

Ties From My Father: Personal Narrative as a Tool for Engaging
Teenagers and Social Service Practitioners

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Abstract

The purpose of this project is to provide social service practitioners with tools and perspectives to engage young people in a process of developing and connecting with their own personal narratives, and storytelling with others. This project extensively reviews the literature to explore Why Story, What Is Story, Future Directions of Story, and Challenges of Story. Anchoring this exploration is Freire's (1970/2000) intentional uncovering and decoding. Taking a phenomenological approach, I draw additionally on Brookfield's (1995) critical reflection; Delgado (1989) and McLaren (1998) for subversive narrative; and Robin (2008) and Sadik (2008) for digital storytelling. The recommendations provided within this project include a practical model built upon Baxter Magolda and King's (2004) process towards self-authorship for engaging an exercise of storytelling that is accessible to practitioners and young people alike. A personal narrative that aims to help connect lived experience with the theoretical content underscores this project. I call for social service practitioners to engage their own personal narratives in an inclusive and purposeful storytelling method that enhances their ability to help the young people they serve develop and share their stories.

Acknowledgements

I would like to acknowledge the man with the flag at the side of the road.

I would also like to acknowledge both what I have lost and gained in the creation of this document. While I have lost significant time with my friends and loved ones, including the first and fifth years of my nephews' lives, I have gained the opportunity to be more fully present in their lives from here on.

Thank you to my advisors for their encouragement and support to create something better than I could have on my own, and to my closest family, friends, and colleagues for their patience and backing at every turn.

Dedication

For everyone who didn't realize they have a story to tell.

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PROLOGUE

If you have ever dressed yourself, you know that it is harder than it looks. Even with some basic rules to help you through (black goes with anything, brown is the new black, your tie should be just long enough to touch your belt buckle, and your belt should match your shoes somehow), things can get complicated and you can end up somewhere far different than where you intended to go.

This project reflects a similar process. While I began intending to follow basic principles for a major research paper, including traditional chapters with introduction, literature review, research methods, findings, and conclusion, I have not ended up there. Instead, what you will find is a tale of two projects: One is about the value of storytelling; the other is the telling of part of my story. The two are combined here for the purposes of highlighting the opportunities that exist within the practice of storytelling to understand and contribute to our individual and shared cultural narratives. Within each chapter I invite you to share in some aspect from my story's past, present, and future and align it with significant theoretical grounding. In this way I hope that adult practitioners can work with young people in their communities using storytelling as a tool for personal and social connection.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) write at length about the shape and form of narrative research, about the process of selecting stories and balancing them with theory, about the usefulness of detail and abstraction, and about the blurred lines between listening to others' stories and offering your own. For the structure of this project, I have borrowed three terms from Connelly and Clandinin, and while I acknowledge that I take some liberties with the application of their definitions, I have set them up as the three major sections of this work because they lend themselves to the inclusion of academic and theoretical language as well as to the language of

narrative. *Broadening*, *burrowing*, and *restorying* are the three chapters: Broadening is to generalize and sets the stage by identifying basic characters and setting; Burrowing is to move from the general to the concentrated and develop the point of view of the character at the time the story takes place; Restorying is a shift to the present and future values and implications of the story with the benefit of new perspectives that shape meaning (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Within the chapter on Broadening, you will find the traditional topics of introduction and research methods; within Burrowing you will find the literature review and findings; and within Restorying you will find the recommendations and conclusion.

In inviting you to read these accounts of my story, I heed Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) caution on "the restorying quality of narrative" (p. 9). The trap is that the text that follows will entomb this story with one set of meanings that I articulate at this one point in time. Yet the intention (and challenge) is to ascribe a living meaning to a narrative that can develop and transform with each retelling and with each new opportunity to apply a new significance. As I continue to tell and retell my stories, they will take on multiple new meanings for me as my perspectives and experiences change. My hope for you as the reader is that you will find your own meaning and significance that will be shaped and reshaped through the ever-changing kaleidoscopes of your own stories.

CHAPTER ONE: BROADENING

This is a study of storytelling because I have a story to tell.

On a sunshine-laced June 6th where I lived, my sister called long distance to confirm that all hope is gone; my father is sick. There is nothing that the doctors can do, and there is nothing that will be done. He will die. The doctors are not able to say when, but the prognosis is that it will not be long. My sister hands the phone over to my father and, as I open my mouth to speak, nothing comes out at first; what do you say to a person who has just been told he will die soon? What could I possibly say to comfort a man who, from the time I was about 4 years old, seemed as stubbornly strong as an ox. I compose myself for a second, and I push out the only words I can, "I'm sorry, dad." His response was a simple, "un-huh." Like every conversation we ever had, this one was short and impossibly shy of substance. I made the 1200km round-trip drive from where I lived at the time to my hometown to see him as often as I could, staying for only a short spell until I had to leave again. My father's condition changed constantly; sometimes he was nearly himself, while other times he could barely move, reverted almost fully back to infancy. In the futility of the situation, my only direction was to be the best a son and brother that I could. Seven desperate weeks slipped away quickly this way. On a Wednesday afternoon in late July, I was sitting at my desk at work when my family called to tell me that the time would be soon; the doctors had prophesied my father had just a matter of hours left. I hurriedly packed my desk, left a note to explain my absence, and just as I was about to speed away, the phone rang again. I didn't have to rush. My father was gone.

This is only the beginning to one of the many stories that make up my view of the world and shape my interactions with it. This project focuses on storytelling as a form of personal narrative. Through telling our stories we have a way to connect our personal experiences with

our cultural norms as a way to understand the world, as personal experience is inseparable from how we navigate our lives (Muncey, 2010). The ultimate goal of this project is to provide social service practitioners, especially those who work with youth, the needed tools and perspectives to help young people connect with their stories. I have shaped this project through relevant literature and an autoethnographic sharing of my story that attempts to thoughtfully connect the personal with the cultural, make meaning of lived experience, and promote subversive narratives that question the status quo (Muncey, 2010). In connecting with their stories, practitioners and young people alike have the opportunity to validate their lived experiences and to chart pathways that connect those experiences to their surrounding culture (Muncey, 2010).

Beyond sharing factual events, storytelling is the opportunity for young people to make sense of their lives (van Manen, 1997b): a chance to think critically on how they have come to be who they are, and to attribute meaning to their experiences (Brookfield, 1995). Storytelling is the opportunity to tune in to the authentic self that contributes to shared culture in a way that is real and meaningful (Freire, 1970/2000). The focus of this chapter is to provide a context for the coming chapters. Creatively applying Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) term "broadening," the chapter uses personal narrative, theory, and self-disclosure to give meaning to the questions "what sort of person are you?" and "what kind of society is it?" (p. 11) from the narrator's point of view.

Research Focus

Across my professional career I have witnessed the coming and going of various social epidemics that prompt waves of government reports and funding to tackle the problems, with three of the most commonly referred to issues of today being mental health, obesity, and bullying. Example reports include *Changing Directions*, *Changing Lives: The Mental Health*

Strategy for Canada (Mental Health Commission of Canada, 2012); *Open Minds, Healthy Minds: Ontario's Comprehensive Mental Health and Addictions Strategy* (Ontario Ministry of Health and Long Term Care, 2011); and *Curbing Childhood Obesity: A Federal, Provincial and Territorial Framework for Action to Promote Healthy Weights* (Public Health Agency of Canada, 2010). While these reports call for positive changes such as policy changes, more financial resources, more community programming, early intervention, and inclusion of citizens with lived experience in decision making, they are all problem-based campaigns that attempt to respond to negative outcomes.

Lost within the context of solving social quandaries is a focus on how we teach and role model for our young people how to think and to utilize their reflective processes to shape the cultural norms within which we all participate. Kegan (1980) writes that practitioners can be most beneficial to those being helped if they learn about and engage in more meaning-making activities rather than focusing on the problem or illness, “none of which is the person” (p. 374). The focus of this research project is to examine, and provide alternatives, to the way that adults either promote or prevent young people from cultivating their individual stories in ways that build critical thinking skills, validate their personal experiences, and make connections to broader cultural norms that further their connectedness to each other, to their community, and to their social culture.

Originally in embarking on this research project, both the intended audience and population targeted were teens from marginalized communities, defined as groups who do not have equal access to the social, economic, cultural, and political institutions of society (Henry & Taylor, 2010). This is a population that I have spent a significant amount of professional practice with. I have found labels such as “at-risk” can serve to perpetuate the barriers and maintain the

status of “other” in society. Because I have witnessed some of the many obstacles these teens face while attempting to achieve their healthy development as people and learners and heard the incredible stories of their individual lived experiences, I believed storytelling was an ideal pursuit. As I delved further into the project, I came to feel that (a) all people have important lived experiences, and that there is richness to cultivating and sharing as many of these as possible, and (b) that the better target audience is the caring adult practitioners who already surround teens and have a strong opportunity to engage them through storytelling.

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that a crucial aspect of the beginning stages of narrative inquiry is for the practitioner to tell his or her story, thereby gaining validity and empowerment as a participant in the ongoing collaborative process of mutual storytelling. Targeting adult practitioners as the audience for this project has allowed me to also share my own stories of lived experience and provide a narrative for readers to make their own connections. I have endeavoured to apply this research to a broad spectrum of teen populations, validating a personal belief that everyone has a story to tell, while intentionally creating invitations within the shaping of this project to specifically engage teens who are marginalized.

Research Methods

I have a young nephew, 5 years old. Getting dressed is an adventure. At age 5, my nephew understands how clothes work; it has been explained to him that underwear goes on first, pants go on one leg at a time, that you put your arms into a shirt and then pull it over your head. He also understands the basics of maneuvering a colour wheel to find which colours are complementary. Left to his own devices, these guidelines seem not to apply in any substantial way. Underwear often goes on first, but it becomes an adventure, an opportunity to play and pretend and to set the stage for the other layers that go over top. Pants, one leg at a time, is

almost a gauntlet challenge to be overcome with a series of somersaults, sound effects, and characters that have carried over from the aforementioned underwear stage. When he is good and ready to add a shirt, there is a twinkle in his eye that says he is about to embark on an entirely new storyline that may or may not have any connection at all to the pants. Whatever he decides, he pulls it on with the confidence of a seasoned expert: a champion shirt-selector who has seen something special and unique in the shirt for that day that even the shirt had never seen in itself before. He writhes himself into the shirt, choosing any of the four openings by which to get it into place. At a flash he makes a new decision, and in one motion whips off the shirt and summons a new one to take its place, following absolutely no pattern, rules, or socially agreed upon norms of colour coordination. He smiles at his accomplishment and knows that he has done well, finding his own meaning in the face of expectations placed upon him.

I began this project by putting on one leg at a time and following the standard procedures that ensure a sound, appropriate project could take shape. It was well intentioned to be sure; like many others, I wanted to create a tool that would help those who work with young people. I wore in public a tie that previously belonged to my father. I put it on one morning with the same sense of adventure with which I have seen my nephew clothe himself. I knew that tie would catch people off-guard if their eyes were not prepared in advance to see its long out-of-fashion sense, and I carried it off as though it were absolutely ordinary. As proud as a 5-year-old, I asked a colleague what she thought of my tie; when she asked me why I wore it, I was not quite prepared for the question. I provided a satisfactory response, but it was not the whole story.

This project is that story. Like the initial shirt selection of a child, in one motion I threw off my first choice and summoned another direction from the bottom of the drawer. This project has become largely about the stories I have to tell. At the same time, my great hope is that in

some miraculous twist of shirts and pants that are impossibly mismatched until you put them on, those same stories will also be helpful to others and provide a starting tool for those who work with young people. I have put myself down on paper, not in an effort to have others understand my stories but to give others a starting place to begin to understand their stories, the stories of the young people they work with every day, and the stories that we all contribute to as a society. While it may not look quite right to the naked eye, like the small child who dresses with self-determined meaning and purpose in the face of established rules of order, I can smile at my accomplishment because I know I have given what I have to give.

Need for Storytelling

This project is based on theoretical research and personal lived experience. According to Dewey (1938/1997), experience is a cornerstone of progressive education that moves beyond the technical and acknowledges the abilities and experiences of the learner. Dewey writes that experiences are continually linked from one to the next and provide the only permanent frame of reference. Experience shapes not only how we understand the world but also how we then act upon it because of referential frames provided by those experiences (Dewey, 1938/1997). Dewey also suggests that experiences are inherently social; they are experienced and understood by the individual, but there is an integral obligation to communicate and share with others the understanding attained through experience. Van Manen (1997b) describes that in phenomenological research the wisdom gained from lived experience is itself used to construct understanding of lived experience. Here the researcher is required to embrace shared situations and living relations while continuing to explore the parameters of lived experience (van Manen, 1997b): “The researcher is an author who writes from the midst of life experience where meanings resonate and reverberate with reflective meaning” (van Manen, 1997a, p. 368). These

two sources of knowledge have been meshed together for the purposes of providing a resource for adult providers of social services (including teachers) for youth that intentionally seeks to examine lived experience and make connections to shared circumstances. This project is intended to provide useful support for understanding the theory behind storytelling, and creating environments and practices that allow professionals and young people to shape and share the stories in ways that reflect their understanding of the world.

My first attempt at constructing this project included a heavy emphasis on the existing research, thinking that if I could find enough solid arguments to position storytelling as a bona fide tool for working with young people, people would have to listen. As I toiled away at that process, I found it insufferable to speak only through the words of others; unless I created the opportunity to tell of myself and my experiences, I would not only limit the value of the message this project is intended to carry, but I would also shortchange myself of the opportunity to reengage and retell some of my story. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) echo in their findings that human beings are constantly telling and retelling stories (whether or not they are even shared or acknowledged) and that it is impossible and unsatisfying to keep personal story separate from observable research. I have lined the research in this project with segments of my lived experience and presented the two together so that the reader can fruitfully search for relevance to his or her own life and professional practice.

Process of Storytelling

Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that embracing stories creates opportunities for the researcher and the research participant to mesh their stories and establish an altogether new narrative. Engaging the research literature gave me the chance to retell my story through new lenses, using new language and perspectives I had gained from the various authors found within

this text. I experienced a similar alchemy whenever I shared my progress, my perspectives, or my challenges with the dozens of people along the way who asked me how it was going. I hope that any readers of this project will find their own occasion to twine their stories through the research and stories provided here, on their way to constructing new narratives. Connelly and Clandinin offer that the dual process of listening to and sharing stories is the roadmap to mutually constructed stories that hold greater possibilities for the next set of students, teachers, and researchers to engage those stories.

Similarly, Freire (1996) describes that as he was writing *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, he was learning; that while he was speaking about the pedagogy, he was learning to write the book. He describes his belief that there are always several reasons for why things happen as they do (as opposed to only one meaning behind them) and his appreciation for understanding process rather than arriving at a product. I have found similar ideas for myself in writing this research project as I have placed layer over layer (some of which you can see, while others bleed beyond the contexts of this project and remain only mine to view) to reach new checkpoints for additional layers. Contrary to Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) view that the easiest starting point for narrative is to outline a chronology, I have found this experience a constant elastic motion through time, moving forward and back as needed, and that could seemingly go on in perpetuity. In fact, as Connelly and Clandinin reassure, there is no real end product; what you hold in your hands now is simply my arrival at the point where I have given all that I have to give to this story at this point in time.

Importance of the Project

I am not content with the world in which I live. I am troubled by the mass consumption of consumer goods and persuasive advertising that invade our every day. I feel disdain for the

inequality that pervades our social structures based on race, ethnicity, gender, and class, and feel remorse for benefiting from those inequalities based on identification with a dominant majority as an Anglo male living in Canada. I am bothered by success that makes me feel alone and isolated because it does not reflect my values, my experiences, or my desires; it is success that is based on the values of someone else, acted out by a vessel. I am disheartened by the growing intolerances I see within my own communities, including stereotypes of teenagers that perpetuate their inferior social status.

I have spent the last 15 years working with children and youth in community settings, and one of the biggest challenges I have observed is a growing social chasm between adults and youth. I believe that creating opportunities for youth to utilize personal narrative that incorporates their experiences, their opinions, points of view, and skills can help bridge the social gap and challenge societal norms that maintain that gap. Attempts to make change seem to focus on change for its own sake rather than substantive changes to the way we see our social fabric.

Yon (2000a) offers that there are more effective methods to examine the ways in which knowledge is legitimized and the way social norms are constructed. Yon adopts the notion of roots and routes, where roots are considered fixed and unchanging and routes are opportunities for growth, change, and intertwining. Neither is good or bad, and one does not occur only in the absence of the other; but to acknowledge both roots and routes is to acknowledge that culture is a complex system that changes and can be changed. Yon suggests that the concepts of roots and routes provide a better opportunity to understand the nature of cultural discourses; by engaging the complexities and incompleteness of everyday life with respect to experiences of culture, race, and identity (Yon, 2000a), we may open ourselves to new chances for being and interacting.

Storytelling, founded in both the roots of personal experience and the routes of critical reflection and action, may be a well-placed tool to engage youth and adults alike to begin a careful rediscovery of each other and ourselves. The importance of the research provided here is to offer a compelling argument for the use of storytelling as that tool for rediscovery, while also inviting the reader in to the experience of mutual restorying so that it may carry over into future practice.

My father struggled with alcoholism for all of my life. In the end, it turned his body against him and triggered his early departure from us. After he died, it struck me that I had never told anybody—not even a hint—that alcoholism plagued my family home. No teachers, coaches, or friends had asked, and I had never offered. Even within my own family we spoke very little about it. It was more a collective sigh that we shared after getting past another day with the hope that tomorrow would be different. From an early age I had learned to keep in the shadows: physically, so that I would not draw the wrath of an intoxicated parent; emotionally, for reasons that I cannot fully articulate. Maybe it was because I did not think anyone would care. Maybe it was because I did not want anyone to judge my family. Maybe it was because I did not want people to treat me differently. Maybe it was because I had learned already that trusting other people could be hurtful. Maybe it was because I grew to think of it as normal. What I do know is that from childhood, as an important survival skill, I learned to observe. As I write now, an adult and a professional working in settings with children, youth, and communities, I have observed time and again that people everywhere live a similar story. It may not be alcohol that impacts their lives, but the feelings of isolation and fatigue, feeling not normal, silenced, and disconnected from others and from themselves, are the looks I have come to recognize on the faces of the teenagers I work with, their parents, and even the practitioners trying to help.

Stories are the meeting ground for people to see that they are not alone, and for forming

new ties to others based on commonalities; stories allow new realities to be created and existing realities to be enhanced (Delgado, 1989). Delgado (1989) writes, “Stories humanize us” (p. 2440); that, “telling stories invests text with feeling” (p. 2440), inviting “hearers to participate, challenging their assumptions, jarring their complacency, lifting their spirits, lowering their defenses” (p. 2440). Sharing stories is an act of communication that binds the two sides together in meaningful ways. Freire (1970/2000) states, “The oppressed must see examples of the vulnerability of the oppressor so that a contrary conviction can begin to grow within them. Until this occurs, they will continue disheartened, fearful, and beaten” (p. 64). The humanization of the storyteller benefits both the oppressed and oppressor in much the same way, contextualizing their experience in the actions of the other.

One of my desired outcomes of this project is to encourage social service practitioners, including teachers, to take the lead on storytelling in a way that empowers them through their values and beliefs and the grounding of their experiences to role model authenticity for youth. This way educational practices that privilege certain groups can be called into question and transformed. Continuing the idea of purposeful interaction of students with their learning environment, Smyth (2006) argues that there is a need to engage ethnographic research with adolescents to examine the relationships between students, their teachers, schools, communities, and larger social cultures that they represent. Smyth makes four points describing why ethnographic stories would help understand educational processes: (a) empathic understanding of what young people feel like to be misunderstood, (b) how it is that discourses of “undisciplined youth” take shape and get taken up by the larger populous (p. 34), (c) the opportunity to deconstruct “at risk” youth and “dropout problem” labeling and make connections to the way these constructs support dominant social norms (p. 34), and (d) barriers facilitating exclusion

from the perspective of excluded populations. This type of work may uncover how social identities are developed within young people with and by schools and what opportunities exist to provide teens with skills and learning opportunities that meet modern-day needs (Smyth, 2006).

Not only is it useful to encourage young people to find their stories, so too is it critical for those adults who support them to share their own stories, and create environments where stories can be fostered and spread. “Critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation” (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 65). Oppression comes in many shapes and disguises and has the potential to live within each of us. Through the intentional development of our stories, we can gain appreciation for ourselves and for others, and renegotiate the way that we shape and are shaped by our shared cultural norms. Delgado’s (1989) words eloquently add, “let us knock down the walls, and use the blocks to pave a road we can all walk together” (p. 2441).

Aside from a few accounts of “the old country” and coming to Canada, I never got the chance to know my father’s stories; still, he is an irrevocable part of mine. As long as I can keep telling them, then I can keep him alive with me and find my place in the world. By understanding my place in the world I can better fill what time I have with purposes that I believe reflect who I am and what I have to offer. When practitioners take up the use of narrative to connect their experiences to their practice and help teens find meaning with their own stories, we have a collective opportunity to knock down the walls that divide us and repave a road that unites us through shared purpose.

Purpose of the Study

The purpose of this study is to provide social service practitioners, especially those who work with youth, this autoethnographic sharing of my story and relevant literature so to pave

the road towards needed perspectives and supports that will help young people connect with their stories. This project will set the stage for adults to understand the value of personal narrative to engage youth in developing their narratives. Through stories, adults are invited to understand the shifting intricacies involved in each individual's identity formation, rather than fruitlessly ascribing identities across groups (Yon, 2000b). Narrative practice contributes to developing a sense of agency through discovery of personal voice; the authentic self and critical thought together give rise to the rejection of unsatisfactory explanations for why things are the way they are and give way to questioning norms that include inequality and subjugation (Brookfield, 1995). Narrative practices are a way to connect individuals with awareness of themselves, their personal meanings, inspirations, and understanding of their experiences (Moustakas, 1990).

Yon (2000b) describes youth identity not as an immovable boundary but as a set of unfixed relationships between students, and between culture and cultural imaginings. Yon suggests that working with youth by necessity requires moving from how we "know" youth identities to finding ways to engage the complexities, contradictions, ambivalences, and tensions of youth identity, and offers ethnography as an important change of practice (p. 154). By using storytelling as a tool, young people have the opportunity to engage the moving target of identity and make connections between the various relationships that Yon describes. The pursuit of meaning, authenticity, and critical thinking are valuable to youth and adults alike.

Scope and Limitations

This project draws on the research literature to define and explain the merits of storytelling as a tool to connect personal experience, critical thinking, and cultural norms. This research does not delineate how a story should be told; I believe, as does Muncey (2010), that for stories to be authentic there should be a great deal of the storyteller dictating its parameters. Nor

does this project suggest that there is only one correct way of storytelling, but implores each individual or group to take the basic concepts presented here and make them fit their needs. Additionally, due to the potentially sensitive nature of personal experiences and shared stories, this project presupposes that the adult engagement with youth storytellers will be a relationship that is based on mutual trust and respect. Additional supports should be made available for storytellers who require or ask for the support. No participants of storytelling projects or programs were consulted or interviewed for this project; rather, the insights presented are synthesized from relevant literature combined with my own personal and professional experience.

I have worked professionally for more than a decade with children and youth in a variety of community settings, including schools. My roles have included health and wellbeing, mentoring, education, self-esteem and asset development, and inclusion. I have pursued this research because I believe that every person (youth or adult) seeks some form of healthy belonging and that belonging begins with the cultivation of our personal selves that leads us directly into understanding of and appreciation for others (Moustakas, 1990; Muncey, 2010; van Manen, 1997b).

This research is presented as a beginning point for social service practitioners to shape their opportunities to apply caring and thoughtful approaches that include storytelling within their local communities and contexts. Human beings lead storied lives of how they have come to understand the world, and Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that education itself is the telling and retelling of personal and shared stories. It is with purpose that I have included my own personal stories within this project, to intentionally include myself as part of the process of storytelling. Connelly and Clandinin use the language of stories as the experiences we live, and

narratives as the deliberate formulation and telling of those stories. This project contains the integration of my stories and my narrative accounts, delivered with as much honesty as I am able to contribute, and delivered with a sense of conversational exchange. These are provided in combination with existing literature in order to arrive at a new narrative that can be shared with others and that invites their contributions into this relationship of sharing and empowerment.

Outline of the Remainder of the Document

The current chapter has been what Connelly and Clandinin (1990) call broadening; outlining the research focus, the research methods and the need for the project has provided the setting or the cultural context for forthcoming narrative. The purpose of this research project and the initial elements of my personal experience serve to introduce the characters of the narrative through Chapter Two. Chapter Two is about burrowing: Chapter Two moves from the general to the specific, and the detailed literature review is the main guide in the travel through the examination of Why Story, What Is Story, and the Future of Story. Vignettes of my own story meshed throughout the literature review as well as key findings of this research provide the point of view of the main character in this story (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Chapter Three, restorying (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990), brings forth newly gained perspectives to focus on the future implications of the developing meaning. Recommendations focused on the merging of theory with practice to restory existing theoretical structures from Freire (1970/2000), Kolb (1984), and Baxter Magolda and King (2004), with a new practical offering built upon the story crafted within this research project, before reaching final conclusions. In the end, I leave you with two clear possibilities for advancing the messages within this project to apply to your own practice of personal narrative as well as those of the young people to whom you are devoted.

CHAPTER TWO: BURROWING

It is my experience that when people want to get to know you, they are curious to see inside your closet. So it is that when a new person nears my closet door I get a bit unsure of what they are looking for. I also know what's in there. Take a step in and you will see shirts hung with care, all facing the same direction, arranged by colour palette. Sweaters are folded and grouped into casual and formal piles. Sweatshirts sit folded unto themselves, with the most frequently worn garments hanging on a hook by the door for convenience. Pants hang, each on their own hook; that way there are no creases from dangling bisected on a hanger. Pants, too, are arranged in a colour spectrum, with blue jeans given the privileged spot with easiest access. I have witnessed all manner of reactions to my closet, as it tells a story. To the uninitiated, such a structured closet-space would undoubtedly signal a highly structured and planned life. To the contrary, the few elements of intentional structure are what give rise to the creativity and madness that starts each day.

What few witnesses to the story that my closet tells manage to notice are the rare neckties that hang sporadically in my closet. Some of them are my own and reflect my tastes and sensibilities. Four special ties hang, conspicuous for the fact that they do not belong, their styles, shapes, colours, and materials reflecting an era long before I was even born. These four ties belonged to my father, and they are one of the few material things I keep in his memory. By design, I hold on to very few pieces of the past, preferring to carry my luggage on the inside. Knowing how to knot a tie may be a measure of a modern man, and my father taught me how. These four ties are the contours for the forthcoming section that reviews the literature that outlines why story (Polka-Dot Tie), what is story (Striped Tie), future direction for story (Paisley Tie), and challenges for story (Flower-Print Tie). This review is primarily grounded in Freire's

(1970/2000) *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* and factors into each of the major sections. The goal of the literature review is to form a basis to understand storytelling, matched up against the telling of portions of my own stories, creating a device to engage readers in storytelling and personal narrative. Following the literature review is a section on findings that presents my own experiences of meaning and reflection when I tell my stories and wear my father's ties. This chapter plays on Connelly and Clandinin's (1990) term "burrowing" (p. 11) that seeks to add greater substance to story, striving to find its origins, meanings, and gain firsthand understanding by taking on the perspective of the narrator.

Literature Review

Animals do not consider the world; they are immersed in it. In contrast, human beings emerge from the world, objectify it, and in so doing can understand it and transform it with their labor. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 125)

On an assembly line the conveyor belt moves raw materials, bits, parts, pieces, things, and objects along a set path towards their destination to be made into something that will be forevermore. Looking back on my youth, the assembly line applies to the way that I began to perceive my own reality. In a chaotic household characterized by parental alcoholism, it served me well to become an object moving along the conveyor belt, careful not to cause any disturbances, and prepared to become something down at the far end of the journey. These early experiences turned out to be good practice for the school environment. It was a new conveyor belt, but the same rules applied; you are just one piece that will be forged into something productive, stay in line or you will be responsible for everyone's trouble, do not think about what lies outside the conveyor, because your job is just to be really good at riding the conveyor. I succeeded in school by definitions of success that do not mean much to me as an adult. Now I

find myself working in a health-education role where I meet with a cornucopia of students riding their own conveyor belts; some sit with perfect posture, while others wriggle restlessly while maintaining their spot in line. Still others seem to rock themselves off the belt and onto the cold floor, where they are swept into boxes marked “defective.” Instead of blaming the victims, we might draw attention to the conveyor itself and social structures that most impact the decisions and behaviours of students. According to McLaren (1998), this includes:

our tolerance of the existence of grinding poverty, frightened and condescending teachers, self-serving politicians, irrelevant curricula, the spirit-breaking quality of many current administrative and teaching practices, lack of community participation in the educational process, and the reluctance of educational offices to meet the special needs of inner-city students. (p. 153)

I have to believe that there is more for our young people than those conveyor belts, and more for me too. I want to know what goes on in their minds and what experiences have grounded their understanding of the world; I want them to know what kinds of things I think about and how I make meaning from them. In this way I have taken up sincere interest in coming to understand storytelling as a way to ignite humanity within oneself and with each other, so that the worlds we know can be something so much more than a series of conveyor belts.

Polka-Dot Tie: Why Story

For the naïve thinker, the important thing is accommodation to this normalized “today.”

For the critic, the important thing is the continuing transformation of reality, in behalf of the continuing humanization of men [sic]. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 72)

Possibly the most common symbol of innocence is the polka-dot pattern; the name itself brings up thoughts of playing games in a schoolyard or classroom. A tie is a mark of refinement

and sophistication, while the polka-dot is mischievous and unassuming, creating a clear juxtaposition of formal and playful. The tie is a dark navy covered in solid white polka-dots, and it is the one tie of the four that others will comment on; there is something about polka-dots that gives others the courage to give their opinions about them. Why I wear this tie is similar to why we need stories. This next section explores the ways in which storytelling is an important aspect for social service practitioners to incorporate into their practice. Included among the topics to come are, interlocking the playful (or personal) with the professional to uncover self-understanding, disrupting and rethinking generally accepted dominant patterns, and connecting with others.

Intentional Uncovering

Why stories are important begins again with Freire (1970/2000) and the relationship between oppressor and oppressed. Freire describes this relationship as having a narrative character, with the narrating Subject in the form of teacher on one side, and the listening Objects in the form of students on the other side. Freire suggests that because of this, education is suffering from a “narrative sickness,” as reality is presented by the narrator as static, compartmentalized, and predictable, bearing little relevance to the lives and experiences of the students (p. 71). This creates the foundation for the banking system of education that views students as empty vessels to be filled by the narrating teacher (Freire, 1970/2000). The basis of the education becomes memorization and repetition of immovable “facts.” The unidirectional flow of knowledge is participation on the conveyor belt of schooling, where the role of the rider is to be acted upon in the creation of an end product. Teachers deposit into the students the information that is deemed necessary, preserving a one-way communication from the knowledgeable to those knowing nothing; this condition of authority of knowledge creates

control over the freedom of the students (Freire, 1970/2000). While this does not describe all teachers, nor do I believe that it describes the intentions of many teachers at all, I do believe that it reflects my own experiences on the conveyor belt of school institutions; I have had a successful school career based squarely on ability to follow directions and not cause disruptions to the norms of the institution.

Freire (1970/2000) points to the very characteristics that make schooling a primary example of the cultural conveyor belts we follow; they are based on one-way communication, they present one side as fact, and they do not require the active participation of the objects being moved along. The students, disconnected from their experiences, from inquiry and action, Freire describes as unable to be “truly human” (p. 72) and argues that knowledge derives only from purposeful interaction “in the world, with the world, and with each other” (p. 72). Intentional uncovering presents us with the ability to recognize that there is more than just one way of being, more than just a conveyor belt to reality, and invites participation to explore other possibilities.

In my closet hangs a black suit that I have worn only once in my life. Tucked in the inside pocket just below the heart is the paper that held the words I had wanted to say for some time. The first funeral I ever attended was my father's. Outside of what I'd seen in movies, I didn't even know how they were supposed to go. When I was told that no one was going to speak at the funeral (none of my father's relations), it felt incomplete to have no one tell anything of his story. In some ways I thought he might like it if his only son would be the one to speak on his behalf; he was traditional in that sort of way. But what would I say? I'd spent most of my life avoiding the man. On the other hand, I had had a front row seat in witnessing his life; I'd listened to stories, I'd watched his movements carefully (even if mostly for my own preservation), and I was as keenly aware of the hurt, the struggles, and simple joys as anyone could be. I was scared to step

in front of hundreds of people, even though many of them were family, and say what I thought needed to be said; I'd tell my story, I decided. I was scared to say it in front of him. As scared as I was, there was no chance that I wasn't going to do it. Whatever he wasn't, my story of what he was to me still needed telling.

The expectation would have been to deliver the standard, predictable dictation about life and death. Here I was presented the chance to change the direction of my conveyor and make myself a subject in the narrative that I had stayed in the shadows of for so many years.

Critical Thought and Reflection

Preparing to tell my story at my father's funeral was preparing to tell it for the first time; to uncage what had been kept closely to myself and share it with everyone. Freire (1970/2000) states authentic thinking is based in the function of reality and can be found only through communication rather than isolation. Freire goes on to write that human life itself has meaning only through communication, never in isolation. True dialogue can exist only where there is critical thinking, conceived as "thinking which discerns an indivisible solidarity between the world and the people and admits of no dichotomy between them" (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 72). Critical thinking includes perceiving reality as a process that involves risks, that is tied to history, and that is involved in continual transformation (Freire, 1970/2000). This is an important addition to understanding storytelling, because Freire throws open the doors on the world and insists that it does not exist separately from people, but the two are wrapped closely in the creation of each other. Our stories shape and are shaped by the world and the cultural norms with which we interact. Our conveyor belts at once become false as we acknowledge that they too exist not within a vacuum but within a multiplicity of supporting structures.

Brookfield (1995) writes of the benefits of critical thinking in the context of teaching

practice, which I believe link to the benefits of storytelling. Brookfield suggests that critical thinking helps to make informed actions, increasing the chances of achieving the intended outcome, partly by understanding how others will perceive what we say and do. Critical thinking helps to develop a rationale for practice, where values and beliefs are intentionally cultivated and connected to practice; the result is practice that reflects the practitioner and increases the likelihood of establishing credibility with students (Brookfield, 1995). The framing of critical thinking through teaching practice is an opportunity for Brookfield to invite teachers to participate in their own intentional uncovering and to recognize that the conveyor belt of schooling also ensnares teachers to move in one direction even when it is disconnected from their own beliefs and experiences of education.

Critical thinking is emotionally grounding, where the highs and lows of practice are taken within the context of the social and political context of the classroom rather than being squarely on the teacher (Brookfield, 1995). By role modeling critical thinking, the classroom becomes a space for democratic trust and inclusion to take place, increasing the skill of the students, the relationships between people, and the ability to engage the process of understanding and redefining knowledge (Brookfield, 1995). Brookfield (1995) suggests that practicing critical thinking allows teachers to find their authentic voice, where “our experience and our practice cohere in a way that feels pleasingly consistent” (p. 46). Finding and expressing the authentic voice is a transformative process as a “counter-hegemonic moment” (p. 46) that shifts the understanding of practice from the way it has to be to questioning the existing norms against their history, our own experiences, and our rationale for practice (Brookfield, 1995). Critical thinking as practice is a platform by which teachers may reclaim their individual stories, situating themselves in the middle and making important connections to the world and to their experiences

as both learner and teacher. Critical thinking enables the viewing of practice through different lenses that enable us to see our complicity in the upholding of dominant discourses and to remove our consent to participate (Brookfield, 1995). In order to help others make meaning of their stories, it is imperative to first make meaning of our own. It is wearing the ugliest tie available and making it a part of how you see the world.

I stepped to the podium at the funeral and unfurled the paper that I pulled from the inside pocket of my black suit, and managed to coerce these words out: “My father told me once that when he was a young man, he wanted to be a boxer because he was physically strong and had the endurance to keep going. When he said this to me I was still a teenager, and I really could only think why I hadn’t received similar natural gifts. Over the years, my father was a butcher and business owner, but along the way he also needed to be a realtor, a taxi driver, a labourer, a contractor, something of a farmer, and multitalented problem solver so that he could be sure his children never knew hunger. But his real trade was being a fighter. Not in the physical sense, in the way that he had told me about, but a fighter by his spirit. As any good fighter does, he took on any and all challengers. Even if he was afraid, he stepped toe to toe with them all. He arrived in Canada with \$15 in his pocket and built a life around himself. Fighters win their share of battles, and they lose their share as well. My father carried with him the scarred reminders of the times that he got knocked down and beaten. True to his spirit, he would give his all to get back up again, ready to face the next challenge. The surest way of getting my father to do something was to tell him that he couldn’t do it. I think that nothing made his heart smile more than the times when he accomplished something that no one else thought he could; he always believed in himself.”

For years I kept my story hidden for fear that sharing it would change an already fragile

existence. I now look to share my story, not for fear that it will cause change, but because it will cause change, helping me to make meaning for myself and offering a more authentic connection to others. Freire (1970/2000) writes: “How can the oppressed, as divided, unauthentic beings, participate in developing the pedagogy of their liberation? Only as they discover themselves to be ‘hosts’ of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of their liberating pedagogy” (p. 48). The intentional uncovering is the first recognition that there is more than just a conveyor belt to belong to. In critical thought and reflection grow hope and power to write our own stories that reflect how we see ourselves and each other and to manifest new possibilities. Brookfield (1995) states that finding authentic voice through critical thinking connects to finding individual sense of agency, and therefore it is crucial to continue sharing our experiences and stories as teacher practitioners. It is challenging to share parts of my story within this project, and it will be collectively challenging to continue to arrange and share our stories. Brookfield’s assurance is that the way out of the uncertainty is the same way in: to keep sharing.

I neared the end of my narrative, but I still had another thing to say at the podium: “If he’s listening now, I want him to know that one day I’d like to be a boxer too. Though I’m not big or strong I want to be the kind of boxer my father was; the kind that fought for what he thought was right, no matter how hard it was, and no matter who thought he was wrong for doing it. My father fought the good fight, and now I’m glad he has a chance to rest, and for all those scars to finally heal.” My sister joined me at the front of the room to speak too. I like to think that part of my story helped her to tell her own. I love my sister, just as my father loved his. As it turns out, as much as I tried to be different from my father, we are really very similar. We wear the same ties, but we wear them each in our own styles that tell our different stories of how we each found our meaning in the world.

The act of speaking with an authentic voice in that circumstance was exhausting on all levels; but from those who mattered, it was also invigorating to read in their eyes and in their embraces that I was able to speak a truth that connected us together as human beings and as a family.

Stories as Humanizing

Speaking these words made me to feel a great sense of relief: relief from the strain of having individually held back this story for so many years, and relief at the feeling of having captured a moment of honesty and humanity that could unite my story with my father's. Stories are the meeting ground for people to see that they are not alone, and for forming new ties to others based on commonalities; stories allow new realities to be created and existing realities to be enhanced (Delgado, 1989). The humanization of the storyteller benefits both the oppressed and oppressor in much the same way, contextualizing their experience in the actions of the other. "Critical and liberating dialogue, which presupposes action, must be carried on with the oppressed at whatever the stage of their struggle for liberation" (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 65). Friere (1970/2000) writes that "educators and politicians speak and are not understood because their language is not attuned to the concrete situation of the people they address. Accordingly, their talk is just alienated and alienating rhetoric" (p. 96). The reason behind why stories are important and useful is that stories promote critical reflection and identity development, they create opportunities to engage each other in deeply human practice, and they allow us to challenge the ways in which our society is structured. Our stories are the bold polka-dots on a tie that add life and vitality with their identifiable pattern that breaks up the monotony and paralysis of conformity.

It's a strange feeling to simultaneously smile and cry. This is especially true after having grown up in a family where stoicism was the norm and neither laughter nor tears were common. After the funeral service, the procession weaved its way to the cemetery where my father would be laid to rest. Shortly after the parade began, on the south side of the street just up ahead, a man I'd never seen before stood with a giant flag of the country my father was born in and was waving it through the air with ferocity and respect as though a dignitary was on his way through. While we passed him and the floating flag, I couldn't help but smile while I cried.

No life is without its share of smiles and tears. Crafting and lending our stories is a way to let the polka-dots break up the silencing monotony of the solid backdrop and open up pathways to our shared human experiences that help us make sense of our existence in this world.

Striped Tie: What Is Story

Human beings *are* because they *are in* a situation. And they *will be more* the more they not only critically reflect upon their existence but critically act upon it. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 109)

Once you move past the initial reaction that tells you that this tie is not part of the norm (indeed, it is not from the modern era), it really begins to settle its charm on you. Its classic stripe pattern provides a sense of familiarity and sureness, while its use of a black, brown, and white colour pallet draws you in to understand how it manages to make them weave together in a way that percolates and excites. It was the very first of my father's ties that I wore after he died, because it suited me the best and when I put it on it felt like a fit.

Arriving at an end destination when defining storytelling is a little like trying on tie after tie to match a suit. Like the fashion behind ties, storytelling or personal narrative, or any of the other names it might fall under, is fluid and ever changing to reflect the storyteller and his/her

perceptions. This section defines story in a way that arrives at a shared general understanding of personal storytelling and narrative instead of one specific classification. Defining story is an important step is recognizing that there are a variety of ways to select the right tie for each story and that there exists something other than conveyor belts.

Meaning in a Name

Moustakas (1990) defines heuristic research as the process of “internal search through which one discovers the nature and meaning of experience” (p. 9) and further develops tools to continue the internal pursuit, including self-awareness and self-knowledge. The process unveils connections with others, even calling upon them to reveal themselves, and the deep and disciplined reflection “gives life” (p. 12) to new questions, new understandings of reality, and new meaning for the meeting of personal experience with the world. These functions of heuristic research align with the connectivity principles of Freire’s (1970/2000) decoding, the disciplined practice of reflection fits the intentionality of the Lewinian model (Kolb, 1984) and Labov’s (2000) structure, and the ability to chase meaning meshes with the free flow of Native narratives (Piquemal, 2003). Muncey (2010) offers several definitions of autoethnography, all, which seem to, in one way or another, point to the controlled practice of uncovering meaning of lived experience and placing it within a social context for further analysis and synthesis. Connelly and Clandinin (1990) suggest that human beings are naturally storytellers as individuals and as social beings; education itself, they argue, is the “construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories” (p. 2). To these authors, narrative is an irrevocable trait of being human, learning, and understanding the world. A difference with autoethnography in comparison to other personal descriptions may be its intent to subvert a master narrative of a culture (Muncey, 2010). An autoethnography presents the story of what is true and positions it against the dominant norm in

order to call it out as such (Muncey, 2010). Therefore, an autoethnography becomes a story that reflects the teller's place in the world and calls on others to engage their place against the same examination.

Subversive Narratives

Stories themselves are at the forefront of challenging the existence and function of the monotonous conveyor belts. Ewick and Silbey (1995) write that the stories we tell are the reproductions of the cultural stories we are exposed to. Stories are a reflection of the storyteller and the way that they shape and interpret their lives (Ewick & Selby, 1995). Subsequently, the experiences we have as individuals are closely connected to social norms, and developing stronger understanding to our experiences can bolster a critical consciousness of our social structures (Bell, 2003). Stories provide insight into the truths about the social world that are kept hidden through the use of other methods of communication and research (Ewick & Silbey, 1995).

Narrative is also described as a political act that gives voice to the silenced and has the ability to unsettle power (Ewick & Silbey, 1995). Freire (1970/2000) writes, "Human existence cannot be silent, nor can it be nourished by false words, but only by true words, with which men and women transform the world" (p. 88). Huey Li (2004) argues for the reclaiming of silenced voices, but also for the examination of silence within pedagogical knowledge as a form of subversion. Huey Li suggests that within silence exists the critical reflection and questioning of knowledge necessary for the formulation of personal narrative; silence breaks up the banking model of education which intentionally prevents introspection. Embracing silence provides the opportunity to explore "alternative frames" (p. 76) through teachable moments that overcome limitations of speech and challenge the way that knowledge is validated (Huey Li, 2004).

Subversive narratives that counter the dominant hegemonic narratives are effective specifically because they are based on individual experience and then rooted in the local and global cultural and political norms, without losing the individual experience (Ewick & Silbey, 1995). Stories remind that our social context is in flux every day, and that it can be either reaffirmed or subverted through our understanding of each other's individual stories and the intentional retelling of our shared stories (Ewick & Silbey, 1995).

Like the sharp stripes on my father's tie, personal narrative cuts through the dreariness of uniformity and reminds that there is more to the experience than what is seen at the surface. Delgado (1989) writes that stories serve an important destructive function that reveals what we believe as false, cruel, or self-serving; they can show a needed shift in power, or the way out of an unseen trap. Within narrative lies the opportunity for people who have been oppressed to name their experience and to give meaning to it through communication with others (Bell, 2003). Delgado supports that stories can be used as a method of self-preservation and a tool to relieve subordination. To the former, through the telling of stories, Delgado suggests that psychic catharsis that can lead to healing, self-liberation, and mental health; in the latter Delgado writes that the sharing of stories can serve as moral lesson for the oppressor where moral insight can be gained, questioning their privileged position and the validity of their actions. Freire (1970/2000) adds that "within their unauthentic view of the world and of themselves, the oppressed feel like "things" owned by the oppressor" (p. 64). At the same time, stories mitigate the "othering" of resistance, preventing the reaction of the dominant group to reassert their status, thus providing for the possibility for change (Delgado, 1989).

For example, Bell (2003) says that stories can be used as "back talk" (p. 8) that brings racism into the forefront so that it can be recognized and analyzed. Survival strategies can then

be devised and learned in order to better deal with inequality as it arises: from personal danger, to attacks on human dignity, to navigating structural racism that hides behind a White dominant discourse and political correctness (Bell, 2003). Bell adds that such stories remain timeless and can be shared over again across generations and stick to the lived experiences of the storytellers as a reflection of the ongoing racist actions through history to the present day. Stories can be used as a tool for education against racism, particularly to help White students reconcile the contradictions of racism with their lived experience, towards developing new narratives (Bell, 2003). Storytelling can be an effective form to share experience and culture norms and can be a successful tool to challenge the status quo. I believe that making the most of storytelling as subversive narrative begins with an understanding of Freire's (1970/2000) notion of decoding.

Decoding

The use of personal narrative as a mechanism for subverting the cultural conveyor belt can be powerful, but appreciating the roots of storytelling leads directly to Freire's decoding (1970/2000). Freire suggests that counter to perceiving the world as concrete and permanent, understanding the world must be a dialectical engagement moving from the abstract to the concrete: "This requires moving from the part to the whole and then returning to the parts; this in turn requires that the Subject recognize himself [sic] in the object" (p. 105). I believe the pattern that Freire describes as "decoding" situations of society (p. 105) is essentially that of storytelling. The storyteller moves between his/her understanding and the social context, locating what s/he knows and has experienced in the people, places, and institutions that surround him/her. That comparison is processed and is returned to the individual for further processing and articulation. According to Freire, if the process is effective it will continue to move forward and back repeatedly; eventually, the abstract will render the concrete less impermeable as it becomes

viewed through a critical perspective. The conveyor belt is a form of unchanging concreteness; to believe in only that conveyor is to accept it as inevitable.

In this hunt for storytelling definitions, Friere (1970/2000) immediately provides that decoding society is the recognition that there are many actions at play all at once, and that there is a need to identify their connectedness. “In all the stages of decoding, people exteriorize their view of the world” (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 106), and so it is a seemingly natural function to formulate and outwardly share a narrative account of one’s positioning within the world. Storytelling, like decoding, is the opportunity to question and express a crafted view of the world.

I don’t know what it was that alcohol did for my father. I don’t know if he found it relaxing, if he felt socially obligated, if he had a predisposition to addiction, or he was possessed by demons (as my grandmother would shout when things were at their worst). I don’t know if it provided him with an escape, and, if so, what was he escaping from? Was it me that he needed to get away from? Was it fatherhood? Was there something in the stories he told us about coming to Canada? Was it something in the stories that he would never get to tell us? As a teenager these thoughts raced through my mind continually.

The thoughts that filled my head through childhood existed only within me, having little opportunity to coalesce with others or to be guided through a productive process of understanding. I developed one reality for home and another, separate, reality for everywhere else. For Freire (1970/2000), the conditions for thematic investigation (investigation into peoples’ thinking) are required to be “thinking which occurs only in and among people together seeking our reality” (p. 108). The investigation is rooted in an attempt to grasp a sense of reality and “thus becomes a common striving towards awareness of reality and towards self-awareness,

which makes this investigation a starting point for the education process or for cultural actions of a liberating character” (p. 107). A tie can be left to hang in a closet, but it is made to be seen by others. What we are left with is a need to connect the individual with his/her surroundings and back again; a need to share this process of thinking with others; a quest for an idea of reality, which starts the process of education and liberating cultural actions. Breaking free of the concrete is escaping the confines of the unidirectional, single-file conveyor belt that moves onward. For me, this is the foundational model of what is storytelling and personal narrative.

Developing a Model

Personal experience is an important aspect of Freire’s decoding (1970/2000), as the person learns to see him/herself and his/her understanding in the surrounding world. Figure 1 provides a model similar to Freire’s thinking; in the Lewinian model of action research and laboratory training, the first step is concrete thinking, acknowledging right at the start the validity of personal experience (Kolb, 1984). According to the model, from concrete experiences come observations and reflections, which are then formed into new abstract concepts and generalizations (Kolb, 1984). The new concepts are then tested against new experience, and the cycle repeats (Kolb, 1984). Kolb (1984) suggests that there are two main advantages to this model, which I would like to echo; the first is, again, that personal experience is placed as a premium. I believe that this is particularly important for practitioners to recognize, as the population identified by this project (teenagers) already has a wealth of material from which to draw. As Kolb (1984) writes, the concrete experience can then be tested against abstract concepts and systematically shared with others, while also entrenching meaning and vitality in the concrete itself.

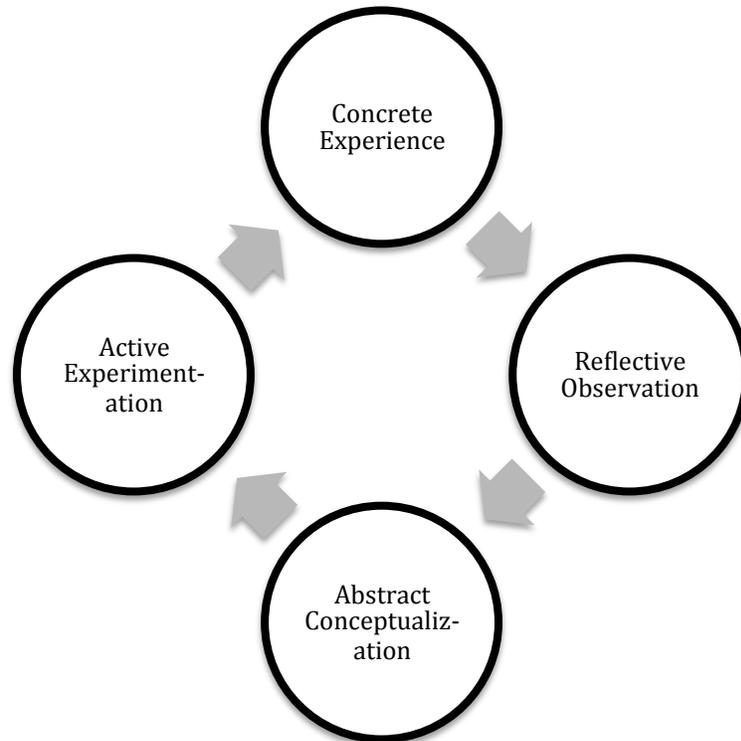


Figure 1. The Lewinian model of action research and laboratory training.

Note. Adapted from “Experiential Learning: Experience as the Source of Learning and Development (Vol. 1)”, by D. A. Kolb, 1984, Englewood Cliffs, NJ: Prentice-Hall.

Image original creation of R. Pozeg, 2013.

The second benefit is that this model highlights the opportunity to assess feedback, particularly when expectations do not meet outcomes (Kolb, 1984). Where expectations and outcomes do not meet, there is much opportunity for critical thinking and possibly even the beginning formation of a subversive narrative. Practitioners play a key role in helping young people to experience feedback that enables them to reflect on their experiences and make new paths towards future actions. The model applies intentionality to the process that Freire (1970/2000) describes as awareness of reality and self-awareness.

I think it's a common experience for children to admire their fathers. When I was really little, before I'd ever bounced my first basketball, I remember in school the teachers would always have us say what our parents did for a living. When it came my turn, I'd proudly say that my dad makes the meat and my mom sells it. When all was said and done, my parents had run their earnest Eastern European delicatessen for 33 years. In fact, within weeks of his last days, they were both there at work, not wanting to let down their loyal customers, or maybe just unsure what else to do. After 33 years it's hard to change routines no matter what the incentive. Somewhere along my way, I lost track of some of the admiration I had as that little child. By the time I was an adolescent, I tried hard to be anything that was different from my father.

The understanding I could shape of my ongoing personal experiences at home and at school came from me alone, since I did not have the abilities at the time to share my story in a meaningful way, or even believe that anyone would want to hear it. I did not recognize that elements of any story make them relatable and uncover mutually shared experiences.

Reportability

Following the feedback cycle of the Lewinian model, a look at Labov's (2000) work is an opportunity to provide another layer of solid material to Freire's (1970/2000) more fluid notion

of decoding. Virtually stumbling into narratives by conducting interviews in New York to research vernacular, Labov has been exploring narrative since the mid-1960s. His analysis focuses on the way that narrative holds audience attention, but that analysis may contribute to our goal of a common general understanding of storytelling and personal narrative. Labov provides this definition for narratives of personal experience: “a report of a sequence of events that have entered into the biography of the speaker by a sequence of clauses that correspond to the order of the original events” (p. 3). Labov calls this an arbitrary but useful way of differentiating from other narratives that also link to the past. It is entirely useful here because it links personal experience, narrative qualities, and the reflective and dialogical pursuit of the nature of reality already discussed. Labov remarks on the “reportability” of narrative (p. 6), suggesting that without some purpose that relates to the audience’s understanding of the story’s significance, the result is an inevitable “so what?” Reportability links to Labov’s “evaluation of a narrative event” (p. 5), which is defined as “information on the consequences of the event for human needs and desires” (p. 5).

Together, reportability and evaluation speak to the need to connect story to some experience of humanity that is relevant not only to the storyteller but also to the audience. The “viewpoint” (p. 10) allows the audience to understand the perspective of the narrator; told orally, the story is presumed to be a first-person account, while other platforms hold more options to see the story through various actors and perspectives (Labov, 2000). Credibility is still another aspect covered by Labov (2000), which speaks to the narrator’s ability to accurately reflect to the audience that story is a lived experience (as opposed to a joke, a dream, or a fictional account). Modern advances in technology are changing traditional norms of communicating experiences, yet even digital storytelling follows very recognizable patterns; themes similar in structure to

Labov's are represented when using digital technology to tell stories. Table 1 outlines The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling from the Centre for Digital Storytelling that are cited as a common starting ground (Robin, 2008). Where Labov (2000) uses reportability, digital storytelling uses "emotional content" to connect the audience to a central purpose; instead of evaluation, digital storytelling uses "a dramatic question" to lead the audience to understanding the flow and outcome of a story. Digital storytelling's "point of view" matches Labov's (2000) viewpoint to convey the angle from which the story is seen. In place of credibility, digital storytelling uses "the gift of your voice" to connect the audience to lived experience of the storyteller. Even when technology changes, core elements of personal narrative remain consistent, and digital storytelling is one growing example of the number of tools available to share experiences and connect to each other thoughtfully. Practitioners could perceive digital storytelling as an opportunity to engage young people while building transferrable skills of personal narrative across mediums. While Labov (2000) provides a thorough indexing of the various elements of narrative (12 in all) that account for impact on the audience, I believe that these four details are enough to contribute to the goal of a common understanding of storytelling and personal narrative without overdefining what qualifies and disqualifies within this analysis.

Breach and Accrual

Continuing on the path to defining storytelling, Bruner (1991) writes that human beings are not able to completely express themselves without the symbolic tools of culture and acknowledges that narrative is a symbol and a reflection of culture. Two examples of these symbolic cultural tools are presented here in contribution towards an inclusive understanding of storytelling. "Canonicity and breach" (p. 11), as Bruner suggests, are key parts of narrative,

Table 1

The Seven Elements of Digital Storytelling

The seven elements of digital storytelling (Robin, 2008)		Comparison to Labov (2000)
1. Point of view	Describes the angle of the narrator, including his or her perspective and main point to the story.	Viewpoint
2. A dramatic question	Engaging the audience with an essential question that reaches a conclusion or answer by the end of the story.	Evaluation
3. Emotional content	Making connections with the audience by bringing to life the personal and powerful circumstances that advance along the story.	Reportability
4. The gift of your voice	Personalization of the story to deepen audience understanding of the narrative context.	Credibility
5. The power of the soundtrack	Music and sounds that support and enhance the delivery of the story.	
6. Economy	Conveying the narrative with the appropriate amount of content, neither too little or too much.	
7. Pacing	The variable cadence with which the story moves along so that it is digestible for the audience.	

Note. Adapted from “Digital Storytelling”, by B. R. Robin, 2008. *Theory Into Practice*, 47(3), 220-228.

where the canon is a generally accepted prescribed social behaviour, such as behaviour in a restaurant, in personal relationships, or in employment. Bruner writes that the breach consists of the breaking of canon through easily recognizable human dilemmas, such as the deceived innocent, the scorned love, or, as I would add, the child's fractured relationship with a parent. Bruner suggests that these elements contribute to Labov's (2000) notions that a story must be worth telling. Bruner also suggests that situated within the canon and breach is the opportunity to creatively pursue new understandings of the general narrative. Perhaps here, within the breach, is where there is significant opportunity to question reality, decode its purposes, and invite others to join in the discussion to form new (subversive) understandings. Or, using Kolb's (1984) language, breach provides a feedback opportunity to assess deviation from the goal and evaluation of the consequences to form new concepts for new situations. Loaded within the definition of storytelling is the ability to expand and create new opportunities for its purpose.

The second element from Bruner (1991) is "narrative accrual" (p. 18) or the accumulation of narratives themselves that contribute to the content of culture, history, and tradition: "Even our own homely accounts of happenings in our lives are eventually converted into more or less coherent autobiographies centred around a Self acting more or less purposefully in a social world" (p. 18). Once again we have a return to the ideas of Freire (1970/2000), where the telling of stories contributes to the formation of social norms, and the social norms contribute to the individual experiences that fuel stories. Most of my father's story remains a mystery to me, but the parts I know and hold on to have played a role in the formation of my personal values, including the value of food, time, and family. Bruner adds to the existing models by noting that the bank of personal experience is cumulative, even going back generations, which may implicate a need for a model that is more reflective of a web than a cycle.

My father was the middle child in his family. The older brother was important to the family because, at that time, every rural family needed a son to help with the farm work, to represent the country in the military when the time came, and to eventually take over the small bit of land and tiny farmhouse. His younger sister was going to be married off to another family, as the tradition called for. Eventually he came to Canada because of a promise he made to his sister; he loved his sister. To be the second son was to be an extra mouth to feed, and so it was his lot to leave the family and find his own work as soon as possible. He was never demonstrative when he talked about it, but it was clear that my father didn't want to leave; he wanted to be part of his family. His grandmother said to him that the best way for him not to starve was to become a butcher. And so when he was 16, that is exactly what he did. When I was 18 and freshly finished high school, I left my home and my family. Among the differences between my father and me is that I couldn't wait to leave. In fact I had been aching to leave for years already. Because of his experiences with his family, he wanted my sisters and me to stay home for as long as possible. Because of him, I had to leave, and there was no going back.

The richness of our experiences is compounded by generations of relationships that mold our current ones and the ever-changing cultural platforms that give context to what we know. The opportunity to engage a process of cultivating self-awareness and awareness of the world is important to the way that we challenge the conveyor belt and shape our personal narratives.

Building Another Model

When I think of the ties of my father, I think about how the relatively small pieces of material connect him to me. I also think about how those ties connect him to others; how did he come by them, what made him choose that particular one, do they reflect his father, or other people that he loved, places that he had seen, or experiences he had witnessed? From this

interconnected way of thinking, I believe another model, offered by Baxter Magolda and King (2004) adds depth to previous models. The Developmental Foundations of Learning Outcomes model (Figure 2) is a three-pronged Venn diagram that demonstrates the overlapping developmental foundations of effective citizenship through education (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The epistemological foundation section of the diagram targets the understanding of knowledge: how it comes to be, in what contexts it is created, what authority it carries, and it is a key aspect of the model (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The epistemological foundation calls for evaluation of various platforms of knowledge, participation in knowledge analysis and creation, and critical reflection that supports an internal identity through the acceptance and rejection of knowledge (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The intrapersonal foundation section is based on the development of personal values; here too there is an emphasis on critical thought that contextualizes identity, interpreting personal experience and location in the world (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). The interpersonal foundation section is understanding the context and construction of relationships with others, fostering interdependence such that differing identities and values can be mutually appreciated and explored (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

When a person reaches a level of proficiency in the three foundations, Baxter Magolda and King (2004) offer that self-authorship arises and binds the three together. Self-authorship is described as the “fourth order” (p. 10) that reflects the coordinated navigation of personal identity and external relationships where ongoing meaning is performed (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Achieving self-authorship requires developmental maturity; the authors note that not all reach the level and that in their own research it was most common for participants to be in their 20s and 30s before reaching self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004).

While this model is complex, I believe that in the conversation of storytelling it offers a

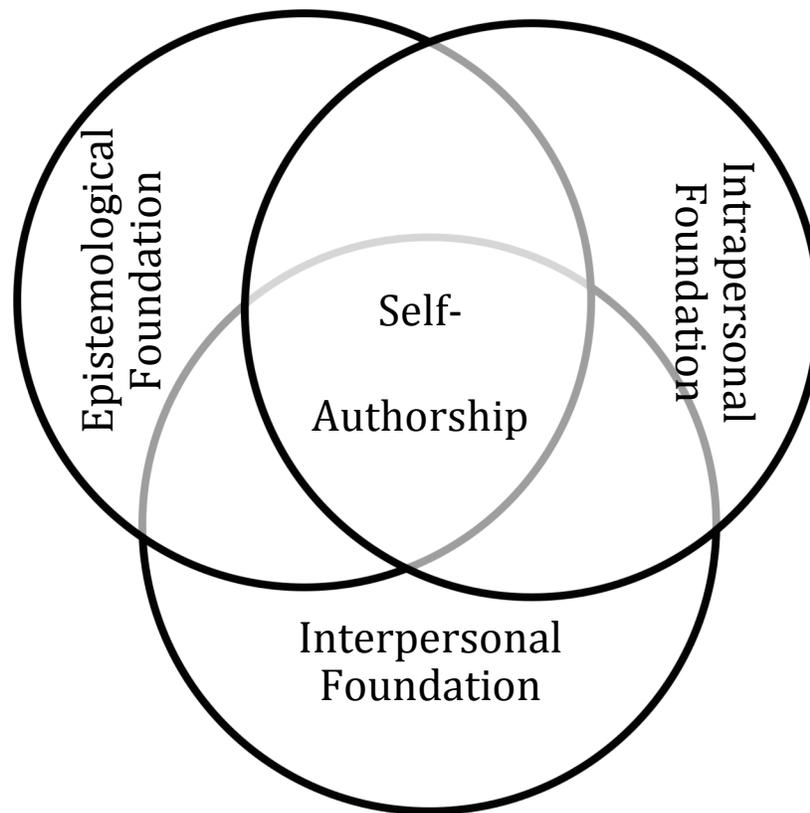


Figure 2. Developmental foundations of learning outcomes.

Note. Adapted from “Learning Partnerships: Theory and Models of Practice to Educate for Self-Authorship”, by M. B. Baxter Magolda & P. M. King, 2004, Sterling, VA: Stylus.

Image original creation of R. Pozeg, 2013.

process for understanding and participating in critical reflection for the individual and his or her place in the world in a way that is intentionally intertwined and multilayered. Baxter Magolda (2004) also notes that a key element for the application of this model is for educators and learners to be collaborators in the process; this is true even at the higher education level where this model is targeted, and so should be especially true at the teenage level where this project is primarily aimed. The partnership should be ever evolving to reflect the changing landscape of personal identity and surrounding culture, where learners can experience the complexity of the world and test their own assumptions and knowledge against it (Baxter Magolda, 2004). The practice of a similar model, where structure is contextual and intergenerational guidance is essential, can be seen in native narrative.

Native Narrative

Piquemal (2003) embraces the fluidity espoused from Baxter Magolda and King (2004) and supports Native narrative as an interconnected story of oral tradition that is not bound by structure. In fact, understanding Native oral traditions starts with Piquemal's juxtaposition against Western literacy tradition, which follows a "conflict-crisis-resolution" (p. 115) procedure over and over again. The Native narrative is instead a holistic account that places meaning within the context of the entire story, drawing on symbols and traditions, and creating a complex harmony that cannot be removed from the whole (Piquemal, 2003). Aboriginal knowledge of the universe also prompts individuals to find meaning within themselves, steeping themselves within their cultural context (Piquemal, 2003). Native narratives seldom have an identifiable moral to the story but expect the listeners to devise their own meaning over time and the accumulation of personal experience (Piquemal, 2003). The narratives are told and retold and often change with the storyteller and their perspectives (Piquemal, 2003). Narratives are seen as an intentional tool

for knowledge transfer; they are used as emotional outlets and educational lessons where the teller and the listener can gain from the perspectives of the characters (Piquemal, 2003).

A tie is selected for any number of reasons: to match a jacket, to accent a face, to fit an event, or to disrupt the expected. And so there is never just one right tie for any occasion. As we have seen, stories shift due to their nature of continually reflecting the changing cultural patterns that shape and gain substance from stories; the Native narrative has itself shifted due to imposition of Western cultural norms (Piquemal, 2003). The oral traditions that have sustained Aboriginal peoples are commonly (and inaccurately) viewed as practices for illiterate cultures, and their very validity called into question by Western literacy traditions that view Western narratives as “fact” (Piquemal, 2003). Adding to the growing definition of storytelling, then, is the idea that story can follow any direction and take any form that takes its roots in the storyteller and the social norms within which the storyteller lives.

In my life I had very few conversations with my father. Dodging his bouts of inebriation became such a habit that even when he was sober I just kept dodging. When we did speak, there was little common ground to ease the tension, and the exchanges stayed brief. When he fell ill, I had to decide how it was going to go down; would this be the time to start having meaningful conversations? If not now, when? Are there conversations you aren't allowed to have with people who have been prescribed a death sentence? Should I ask him about dying? Should I ask him about alcoholism? Should I ask him about me? In the end the decision was only partly mine. I had decided that the right thing for me to do, to honour him and me, was to do the best I could for the family—just as he had always tried to do. To me that meant giving my father the chance to choose what tie he would wear on his way out of this life. It was only partly my decision because his time went quickly and his condition changed on a daily basis, and at no

time could I even find the fortitude to think that it would be the right time to start. As it turned out, he had something to say to me. Sitting beside him in the hospital bed that was now the centerpiece of my parents' family room, watching him suck juice through a straw and without even the strength to move his head so that he was looking at me, he said in his broken English just one thing; he told me I was wrong to leave home.

The flow of our personal narratives can lead in any direction since our stories are a diverse intertwining of our selves and our cultural norms. Adding another layer of holistic design, symbolism, and meaning is the way in which modern technology can be utilized to convey personal narratives.

Digital Storytelling

The patterns of native narrative can be seen in some of the ways that modern technology is being used to tell stories. The Digital Storytelling Association (as cited in Sadik, 2008) defines digital storytelling this way:

a modern expression of the ancient art of storytelling. Throughout history, storytelling has been used to share knowledge, wisdom, and values. Stories have taken many different forms. Stories have been adapted to each successive medium that has emerged, from the circle of the campfire to the silver screen, and now the computer screen. (p. 490)

In contrast to the way that use of technology could provide structure, as noted above, here technology can be seen as more of a tool that changes continually to suit the needs of the culture and the storyteller. Burgess (2006) explains that digital storytelling combines skills, from the learned skills of computer use, and narrative rules, to more intuitive abilities such as performance of personal stories, combining audio and visual components, and developing an overall flow to story, the latter of these being gained through participation in social relationships and interaction

with various forms of media (Burgess, 2006). The experience of storytelling through technology becomes very much about the experience of the storytellers and their own connections or understandings of the way that their surrounding culture is represented through a variety of technological mediums.

Burgess (2006) and Robin (2008) write that the technologies of today have led to a modern consumer who is well versed in his or her own media creation; this “creative consumer” (Burgess, 2006, p. 201) is foundational to the new economy and the questioning of traditional forms of media. The creative consumer of the Western world is marked by unmitigated creativity that marks current labour and cultural citizenship parameters (Burgess, 2006). The opportunities that lie ahead to use technology lie not in the mere presence of the technology but in the creative application of the technology for individuals to engage their own decoding process of their surrounding culture and their personal experience.

Storytelling can flow through any medium, including written or oral words or additional forms that may include art, video, or other. There is not one correct method of storytelling, and no hierarchy exists within them. Within this growing definition and experience of storytelling, the social service practitioner obtains the opportunity to present a diversity of entry points for new storytellers to begin. Whether it be a striking subversive narrative, a basic uncovering of personal experience, the inert expressiveness of a new technology, or the chance to recognize a relatable experience or shared value with others, with the guiding support and feedback of practitioners, storytelling awakens awareness of the steadily turning conveyor belt.

By plan, this look at what is story is built on the premise of inclusion; though several different terms, definitions, and essential components have been used in the literature, there remain key elements that are consistently present. The striped tie of my father was the first one I

wore because it matched me and what I wanted to say; in the same way, each storyteller should have the freedom to find the storytelling approach that best matches his or her needs and his or her message. The variety of channels available for storytelling should be seen by practitioners as opportunities to help young people navigate their own stories. The key elements of story include an intended process of critical reflection, analysis of personal experiences, and ongoing connections made to cultural norms and structures, which together invariably lead to sharing and engagement with others. These encapsulate a consciousness of the conveyor belt, its existence and purpose. It recognizes that there exist other ties, other identities, other opportunities to try on and explore beyond the parameters of the belt. It includes the very questioning of the purposes of the conveyors and their connection to humanity. I have arrived at the point where I feel comfortable knotting together storytelling by any of the names and definitions given in this literature review and using them interchangeably to capture the key elements just described in a way that invites participation into storytelling and allows for deviances and abnormalities without losing the general conceptualization of what is story. The future of storytelling should be vibrant with all manner of interpretations and applications of the core but inclusive tenets outlined in this chapter.

Paisley Tie: Future Direction for Story

Hope, however, does not consist in crossing one's arms and waiting. As long as I fight, I am moved by hope; and if I fight with hope, then I can wait. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 92)

The tie is not even really paisley: that is just the closest description I can come up with to match it to a recognizable pattern. If I may attempt to further explain it, I would say that it is more of a 1970s-couch-pattern and material. It uses colours, materials, and patterns (if we can agree that "couch" is a pattern) that are not recognizable by today's tastes. It is arguably the most

visually attacking of all the ties. When it comes to fashion, ugly is ugly only if the wearer thinks it is. If the wearer is convinced that it is ugly, the fashion invites shame and ridicule. If the wearer wears the fashion with intention and purpose, not only does it become part of the wearer's identity, but it impressively catches the attention of onlookers. This paisley tie is a tie that tells a bold story and requires some courage. In time, some others will be wearing that same design, believing it matches something they have been missing. Most important, future styles will be based upon some of the most audacious of designs, and how we all behave may be changed because of it. The future directions for story that are presented here have been selected in order to provide a wide spectrum of possibilities. These may serve to enrich service providers with new perspectives on the value of story in their own practice or to directly borrow, mix, and apply to their communities. These practices already exist today to varying degrees of normal acceptance and may set the future styles for the way that communities are engaged through story. The examples of community-based research, mutual help, silent stories, and digital storytelling are provided here for practitioners to envision entry points for members of their communities to craft and tell their stories.

Community-Based Research

To engage a whole community is much like my paisley tie; it definitely requires courage, but the rewards can be something unique and very rewarding. Freire explains that:

Authentic education is not carried on by "A" *for* "B" or "A" *about* "B," but rather by "A" *with* "B," mediated by the world – a world which impresses and challenges both parties, giving rise to views or opinions about it. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 93)

By intentionally turning away from the banking style and embracing a humanist approach to education, Freire (1970/2000) argues for expanding awareness about the human condition and

collaborating as people to make change together; or as I would argue, collective storytelling. One such model that focuses on a whole-community approach to change is community-based research (CBR); used as a public health approach, it flows from social justice movements into a tool used to address social and economic conditions within communities (Horn, McCracken, Dino, & Brayboy, 2008). This approach is founded on the strengths that each partner group (practitioners, local leaders, community members, children and youth, researchers, et cetera) brings to the endeavour and builds a collaborative methodology that benefits from the unique skills and perspectives of all involved (Horn et al., 2008). “From the constructivist paradigm, there exist multiple, socially constructed realities that are influenced by social, cultural, and historical contexts” (Israel, Schulz, Parker, & Becker, 1998, p. 176), and community based research aims to uncover the various realities within a community.

Israel et al. (1998) point out that there is a multitude of similar approaches sometimes combined or interchanged, including community based, community centred, community involved, community collaborative, and community based participatory research; for simplicity, CBR will be the generic focus of this analysis. Inherent within CBR and like approaches is the embracement of critical thinking and reflection, viewing knowledge as relative to a given context, and that gives authority to personal experience instead of only to scientific evidence (Israel et al., 1998). By creating an inclusive approach that values the knowledge brought together by the various community partner groups, placing a premium on personal experience and critical reflection, CBR behaves in an authentic manner of storytelling and creating new narratives.

Israel et al. (1998) provide the following nine key principles of CBPR: (a) recognizes community as a unit of identity; (b) builds on strengths and resources within the community; (c)

facilitates collaborative, equitable partnership in all phases of the research; (d) integrates knowledge and action for mutual benefit of all partners; (e) promotes a colearning and empowering process that attends to social inequalities; (f) involves a cyclical and iterative process; (g) addresses health from both positive and ecological perspectives (h) disseminates findings and knowledge gained to all partners; and (i) involves long-term process and commitment. While the idea of community is perhaps most readily conceived as a geographic proximity, CBR applies to any form of community where there is a shared identity, which may span across a country or even around the globe (Israel et al., 1998). In addition to the strengths of this approach already offered, Israel et al. suggest that CBR empowers participants by validating their knowledge, bridging gaps in cultural divides, building trust between researchers (or service providers) and community members, connecting individuals with communities, developing theories out of social experience, increasing action capacity through partnership, increasing validity of research, promoting the relevance of action, and including marginalized populations in the examination and response to systems of exclusion. Horn et al. (2008) suggest that due to these characteristics, this type of approach is effective for reaching underserved populations and developing responses that are culturally applicable and sustainable beyond the initial intervention. CBR is in line with Freire, who writes:

Revolutionary leaders do not go to the people in order bring them a message of “salvation,” but in order to come to know through dialogue with them both their objective situation and their awareness of that situation – the various levels of perception of themselves and of the world in which and with which they exist. (Freire, 1970/2000, p. 95)

In their research, Horn et al. (2008) used community-based participatory research to partner with public health, two American universities, and rural communities in the United

States, including one tribe of Native Americans in North Carolina as a response to youth tobacco addiction within the tribe. Themes found within the identified problem included exploitation of ceremonial tobacco practices for economic (commercial tobacco) gain and history of Aboriginal exploitation by the dominant culture (Horn et al., 2008). Local knowledge became crucial, as it was determined that tobacco was held as sacred for both ceremonial and economic purposes, and led to reframing tobacco addiction as their key problem rather than tobacco itself (Horn et al., 2008). Out of the voices of the partners joined in the research, Horn et al. (2008) reported that a new youth addiction intervention program was developed, additional partnerships formed, shared interest in youth tobacco prevention and education emerged, and new tools and resources were developed within the community. Additionally, a key result was the increased self-sufficiency within the community to address future identified problems through new skills in grant writing, evaluation knowledge, financial resources, and tobacco education (Horn et al., 2008). Sharing the narratives of each of the partners, the researchers, the educators, the tribal leaders, and community members, a new narrative was able to be crafted in a way that embraced understanding individuals, communities, and social structures. The opportunity exists to mesh the individual narratives in creating a community narrative that leads into their collective futures.

Mutual Help

When looking at mutual help settings, including formal settings where participants are dealing with a mental health issue or less formal environments such as churches, Rappaport (1993) observed that patients and churchgoers “tended to incorporate into their own life stories elements of their respective community narrative” (p. 246). Rappaport suggests that mutual help settings should be considered “normative narrative communities” (p. 239), ensuring that personal stories are voiced and heard. By doing this, Rappaport suggests that narratives highlight the way

that communities function and how narratives change, and are changed by, sharing stories. When clients are enabled to reflect on and share their life stories in the mutual help context, they become less defined by professional norms and more by the “contexts in which people live their lives” (p. 241), where clients are not the recipients of service, but give and take in a communal balance (Rappaport, 1993). This way, more understanding is derived from the narratives as to how each person performs his or her identity within their social contexts, while at the same time holding in check “professional centrism” (p. 243) and stigmas such as client neediness or inferior competence to those outside of mutual help settings (Rappaport, 1993). Rappaport argues that if mutual help organizations can be viewed as “the stories people tell,” then the focus shifts away from diagnosis and treatment outcomes as defined by professionals and towards community belonging and social identities as judged by the members themselves.

By embracing normative narrative communities, Rappaport suggests that mutual help membership should be seen as volunteer communities; just like churches, schools, clubs, neighbourhoods, professional associations, and thus focused on the development of identity within social and community life across an entire lifespan. Embracing this point of view and these practices leads to a great depth of data and analysis of how communities function and how individual identity is formed against the backdrop of collective identity (Rappaport, 1993). Rappaport suggests this would also lead to changing professional practices of all sorts, including psychology, social work, pastoral counselling, and any other forms of counselling. Without a doubt, normative narrative communities would also impact teaching and education, challenging the banking theory and the overall power dynamic inherent in many school environments.

Silent Stories

Another practice that would serve to disrupt the status quo within a school environment is

what Kaufman (2008) calls a “silent discussion” (p. 169). Kaufman explains the purpose of the silent discussion is to provide students an opportunity to share their ideas in a safe space that breaks the silence within the classroom. To break the silence, the approach embraces the silence by engaging students in a completely silent, shared writing activity. The activity begins as each student responds in writing to a question posed to the group; when finished writing, each student passes his or her paper to the student next to him or her in a circle formation, and writes his or her own response; the pattern continues until several responses are completed and each paper finds its way to the original owner (Kaufman, 2008). Kaufman explains the benefits of the activity include: a “meditative ambiance” (p. 170) in the silence; a bank of cumulative knowledge based on individual experiences and points of view; validation of personal experience through shared experience; and equity of voices, as there is no competition to be heard.

Consequential of these benefits, Kaufman (2000) notes there exists the opportunity to use this format to take on challenging topic areas, such as gender, race, class, sexuality, ability, and religion. As Huey Li (2004) states: “Listening to the silences can facilitate a more in-depth understanding of silenced people’s agency in coping with and in negotiating with oppression” (p. 80). Chapman (2004) uses a philosophy of critical personal narrative (CPN) to engage similar activities. CPN is a response to the role that power plays within a school environment, where Chapman suggests that through the telling of stories of struggles against power, power can be understood (Chapman, 2004). The key components of CPN for Chapman are that it is critical of power structures and generation of knowledge and that it is deliberately personal to the author, connecting the personal with the political. At the same time, CPN knowingly makes use of narrative so that it relates to the audience through characters, context, and plot (Chapman, 2004). Inherent within CPN is that it is engaging on a human level, bridging the gap between storyteller

and receiver; there is not necessarily a neat ending, as CPN reflects real life and there are not always neat endings; and different meaning can be derived in the retelling of the same stories with different audiences. Chapman states that the goal for the reader is to explore his or her own understandings, also linking experience to theory, while inspiring the readers to action that resonates for them personally.

For Chapman, CPN can follow Kaufman's (2000) silent discussion format as a quiet written assignment shared in a group collective (what Chapman calls "Inkshedding," p. 101), but it can also be formed around an individual assignment, a group discussion, emails, or chat rooms. These practices function to promote critical reflection and creativity, explore power and knowledge, and engage various points of view (Chapman, 2004). They are examples of the way language and power can be played with to change the norms that reshape the classroom experience through personal narrative. They offer examples of what Huey Li (2004) calls "a conjoint effort to listen to the silences and to reclaim the silenced voices" (p. 79) in pursuit of a liberating pedagogy.

Digital Storytelling

I am young enough to be comfortable with modern technology as an everyday part of life and old enough to remember a time when many of the technologies we take for granted today were not very common, including personal computers. Intentionally using modern media to share stories has been going on since the early 1980s according to Robin (2000), due in large part to the fact that average people can share their stories in a relatively short amount of production time and with limited costs. Burgess (2006), pulling from the movement from the 1990s that was based on photo-taking with inexpensive equipment that intentionally challenged artistic norms (known as lomography), shares these rules for "anti-rules" photography (p. 205):

1. take your camera everywhere you go
2. use it any time—day and night
3. lomography is not an interference in your life, but a part of it
4. try the shot from the hip
5. approach the objects of your lomographic desire as close as possible
6. don't think
7. be fast
8. you don't have to know beforehand what you capture on film
9. afterwards either
10. don't worry about the rules. (Burgess, 2006, p. 205)

Burgess (2006) argues, however, that this form of “amateur” media creation that snubs dominant cultural norms actually requires a high degree of cultural understanding and technological ability. Instead, Burgess offers an alternative where the “ordinary” person can engage technology to find meaning. Burgess calls this “vernacular creativity” to induce the ordinary, or everyday creative practices of self-expression (p. 206). In vernacular creativity, the core is access, self-representation, and literacy rather than aesthetics or cultural opposition (Burgess, 2006). “Vernacular” represents the ordinariness of the subject and the commonality of understanding the shared subject; “creativity” marks the repositioning or mixing and matching vernaculars (or cultural resources) towards creating an impact to others by the innovative process (Burgess, 2006). According to Burgess, this repositioning takes place within and amongst commercial media (such as television) and traditional practice of communication (such as photography, scrapbooking, and storytelling) to reduce the divide between cultural production and everyday experience.

One form of vernacular creativity that Burgess (2006) offers is a specific form of digital storytelling, or community media movement, characterized as a set of workshops that engage ordinary people to create autobiographical short stories for the web or television. Burgess describes digital storytelling as the intentional amplification of “the ordinary voice” and a tool to legitimize vernacular creativity as a self-ruling and meaningful addition to popular culture (p. 207). The new format aims to connect to the humanity of the subject matter, focusing on “narrative accessibility, warmth, and presence” over innovation or technological experimentation (Burgess, 2006, p. 207). Digital storytelling connects significantly with personal experience, granting experience and competencies derived from everyday experience hierarchy over artistic credentials (Burgess, 2006). By comparison to older participants, Burgess observes that younger participants in digital storytelling workshops tend to embrace metaphorical imagery, casual language use, and more personal and emotional themes. Technology, then, provides young people a unique entry point into storytelling by providing a familiar or comfortable outlet to channel their creativity, critical thinking, and personal representations.

Robin (2008) suggests that digital storytelling is an opportunity for teachers to engage students in new learning opportunities, not only by engaging students in their own stories but by the teachers’ ability to create digital stories as a tool for introducing content or facilitating discussion that promotes understanding of material. Robin suggests that digital storytelling can also be used as a tool outside the realm of education as a way to document and share significant life events. Additionally, stories can be used to convey instructional material or to present material in new and interesting ways. Robin notes several key benefits to the incorporation of digital storytelling into pedagogy, referring to the following “21st Century skills” (p. 224) that allow students to become effective communicators:

- Digital literacy: the ability to communicate with an ever-expanding community to discuss issues, gather information, and seek help;
- Global literacy: the capacity to read, interpret, respond, and contextualize messages from a global perspective;
- Technology literacy: the ability to use computers and other technology to improve learning, productivity, and performance;
- Visual literacy: the ability to understand, produce, and communicate through visual images;
- Information literacy: the ability to find, evaluate, and synthesize information. (Robin, 2008, p. 224)

What it all adds up to is something unique; Burgess (2006) suggests that the digital story is a way to “become real” to others by way of shared experience and emotional connection (p. 211). In this way, the storyteller earns a sense of self-expression and authenticity that supersedes some of the tropes, nostalgia, and sentimentality that may deem them “uncool” or conservative (Burgess, 2006). Additionally, the format provides the means to social connectivity where ordinary people can work through an understanding of their own lives and share their experiences with others in a way that promotes empathy and understanding (Burgess, 2006). At the core, the storyteller gains an appreciation for his or her own story and validation for its sharing. Burgess argues that vernacular creativity is an opportunity to reshape the power of voice; to give rise to autobiographical narratives and the value of listening to them without second-guessing them for their lack of subversion of new media rules. It is the opportunity to engage with all voices in a more complete way.

From community-based research and mutual help groups to critical personal narrative and silent discussions, what becomes clear is that narratives are a powerful shared experience that continues to shape the individuals and the communities to which they belong. Freire (1970/2000) suggests:

We must never merely discourse on the present situation, must never provide the people with programs which have little or nothing to do with their preoccupations, doubts, hopes, and fears – programs which at times in fact increase the fears of the oppressed consciousness. (p. 96)

The section on future directions is only a starting point for the directions and places that we can go when we take the time to embrace speech with silence, the individual with the community, and the oppressor with the oppressed. It is about boldly wearing the ugliest ties we have in order to change the future of fashion sensibilities.

Flower-Print Tie: Challenges for Story

Sometimes our eyes need a moment to adjust to something new or unsure, like moving from dark to light or back again, like waking up in the morning, or like a figure in the distance that looks like one thing but as it gets closer becomes something clear and obviously different. No matter how near or far from it you can get, my father's flower-print tie could be the most invasive to the eyes of them all. In fact I would say the period that your eyes need to adjust to looking at it are the brief moments when the tie looks its best. In an unnatural concoction of a swirled burgundy background, covered by flowing vines of blue, green, and rust coloured flowers and leaves, the tie is not only in conflict with its surroundings, but it is at odds with itself. Still, no matter how it gets dressed up or down, covered by other fashions of the time, or

silenced altogether, it remains staunch in its composition. Like it or not, its message is consistent, clear, and unavoidable.

To this point, this analysis has primarily covered the present and future benefits of storytelling in contributing to educational and social communities. Here now is an opportunity to identify some challenges to the use of storytelling. These challenges are not exhaustive, but they constitute some of the key themes that underlie the risks of employing a storytelling approach, including being in opposition to the environment, feelings of inner conflict, uncertainty, fear, and more.

Risks of Critical Reflection

Brookfield (1995) draws attention to four major risks that pertain to critical reflection, which is a key component of storytelling. The first risk is what Brookfield calls “The Imposter Syndrome” (p. 229) and is characterized by a belief that we are not deserving of the achievements or positions attained, and that under scrutiny our lack of skills and abilities in comparison to others’ will be revealed. Sharing patterns of critical thought invites that analysis from others and can trigger imposter feelings (Brookfield, 1995). The second risk is “Cultural Suicide” (p. 235), when critically reflective opinions and perspectives are voiced and lead to becoming marginalized by peer groups (Brookfield, 1995). Brookfield identifies the third risk as “Lost Innocence” (p. 239). Lost innocence is the downtrodden emotions triggered by a change in perspective that challenge previously held core beliefs; it “is the gradual realization that the dilemmas of teaching have no ultimate solution” (Brookfield, 1995, p. 239). The fourth risk is “Roadrunning” (p. 241), where enthusiasm found from critical reflection and voice carries past the solid ground previously provided by unquestioned norms (Brookfield, 1995). This can lead to feelings of insecurity, isolation, fear, and disengagement from further critical thought

(Brookfield, 1995). While these are all significant risks that should be considered appropriately, one common solution that Brookfield provides is to continue in critical thought, continue challenging personal values and rationale for practice, and continue finding personal voice. In this way there will be an intentional linking of the personal with practice, there will be opportunities to rebuild social ties and supports, and critical thinking will be role modeled for others to gain from (Brookfield, 1995).

Hegemonic Narratives

While we know that counternarratives can be used to challenge the status quo, Bell (2003) describes that narrative can also be used to uphold hegemony. Bell suggests that these narratives can be used to reaffirm “White goodness and innocence” (p. 14) while deflecting attention from systems of inequality by portraying false progress. This can result in narratives that depict Whites as “innocent bystanders” (p. 14) or as victims of policies such as affirmative action (Bell, 2003). Bell argues that one predominant narrative is that of “colour-blindness” (p. 15), where dominant groups claim not to see colour at all, recreating narratives that ignore inequality and support the good nature of the dominant group. Ewick and Silbey (1995) warn that hegemonic narratives have the capacity to weave their way into individual narratives and recreate themselves over and over. The retelling of personal and social narratives serves as a means of social control (dictating what is right or wrong), as a way to “colonize consciousness” and subdue alternatives (Ewick & Silbey, 1995). They are effective in these aims, according to Ewick and Silbey, because the stories are received as truth and protected from debate. Both Bell and Ewick and Silbey support that the best response is to continue to cultivate counternarratives by representatives of subordinate and dominant groups that link personal experience to social practices and question the validity of those structures.

Community-Based Research

While community-based research boasts a strong appeal, it is not a perfect system and it has its share of challenges. Israel et al. (1998) provide several examples, including: challenges developing community partnerships, methodological issues, and broader social, political, economic, institutional, and cultural challenges. The most commonly cited challenge according to Israel et al. is a lack of trust and respect; the authors note that researchers should endeavour to continually earn their trustworthiness and not take it for granted at any time. Unequal distribution of power is another specific challenge offered by Israel et al., which is often steeped in history of groups, their previous interactions, or established hierarchies within groups. Israel et al. also suggest that time is a key challenge, as building trust takes significant time, working through processes, sharing in democratic methods, and problem solving all take time to deal with in a community-based approach. Israel et al. recommend that researchers should recognize the additional time community-based research would need going into it and that such projects should be made a priority once begun. Given the sensitive nature of the sharing of stories within community-based research, these recommendations seem just the tip of the iceberg.

Digital Storytelling

Robin (2008) outlines that one challenge of technology occurs when it is left to rest on its own laurels when the simple provision of technology is believed to be enough to change the way that teachers teach and learners learn. The challenge, then, is gaining an understanding of how technology can be used effectively in pedagogical practice. Robin notes the need to advocate for a shift from supplying technology to focus on creating policies and practices that allow educators to get the most out of technology in connecting their students to learning opportunities. Robin states that with the shifting nature of technology, especially the latest shift to a highly user-

generated internet, educators do not have the opportunity to gain or maintain skills and confidences to exploit technology for teaching purposes. Sadik (2008) suggests that teachers have not received appropriate training on meaningful integration of technology-based approaches, leading to teacher struggles of meshing technology with classroom practice. The result is that there is not yet one agreed upon theoretical framework for educators to turn to that provides for how to make best use of technology (Robin, 2008). However, there does seem to be growing consensus that technology is effective when applied to higher order thinking and reflection (Robin, 2008), but that ultimately technology, as we have seen with native narratives, will be shaped by their context and their users for their greatest benefit.

The telling of our stories will come with challenges. Like any tie that we put on, there will be trepidation that it is somehow mismatched. Important to remember is that our stories, like our ties, belong to us; they are part of a composite reflection of our inside selves and the ways that we find meaning in the world we belong to. They exist to be shared, and in being shared will breed connection to ourselves and to other members of our communities.

Findings

Now when I meet new people I try to let them in to aspects of my personal narrative, such as family life, or career choices, or love of sport, so that we can begin to find a common ground. I appreciate Labov's (2000) breakdown of narrative that gives a structural understanding of how it works to communicate with an audience; however, in his use of reportability, evaluation, and credibility, these three especially stood out to me because they speak to authenticity, or the ability to portray a story (or storyteller) as real (or honest). From my experience, this basic foundation is what supersedes all other structures of storytelling. The challenge is for the narrator to find his or her own truth and make connections with his or her

own authenticity such that he or she can share it with others. It is part of the reason I appreciate the style of Native narrative, because I think there needs to be a freedom within storytelling structures that allows for people to find their authenticity based on their histories and experiences, their interests and skills. As Connelly and Clandinin (1990) write, it is not the role of the narrative to neatly outline a cause and effect relationship within a story, but to use details to draw in the audience in a way that is relatable and leads them back to an examination of the whole picture that they are now a part of.

I sat in front of a small room of colleagues, though most of them were strangers really. Most faces I had never seen before; some I had seen but didn't know the names associated. Others I had met once or twice before, but had engaged in primarily official conversations about our shared work. Only one other person in the room would have been able to provide my first and last names on command, and even though she didn't know what was coming yet, having her there brought me some comfort. I retrieved a worn-out basketball from under my chair and introduced it as the one that I used as a kid. It was worn to the threads because I used it so much. While there was turmoil in my childhood home and family, there was freedom and another kind of family at the basketball court at the end of my street. I had brought the ball with me as a way for this group of strangers to see me as a person first, with history, emotions, experiences, and purpose. After that they were welcome to see me as a colleague, or just as the person navigating the discussion for the morning, if they wanted it that way. The basketball court was my other persona. At home I felt confined, I felt isolated even with a full house, I felt disconnected, I felt like I was enduring something. On the court, I was good at something, some days even the best at something. I connected with others, and we shared in wins and losses, high-fives, yelling at each other to play harder, and sticking up for each other when competitions got fierce. For every

minute I was on that court, I had purpose. The distressed threads that remain on my basketball today are evidence that I stayed on that court through rain and shine, summer heat, and even darkness. My basketball was a way to share in a moment of conversation that I was a person with personal experience and to explain that the personal experience directly connects to the role I play as an adult, working with young people to help them find their place to belong.

One of the main reasons I appreciate Brookfield (1995) is because of his acknowledgement of the courage that it takes to face the risk of sharing your story, recognizing how imposter syndrome, lost innocence, cultural suicide, and roadrunning work, making it just a little easier to put your hand out into a room of strangers and feel confident that somebody will reach back. In particular I have found that the offering of imperfection through story, often begets humanity and understanding from the audience. Freire (2005), directly addressing teachers, offers these additional insights: to be bold in expressing and standing behind your feelings, instead of taking on a false confidence behind the lines of discourse. Freire suggests that sharing fear with the students, identifying it as a human right, and acknowledging vulnerability within the role of teacher are positive steps to not only break down barriers between teacher–student relationships, but also to build better practice as teachers by gradually overcoming these fears (Freire, 2005).

I make it sound easy, but I was scared. Not scared to talk about my family, or alcoholism, and the impacts of it, not scared to share about basketball and the difference it made in my life. But scared just to bring my insides to the outside; what if what I was presenting ended up looking like that flower-print tie: offensive to the senses, and so different from the expected norm of what it is to be a “professional.” But instead of a gruesome tie, this was my life; things I had never said before suddenly echoing in my own ear while I said them. My voice cracked, and

more than once I needed to remind myself that I could talk and still breathe at the same time. Really it was for me as much as for them. I think we all need reminders that we are people and that the purposes we create for ourselves are crafted from a lifetime (however long or short) of experiences and decisions. There I was, lucky to be able to tell everyone part of how I came to have my purpose, share it with the group, and invite them to join with me, as a colleague, and as a person.

What Muncey (2010) calls the “missing story” (p. 6) is the displacement of our own narratives cultivated through our lived experiences. The missing story is replaced by cultural stories that have become commonplace to take on and perform, as though they are easier to live out than our own lives (Muncey, 2010). The missing story can also be expropriated by research evidence when narrative is not seen for its research value. McLaren (1998) offers three steps which I believe could be useful for combating the missing story and counter the growth of fear by offering the development of subversive narratives: (a) help students identify power dynamics within their social lives while learning to question previously accepted norms, (b) help students develop the skills to make judgments about the merit or detriment of those power relations, and (c) help students affirm their judgments by helping them find and label historical and modern examples of similar power dynamics. The ability to question these cultural narratives offers a gateway back to the development of our own personal narratives. It is Freire’s (1970/2000) decoding, moving from concrete to the personal and back and forth repeatedly until we uncover some of the missing story of ourselves. Strategies such as community-based research, mutual help, silent stories, and digital storytelling are just some of the options to explore. They are each a fashion to try on to see if it matches, if it fits, if it reflects what is on the inside, and to share with others.

What does it feel like to share a story? Truthfully it feels a bit strange. Strange in that it is so simple it almost feels like something is missing. It is as though not sharing stories is what takes the work, takes the effort, takes the fortitude; not sharing stories takes justifying, it takes supporting documentation, and a second reader to ensure consistency. Sharing just is. While it is simple, it is far from simplistic. It takes an ability to deconstruct the complexity of being alive and interaction with other human beings on a continual basis across time, perspectives, and surroundings. It takes a certain courage to step into unknown territory and bring to life something that has not been before, and giving your experiences to others to work with. There is the risk that sometimes the listeners will let it drop to the ground with a thud, like when you hand a toddler a ball and it drops to the ground between his or her feet because the child has never seen one before and does not know what to do with it. On occasion, there is a risk that someone will pick it up and throw it back, feeling somehow put out by the personal gift. The large percentage of people left over seem to undergo a change; the before-and-after change is like turning from stranger to friend, as though we know each other now, have history, have connections and things in common, or questions to ask, or just a desire to say hello because we are sure to meet again. Whether I am talking now with adults or teenagers, strangers or colleagues, I look to invite them into a story of mine. I pick and choose which stories and when, and how much of the story to tell, but it has become almost as fundamental a custom as a handshake to show that I mean no harm. What I have found is that this is the simplicity of sharing a story; it the easiest way to make a connection between people.

Conclusion

I wear my father's ties as a reminder to myself that I have something to say. I'm not one to keep a lot of stuff, but after my father died my mom offered his ties to me, and they were so ugly

that I had to hang on to them! How could I ever hide or forget that I have a story to tell if I was wearing such an ugly piece of historic fabric right down the middle of my chest? Recently, standing in front of a group of teenagers, everyone was kind enough not to say anything about the tie I was wearing; or possibly no words could be found to describe what they were seeing. I said to them that I believe they have something to say. I know this, I told them, because I have something to say. I told them about how it felt to grow up in a house that was uncomfortable, and immediately the heads starting nodding. They barely knew my name or why I was there, and in an instant our relationship changed. We were in this together. We were people working together, instead of a classroom with students and an adult expert.

Polka-dot, striped, paisley, and flowers; these four ties are reminders of Why Story, What Is Story, the Future Directions of Story, and the Challenges of Story. They connect my personal experience and positioning in the world in a way that has allowed me to be reflective and to navigate through oncoming situations and experiences with greater mastery. This literature review, combined with my findings through the process of my research, has been an exercise in burrowing: articulating a depth of context and developing essential characters' points of view. The restorying of Chapter Three is my opportunity to still more thoughtfully engage my personal experience and surrounding culture to make recommendations for the future practice of storytelling.

CHAPTER THREE: RESTORYING

Restorying is a return to the present with an eye to the future; it is looking at the story description and meaning to reconstruct the lesson of the story and the life values of the storyteller (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). It fits the earlier discussion of Native narrative, where meaning is continually in development and changes based on life experiences. It is an opportunity to continue the decoding conversation of Freire and investigate the way that the world is understood. Here I use restorying as a platform to present my recommendations for future practice of storytelling.

Within these pages live two narratives: one on the value of narrative, the other on my own narrative account of the intersection of my life with my father's. The writing of narrative has several key points. I have intentionally shared with you intimate details of my life's experiences and how I have made meaning from them. I have shared this with you, not because you needed to know them or because I needed to tell you. The truth of the matter is that what I have written, I have written for me alone. The stories I have put to words and the framing I have given them, I have done for my own benefit, for my own meaning and reflection. But my intention for writing was always so that it would be shared and that others would find value through their own interpretations, their own intentional uncovering. To enhance opportunities and effectiveness for storytelling, I offer two key recommendations to move forward with: connecting theory to practice, and the use of story as subversive narrative.

Connecting Theory and Practice

Freire (1970/2000) suggested the perpetual movement between the concrete and the abstract aspects of who we are in the world around us to keep us thinking, or decoding, how we understand that position. The Lewinian model (Kolb, 1984; Figure 1) illustrates a tidy process

that expands concrete experience and abstract conceptualization with active experimentation and reflective observation. Baxter Magolda and King (2004) bring a great deal of depth to the notion of self-authorship through the developmental foundations of learning outcomes (Figure 2). The overlapping aspects of epistemological foundation, interpersonal foundation, and intrapersonal foundation fan together to contribute to the central tenet of self-authorship (Baxter Magolda & King, 2004). Leaning heavily on this theoretical basis, I offer my own model for storytelling (Figure 3) that attempts to advance storytelling as an inclusive practice. Titled the Kaleidoscope Model of Practical Storytelling, the shape of the model itself resembles looking through a child's kaleidoscope. More significantly, like the perspective within a kaleidoscope, the model has no beginning and no end and continually turns within itself, creating new experience and understanding.

Kaleidoscope Model for Practical Storytelling

I have added my own model to the discussion not because the other models cited here are incomplete or lacking in their applicability. Rather, my main purpose in sharing this additional model is to take what I consider to be rich theoretical foundations and build a bridge toward practice that is inviting and inclusive. The key differences from theoretical models to the kaleidoscope model of practical storytelling include simplifying language to make it more accessible to wider (in particular, teenage) audiences; opening up the entry points to the practical application of the model in order to promote its relevant use and relationship to lived experience; and making an explicit connection to storytelling so to offer a tangible experience to practitioners and the populations with which they work. The model I proffer borrows the familiar overlapping circles used by Baxter Magolda and King (2004), for the reason that processes of thinking and understanding can flow in any number of directions, even circling themselves and crossing over

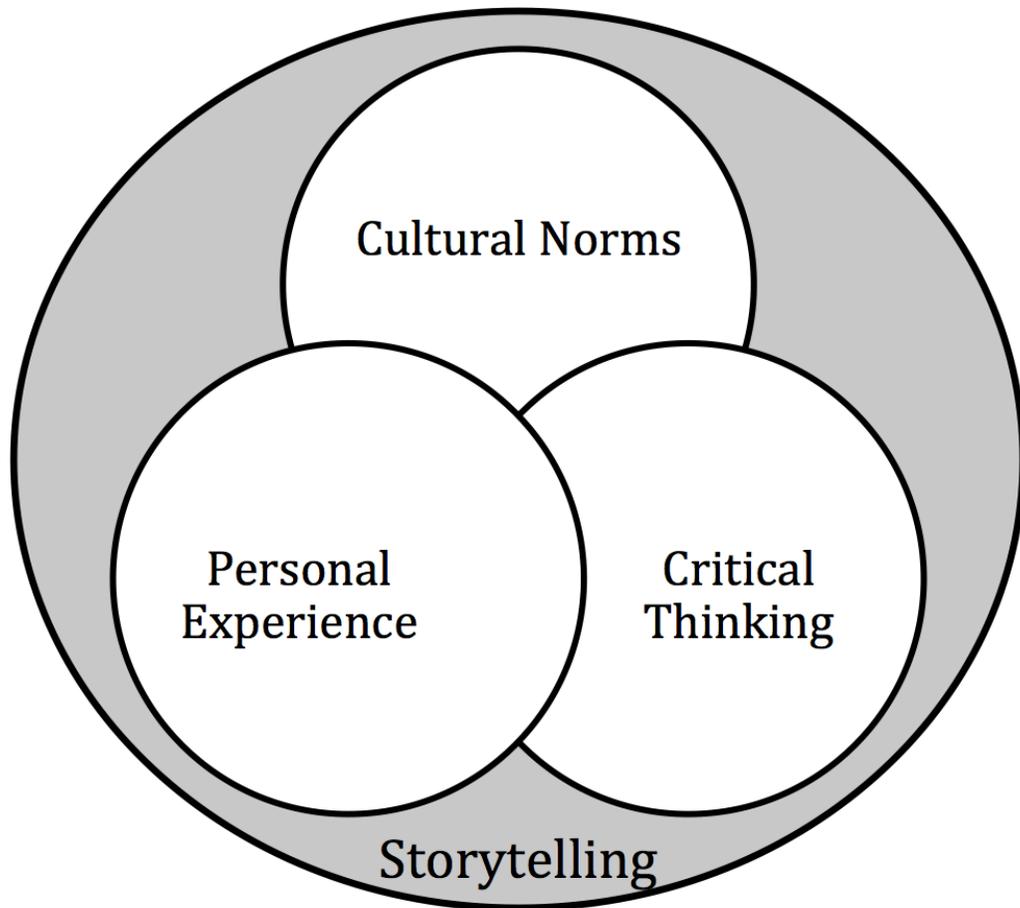


Figure 3. Kaleidoscope model of practical storytelling.

onto other spheres of processing. Where Baxter Magolda and King label their foundations epistemological, interpersonal, and intrapersonal, I significantly simplified this language to make it more accessible to the populations targeted by this research. Stemming from Friere's (1970/2000) descriptions of concrete and abstract, I have chosen the labels personal experience and cultural norms, and linked them with critical thinking. Whether teenager, or supporting adult service provider, I believe a newcomer to storytelling can reasonably relate to these terms and find an entry point for beginning his or her story.

We are all a story away from each other. When a person near to you dies, it is an absolutely grievous time. But when the time is right, it is also an unparalleled opportunity to remember that you are still alive. Losing my father was a time when I was able to gain a connection to myself, to friends and family closest to me, and to the beauty and grime of the world I passed through every day. Storytelling is a similar experience, and the chances I have had recently to share these stories with friends and total strangers has reminded me that I am very much alive and the main obstacle separating us from each other as communities of people is the opportunity to share a story.

Entry into storytelling can follow Giroux's (1979) notion of micro objectives, or productive knowledge, and is characterized by the defined intake and organization of data. A new storyteller can find an entryway to his or her story by organizing events, both historical and personal, and can begin to integrate macroobjectives. A macroobjective, or directive knowledge, includes the application of practical knowledge to make connections to broader society (Giroux, 1979). The collision of personal experience and cultural norms, the abstract and the concrete, even as microobjectives, I believe helps the storyteller uncover his or her own macroobjectives and make meaningful connections between him/herself and wider society. As McLaren (1998)

suggests, the dialectical method of thinking on both micro- and macroobjectives fosters within the storyteller an understanding of his or her own acquisition of knowledge and skills to scrutinize the foundations of political, economic, and social society.

There's more than one way to put on pants. By the time my father died, I was already used to living differently. Watching his struggle with alcoholism over all those years was the first time I was forced to look at myself and my position in the world. As a teenager, I could not simply pretend that the events of my home life were different and disconnected from the choices I had to make in my friendships and lifestyle. Even at that time, I had to critically reflect upon my experiences and their cultural implications and make decisions about how I would lead my life. My choice then was to live differently. My choice today is to live differently and encourage others to find their own way of putting on pants.

Critical Thinking (So What?)

The third sphere links personal experience and cultural norms in critical thinking. In plain terms, this is an opportunity for storytellers to make thoughtful meaning of their experiences and their connections to the wider society; it tells why the story matters, or makes its reportability explicit to the audience (Labov, 2000). Critical thinking answers Labov's "so what?" for the audience and is the storytellers' opportunity to develop their authentic selves (Brookfield, 1995). The integration of personal experience with cultural norms by way of critical thinking can be effectively seen through the question McLaren (1998) posed of his students: "What is it that society has made of me that I no longer want to be" (p. 236). I have integrated rephrasing of this same question into my own practice, and I have witnessed teenagers and practitioners take fast steps towards expressing their narratives, even finding common ground in unexpected places. The ability to articulate meaning, or answering "so what," through critical thinking on personal

experience and cultural norms gives the storyteller that feeling of empowerment with a palpable message that he or she can share and further critically reflect on. The benefits of critical thinking have already been made clear in this document, but worth repeating is that the formation and expression of our authentic selves is itself a counterhegemonic action (Brookfield, 1995) which I believe will also speak to the teenage and adult populations who are the audience for this research.

These are not my father's ties. Although they once belonged to him, they are now mine. I wear them as a method of reflecting who I am and what I want to say about myself and the culture I participate within. The fact that my father is rooted within these ties is no accident; his stories are part of my stories, and I want to share them all; the uglier the better. These ties no longer represent his stories; they represent my stories.

Critically reflecting upon our lived experiences and the experiences of those around us is an important step in deciphering the meaning to the way that we live as individuals and as societies. The ongoing relationship between ourselves and our place in the world is part of the ever evolving narratives we have to tell.

Uncovering Storytelling

Where Baxter Magolda and King (2004) place self-authorship at the core of the overlapping foundation, I have chosen to refer to similar concepts to self-authorship as storytelling, and to place it as a broad sphere enveloping the others. My main reasoning for this difference is again simplicity, in order to move theory closer towards practice. I believe that a story is not just story when it meets several conditions; rather, for the populations this research targets, by looking at cultural norms, personal experience, or critical thinking, either as a collated process or as isolated steps, story is taking shape. This model lives out the expansive definition

of storytelling reviewed in the literature of what is story, allowing as many points of entry as possible for the newcomers to storytelling. Placement of the outer sphere explicitly indicates that storytelling is a living, developing organism. It flows through the concrete and abstract at different rhythms for different people at different times, and no story has an end as it becomes pieces of other stories.

Underneath his name, engraved on my father's headstone at his grave, it reads: "A Son, A Brother, A Husband, A Father, A Friend. His memory lives on in those who love him." My father's alcoholism slogged on for decades, but the time from the prognosis to this death could be counted in days. In my mind, alcoholism had created a shroud of secrecy and silence, not only for my family but for the man himself, and so I offered the suggestion for the engraving above my father's grave. In the moment of finality, when his life came to an end, I felt an aching need to tie him to the rest of us, like a balloon tied to a child's wrist. I wanted it to be clear that while there were some obvious storylines to my father's life, there are many more needing to be acknowledged through the relationships that he held with us; I wanted it abundantly clear that in his life and in his death, he was not alone. More important, I wanted it to be known that his death was not the end, but the beginning of the stories that tie his to mine. Since then I have been slowly telling and retelling my story, keeping his memory alive for those who love him and for the newest and littlest members of my family who never got to meet him. I have been telling my story as a way to invite others into mine and as a bridge to find their own.

The Kaleidoscope Model for Practical Storytelling is a reminder that with every way that we engage with the world, with others, and with ourselves, we are developing our personal narratives. By making meaning from our experiences and our relationships with each other, we

have the ability to live more authentic lives that reflect who we are and help us to challenge stagnant norms so that we can pursue who we want to be as people.

Storytelling as Subversive Narrative

I place an emphasis on engaging teenagers and service providers in the practice of storytelling and personal narrative primarily because I believe this population in particular is largely and unnecessarily disconnected from their authentic selves. Making entry into storytelling easier by embracing the practice, expanding the channels for practice, and sharing with others in the community, this population can experience internal identity development and meaning, critical analysis of the social structures around them, and human connectivity with each other. With those skills and perspectives in hand, I believe that storytelling can be used effectively to challenge the status quo of culture through subversive narratives.

In my view, the opportunity to share stories is itself a subversive narrative. By having the occasion to bring to the surface our personal experiences, we have the chance to see ourselves in others and draw attention to the social environment that shapes our interactions and behaviours. What is often overlooked is that we all benefit from, and are dependent upon, social inequalities for our own sense of security (McLaren, 1998). We see those who struggle or fail within the existing social structure as deficient, unskilled, or unintelligent, without noticing the function of the structure itself or the benefit of that structure to others (McLaren, 1998). Shaping and telling our stories bucks the established expectation to follow and fulfill decided-upon expectations. Through our stories we can uncover meaning, purpose, and personal direction, while developing understanding of others. Accomplishing this as a norm fits McLaren's (1998) additional suggestions that change requires respect by teachers for the skills and abilities of students who are disadvantaged, and addressing the structural system of poverty instead of attempting to

change the attitudes of the impoverished working class (p. 153). Storytelling is partly a tool for change that challenges existing norms and provides an alternative narrative. As McLaren (1998) writes, the goal is not to point to individuals or groups to identify blame but rather to bring to the surface the ideologies, structures, and myth that perpetuate our cultural norms and prevent change from taking place.

McLaren (1998) points out that even though schools alone cannot reconstruct society, they must take up the charge to shift towards recreating themselves such that they empower students over their decisions and their futures instead of confining them to the conveyor belt of predefined social status. If McLaren is right and part of the role teachers and parents have to play is to confront structures of oppression that perpetuate inequality within education, then storytelling could be a key asset to connect adults and teenagers with each other to challenge hegemonic practices. I agree with McLaren that to make real social change take place will require a significant shift, including social planning, government policies that support equality, enhanced training for teachers and other professionals, and much, much more. However, I also believe that storytelling is an opening itself to empower people to understand their experiences and their connections to broader social and cultural functions.

The value of narrative inquiry is “a process of collaboration involving mutual storytelling and restorying as the research proceeds” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 4). I have shared my stories because these elements are a part of me; to deny them would be to create a work that is incomplete for me as the writer and for you as the reader. By sharing details of our experiences, we create an opportunity to build bridges towards understanding each other; providing contexts invites the reader to participate in the narrative and to find relevant connections to his or her own experiences (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990). Part of the hope of sharing stories of myself is to

invite you to ask yourself, “what do [I] make of it for [my] teaching (or other) situation?” (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 8). The recommendations offered here are explicitly given so that readers can ask themselves how their practice can be augmented through their application. I was long unsure how I would know when this work would be done, when I had put down everything that I should. The fact that I consider this project now complete is simply because I have given it what I can at this time, and I am ready to tell and share new stories through other channels. What you do next with these and your own stories is entirely up to you.

Conclusion

The fear must be a natural one, or at least that is what I tell myself. That when I tell people this story, about my family, and about my father, that that is it, that is my story, and I will not be allowed to be anything but the one story. We are all made up of stories. If they are really authentic stories, where personal experience collides with cultural norms, while critical thinking agitates the two, then the stories that we have to tell will be linked invariably into one grand narrative. Without a doubt, my father’s story impacted the development of my story on a daily basis. But so too did my interactions with my mother, my sisters, and my grandmother who lived with us. Basketball to me is the dozens of people I spent day after day and year after year with in my adolescence, and a story unto itself. There are stories about school and its teachers and my grades, about my friends, about my family culture, about the colour of my skin, about the places I have lived and traveled to, about my social class, about the jobs I have taken on and the ways I have volunteered my time, about my gender and sexuality, about the people I look up to, the ones I have let down, and the ones I try to raise up. The only way I know to overcome the fear I have of being read as just one story is to keep telling them all. If I can engage a constant conversation between who I am and how I see the world around me, then I have only one story; but it is one

story that is linked over and over again with itself and the world I live in, and that continues to take on new twists and chapters. All I can do is wear my story down the middle of my chest, just like the absolutely hideous ties that I get to wear anytime I need a reminder that I have a story to tell.

EPILOGUE

If you have made it to this section of the project, then there is something within it that has stayed with you. It is part of the greatness and simple usefulness of storytelling that when we have the opportunity to find our own personal relevance within a subject, we are able to make more from it.

You have come this far and I do not mean to cheat you on the very last page of this project. I have relayed to you almost everything that I right now know about storytelling and its usefulness as a tool to empower practitioners and teenagers alike, and to build connections between people, and between those people and the surrounding culture they comprise. I have made to you my suggestions as to *why* storytelling, layering intentional uncovering, critical thought, and reflection, and stories as humanizing. I have done my best to explain *what is* storytelling, covering meaning of a name, subversive Narrative, decoding, developing a model, structure, breach and accrual, developing another model, native narrative, and digital storytelling. The *future directions* of storytelling have been outlined, providing real examples of community-based research, mutual help, silent stories, and digital storytelling; and the *challenges* of storytelling have been shared, including risks of critical thinking, hegemonic narratives, digital storytelling, and community based research. Throughout these lenses, you have come to know elements of my story: stories I told so that I could better understand the purposefulness of what I had to say, and stories told so that you might find pieces of meaning so that you could find what you want to say.

I restoried it all and provided you with a model to apply to your own work. The Kaleidoscope Model of Practical Storytelling (Figure 3) is a culmination of research, practice,

and personal narratives coming together to create a tidy closet of neatly ordered fashions so that you can bare the personal creativity and madness that fills each of us every day.

I said that I do not want to cheat you now, but the humble end of this story is simply to suggest that together we have reached just the beginning of your story.

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