

LEARNING THROUGH REPRESENTATION: YOUNG CHILDREN'S MEANING-MAKING
VIA NARRATIVES

by

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ABSTRACT

This study investigates how young children (five-year-olds) describe and represent their understanding of experience, identity, relationship and place through oral and visual stories that engage them with the real and imaginary worlds.

Narrative inquiry enabled me to uncover unrecognized and taken for granted experiences of young children. Through narrative inquiry, children's experiences were unearthed and translated into stories that led me to inquire about who they are and where they are. The analysis presented in this study was drawn from narratives in play and artworks of five-year-old children living in Vancouver, British Columbia.

In order to represent my complex research inquiry, I have composed the dissertation as a tapestry of different kinds of text, including children's play transcriptions and artwork, personal journal writings, reflections, and interpretations (written in italics). In this research project, young children represented their understanding of the world through diverse meaning-making processes. In their narratives, children illustrated that they construct and establish their identities as moral, social, cultural, and gendered beings. While crossing and reconfiguring different contexts, children were awakened to the possibilities of developing identity. Children reconstructed and reimagined their own emergent forms of identity by living and reliving fantasy stories and natural conversations. This study argues that narrative practices in young children are social, moral and cultural practices. Young children's narrative constructions embrace fabricated

complexity and tensions as well. While being with children, I found that cultivating a meaning-making practice is vital to the formation of one's identity.

This research investigates the significance of narrative in young children's understandings and interpretations of their worlds. This information is crucial in understanding the role that storytelling and narrative can play in education. This study invites educators (such as myself, a Korean early childhood education scholar) to revise and develop narrative-centred curriculum for young children to reflect on their living perspectives.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

Abstract.....	ii
Table of Contents.....	iv
List of Figures.....	vi
Acknowledgments	ix
PROLOGUE.....	3
CHAPTER 1 INVITATION: EVOKING AN INQUIRY.....	16
1.1. History of the Research	17
1.2. Research Purpose.....	19
CHAPTER 2 REVIEW OF UNDERPINNING LITERATURE: RUMINATIONS AND AWAKENINGS	28
2.1. Conventional Understanding	28
2.1.1. Narrative as Representation, Narrative as Generative Action.....	28
2.1.2. Children’s Representation through Narrative.....	32
2.1.3. Children’s Play and Art as a Narrative.....	36
2.2. Personally Established Understanding	46
2.2.1. The Image of the Child.....	46
2.2.2. The Generative Significance of Narrative in Early Childhood Research...	46
CHAPTER 3 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY.....	50
3.1. Narrative and Conversation as an Inquiry	50
3.2. Pilot Study—Observations and Interviews.....	57
3.3. The Research Focus and Questions	58
3.4. Watching, Listening, and Exploring.....	60
3.4.1. Defining the Participants	60
3.4.2. Use of Qualitative Data Collection.....	62
3.4.3. Representing Stories into Text.....	65
CHAPTER 4 CONTEXTUALIZATION OF CHILDREN’S REPRESENTING	72

4.1. Surface of the Landscape.....	72
4.2. Going Underground: Listening and Responding.....	77
CHAPTER 5 ENGENDERING AND PROVOKING	80
CHAPTER 6 CROSSING TEXTS AND RE-CONFIGURATION.....	120
CHAPTER 7 RE-CONSTRUCTION/ RE-IMAGINATION.....	158
CHAPTER 8 NARRATIVE, PLAY, ART, AND SELF: INTERSECTING WORLDS.....	192
8.1. An Artful Tool of “Meaning-Making”	198
8.2. Pedagogical Attentiveness: A Window of Configuration/ Construction.....	205
8.3. Composing Intertextual Links	211
CHAPTER 9 CONCLUDING REMARKS: MY PILGRIMAGE TO THE CHILDREN’S INVITATION	220
EPILOGUE.....	230
Beginning at the End	230
Be (com) ing a Transformative Narrative Inquirer.....	234
REFERENCES	237
APPENDIX A: LETTER OF INITIAL CONTACT (PILOT STUDY).....	249
APPENDIX B: PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT FORM (PILOT STUDY) ..	250
APPENDIX C: PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM (PILOT STUDY).....	253
APPENDIX D: SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (PILOT STUDY).....	256
APPENDIX E: LETTER OF INITIAL CONTACT (MAIN STUDY).....	257
APPENDIX F: PARENT/GUARDIAN INFORMED CONSENT FORM (MAIN STUDY)...	258
APPENDIX G: TEACHER PARTICIPANT INFORMED CONSENT FORM (MAIN STUDY)	261
APPENDIX H: SAMPLE OF INTERVIEW QUESTIONS (MAIN STUDY)	264

LIST OF FIGURES

Figure 4.1	Art Table Setting	75
Figure 4.2	Art Table Setting	75
Figure 4.3	Free Artwork Setting.....	76
Figure 4.4	House Centre Setting.....	76
Figure 5.1	Discussing	88
Figure 5.1	Drawing.....	88
Figure 5.3	Our Heart.....	89
Figure 5.4	My Bear.....	107
Figure 5.5	My Doggy	108
Figure 5.6	Mommy and Me.....	109
Figure 5.7	Cleaning Teeth	110
Figure 5.8	Cleaning Teeth	111
Figure 5.9	Cleaning Teeth	111
Figure 5.10	Cleaning Teeth	112
Figure 5.11	Wonderland	114
Figure 5.12	Myself.....	115
Figure 5.13	Love.....	115
Figure 5.14	Picnic.....	116
Figure 5.15	Helens Mountain	117
Figure 5.16	On the Way to School	118
Figure 6.1	Sorry, We are Closed	125
Figure 6.2	Gondola Making.....	128
Figure 6.3	Easter Bunny	145
Figure 6.4	Easter Bunny	145
Figure 6.5	Easter Bunny	146

Figure 6.6. Easter Bunny	146
Figure 6.7 Easter Bunny	147
Figure 6.8 Easter Bunny	147
Figure 6.9 I Love You, Mom.....	150
Figure 6.10 My Teachers.....	152
Figure 6.11 My Family	152
Figure 6.12 My Friends	153
Figure 6.13 Gold Fish.....	154
Figure 6.14 He is Breathing.....	154
Figure 6.15 He has a Friend.....	155
Figure 7.1 Spring	169
Figure 7.2 Volcano	170
Figure 7.3 Animal Farm	170
Figure 7.4 Electric Station	171
Figure 7.5 Electric Station	171
Figure 7.6 The Flowing Electricity	172
Figure 7.7 Linked Electric Station	172
Figure 7.8 I am Playing with My Toys	177
Figure 7.9 My Barbie	177
Figure 7.10 My Hot Wheel	178
Figure 7.11 Decoration of Children's Drawings	178
Figure 7.12 The Picture Book of Friendship	182
Figure 7.13 In the Playground	186
Figure 7.14 Beach.....	187
Figure 7.15 Happy Flowers	187
Figure 7.16 My Dream House	188
Figure 8.1 Children's Representation	193

Figure 8.2 Reflective Understanding.....217

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Listen and Feel...

Listen,
Listen to the children's stories
"We can make a difference"

Listen,
Listen to the heart of children
Feel and draw children's worlds
In a diverse world
In a dynamic fluidity and complexity of emergent forms
With purity
Authenticity
Representation of the thread of experiences

Intermingled, interwoven stories
Evoke,
Provoke,
Invoke
This moment
Lead into the stream of children's lives

Children in their stories
Visualize,
Translate,
Interpret,
Constitute and construct
Lives, memories, experiences

We are also living with children's stories
Transforming ourselves
Through the fragments of stories

We see ourselves in the reflection
Of the mirror as the name of children

This is a time of suddenly acknowledged multiplicity and diversity. Voices long ignored or long repressed are making themselves heard, many of them demanding that we look at things from their perspectives and recognize how numerous are the ways of defining what is “real” (Greene, 1993, p. 241).

PROLOGUE

With (in) In/Outside of Story

Story is the bridge that connects one life to another

We are living with/ through/ in/ outside of story

Mingling with stories is a way of becoming

Self via Storying

I am listening to your story
You are listening to my story
You are coming into my world inside out and outside in
as evoking, invoking, and provoking journey/exploration
Into the similarities and differences weaving past, present, and future

The threads of experiences and anticipations
Contradictions, unknowns and uncertainties,
Sediments and texture of our life collection
Ruptures and tensions
Unleashed reflections
Provocative tapestries
Projection and reflection
Commonplace horizons of you and me
As a starting point of fusion

Presences & Absences play with(in) me as a form of "trace"
Lived experience
Lived time
Lived place
Metaphor/metonymy
Rejuvenation of you and me from idiosyncratic and common story
Your story is my story
My story is your story
We are arriving at the juncture where our spirits meet.

Who I am ...

I remember my first day of kindergarten even though it was over twenty years ago, as if it were yesterday.

After flying for ten hours from the edge of the Pacific Rim, at last I arrived at Canada to pursue my dream.

The first day of kindergarten was regarded as the first moment that mother and child were separated.

Scary. I felt I was entering the forest at its deepest, darkest point.

I sensed a strange atmosphere of thrill and unease in the classroom, but all the children kept quiet until one of the mothers foolishly showed her face at the window that separated the classroom from the corridor.

It all seemed so remote and unreal, and I was overwhelmed by the feeling of being a stranger. I wandered like a ghost in a physical space and experienced every possible emotion. I was a stranger in this alien world.

My maladjustment lasted for one month and I cried every day. I was nicknamed "Crybaby."

I felt at one moment as if I were in a dark tunnel, and the next as if I were in the middle of an endless ocean, trying to row my little boat towards my goal. Just as on that day over twenty years before, I was again labeled as "different."

I was afraid of being alone in a new world.

I faced a second separation, only this time from the womb of my culture.

Stranger

I am different from others

I have black hair

I have a colored face

Distinguished I

I am different from others

My nickname is

An Outsider

A Stranger

An Alien

I am different from others

New culture

New people

In the midst of a dark tunnel

Briskly, Briskly, Briskly

Obscurities/Uncertainties are immersing me

Where am I now?

I am still a stranger...

How can I find myself in the hybridization?

Shall I dance between 'differences'?

I still cannot be the same as you

Where can I find my wings to fly freely?

Recognizing "Self" in the diverse ethnic group classroom¹

In the classroom, there are several children from different countries including China, France, and Spain. It is only natural that my eyes focus on the minorities. The minority-group children, those from non-Canadian cultures, have a tendency to hide themselves. They are not comfortable playing with classmates from the mainstream, Canadian-born group; instead, they spend time with other minority-group children or they play alone. Although there are no visible restrictions, these students have difficulty joining the mainstream group. Some of them are not fluent in English and insist on speaking their first language. This simply acts as another hindrance to engaging the mainstream group.

Among the children, one little girl catches my attention. She is cautious and calm, and can usually be found in the corner of the classroom. Donna, who has rosy cheeks, is a little Chinese girl in the Norsal preschool. She cries every morning after being separated from her grandmother. Although I cannot understand what they are talking about, I can deduce the meaning from their tone and body language. The grandmother is very embarrassed by her grandchild's behavior, and she escapes the embarrassment by leaving the classroom as quickly as she can. Donna is in the minority in the Norsal preschool and the look she wears reveals her reluctance to be there. Unlike the other children, she seems very unhappy at preschool. Donna cries for a while, then gets temporarily comfortable on the lead teacher's lap, but this only lasts a short time. She still has difficulty joining the mainstream group. Instead of busying herself with her peers, she wanders around the classroom sucking her thumb. She approaches me because of the similarities in our appearance, but I am embarrassed by her behavior because I do not know how to act towards her. This little girl, with the black hair, black eyes, and flat, yellow face, is always alone. She does not interact well with the other children, but either works by herself or spends time in the play area where the other children are unwilling to play. She seems to be free only in this play area which is set up like an imaginary house, with lots of dolls and some old kitchen utensils.

Donna is excluded from the main group. According to her father, she complains a lot about preschool and her classmates and often tries to avoid going. Yet, strangely, she never speaks Chinese at home despite the fact that her grandparents cannot speak English. This conversation with Donna's father reminds me that Donna does not speak Chinese in the classroom, even to her Chinese-speaking peer, Eileen. Whenever Eileen speaks in Chinese, Donna answers in English.

Donna: Can you play with me?

Jiryung: Why don't you play with your friends?

Donna: No. They don't want to. When I get to them, they're gone. I don't have any friends.

¹ This is a part of an autoethnography based on my volunteer experience in a Canadian preschool. The names of the preschool, teacher, and children are pseudonyms.

Unlike the rest of the children, Donna wants to spend time with me, and often tries to touch my hand or hug me. What is the reason for her isolation?

Because I am a stranger, I am excluded from the centre. I cannot be included in the mainstream group. Though I try to join the majority, I feel comical, like a clown in the circus. There is a limit, there is an end, and there is a wall. I am like oil floating on the surface of water.

As a matter of fact, Donna does not have any friends. Among the children, race, language, and colour play a large role in deciding their groups. On one occasion, I observe several children playing in a building-block area, making robots, bridges, and so on. These children are all native English-speakers. Donna shows an interest in them. She and I make eye contact and then she goes towards her classmates in the building-block area. As Donna approaches, the children who were playing disperse to other areas.

"She smells strange."

The children murmur things to her as they leave, and though I don't believe they are intentionally cruel, she is left alone once again. Even though Donna brings special toys and computer-game CDs to attract the other children's interest, her classmates are only interested in the toys. She is still alone. There is no space for her. Donna is absent from preschool for one week and then returns with her father. We learn that the reason she was away so long is that she obstinately refused to go to preschool. Her parents had to persuade her to return. What is the cause of her exclusion from this peer culture?

"I don't have any friends in this classroom."

"I 'm so bored."

"Am I different from the other children? Sometimes they look at me funny, but I can sing, and dance, and draw. Why don't they like me?"

Even now, her words still echo in my ears. Power, authority, and hierarchy are already being established in the children's world. This is not just the children's small world, for contained here is the same adult world order; their world is a mirror of our own. Donna is losing her rights, words, and identity in their society. She is already living with discrimination as a minority in a heterogeneous society. How, then, can she achieve her own cultural and personal identity? She is the same as other children but not really the same. She is different.

In the same classroom, I am witness to a second case, this one both different and similar to the one I observed with Donna. The child's name is Chi Qi, and she also comes from China. She does not know any English except for "hi," and her father also has difficulty speaking and understanding English. Whenever the teachers want to speak with Chi Qi's father, they use signs and gestures to communicate. Unlike Donna, Chi Qi does not care about anything. She makes no attempt to speak English and seems unconcerned about her problems of communicating with the other children, and even her teachers. I also have difficulties communicating with her, but because I am similar to her in appearance, whenever she has a problem, she comes to me. It is a pity I cannot understand anything she says, but from her facial expression and tone of voice, I can assume she is having problems. Like Donna, Chi Qi is always alone. Furthermore, she is often aggressive towards the

other children because no one can understand her and give her what she wants. Nevertheless, it appears that she also enjoys being alone with no one to bother her. Chi Qi does not appear to want to join with the mainstream group, and instead just keeps to herself. Her classmates stay far away from her and ignore her, as if she weren't even there. At any rate, Donna and Chi Qi are all but invisible in the classroom.

Although these two cases are dissimilar in terms of joining a peer group, they share the common theme of how children conceive of who they are within their group, what it means for a child to construct a sense of identity, and how it affects that child later in life.

Sometimes the differences between an individual and his or her surroundings may be perceived so strongly that, as a result, the feeling of being a stranger appears. It is usually more than merely the sense of distinctiveness or the recognition of the differences; it involves a clear sense of nonbelonging in a given group or a lack of one's own place within the group.

Our sense of being is experienced and extrapolated. The 'I' does not pre-exist; the 'I' is constantly being formed and reformed as it moves about in the world. It creates a generative dialectic between lived experiences and lived textualities.

As I mingle with children's narratives...

I recall the tapestry of learning during my undergraduate and graduate degrees and remember it as a cross-cultural adventure. My life as a student has taught me many lessons. One of them is there are no innocent eyes; instead there are enormous hypotheses, versions, and expectations. The nature of life is that it is a story, and some narratives are incoherently interwoven. Those narratives are better understood by considering other possible ways in which they can be told. Over the course of my research, it became a cultural and concurrent language game involving the children and me. By overlapping the children's own narratives and my childhood experiences, I was on a path or a way of figuring out what the children wanted to say. Indeed, my intense early memories contributed powerfully to my ability to sense the children's thoughts.

It has been an incredible journey of discovery as I reawake to my own experiences. Children are not little adults, but are developing and growing beings who have their own specific characteristics. Children perceive and understand the world differently and acknowledge their world as they continue to grow as distinguishable selves. As an adult, an observer/researcher, and a collaborative learner, I was invited into the realm of their stories and of their worlds as a guest. I sincerely appreciate my little friends.

Multifaceted voices

My thesis reveals the diverse themes of children's narratives. It documents young children's descriptions of experiences and their relationships to others in early childhood. Through their spontaneous conversational stories told during free choice playtime, they reflect personal experiences. These provide means not only for interacting with others, but also for inventing themselves in such transactions. It is conceivable that our sensitivity to narrative provides the major link between our own sense of self and our sense of others in the social world around us.

A learning journey

I believe that, in order to survive in a complex world, we must recount the stories of our lives and document our experiences. It is important to mention something about my thesis from the perspective of a narrative inquirer. Over a period of five months, I was an observer, a learner, and a friend of children. Meeting with little friends gave me a lot to look forward to each morning. On the way to the kindergarten classroom, I was lost in thought, reflection and integration with theory and practice. Information gathering included observing the children, listening to their stories, observing conversations, and looking at their drawings and paintings. Watching, listening, and writing about the children's representation and construction of themselves through personal experiences was an amazing journey. For me, a Korean woman

whose own early childhood education experiences reflected a very academic and teacher-centred approach, these narratives were a revelation. I began to see from children's narratives that I could reflect on my own experiences and see a transformative image of myself intermingled with the children's narratives. Personal narratives, tempered by silence, can bring into play powerful survival instincts as well as pleasurable feelings towards early childhood. These stories can help to open up opportunities for complex and challenging theories and research possibilities with and about children. In addition, I can see important implications for pedagogical change particularly for the Korean early childhood education system. Such change might encourage and recognize the importance of providing opportunities for the voices of children to be heard. By using pseudonyms, I have concealed the real names of all the children and their teachers.

Living and reliving stories

My journey with children consists of nine interrelated chapters. The first chapter begins by outlining the purpose of my research and research questions. The second chapter is about the theoretical background of this research study. It extends the hermeneutical understanding of narrative. Further, it examines narrative, young children, and the role of narrative in early childhood education. Also, it scrutinizes the relationships of narrative in the children's play and the visual arts. The third chapter explains my research methodology. This chapter explores the understanding of narrative inquiry in education, as it relates to the research process. Chapters

four, five, six, and seven describe the diverse narratives that emerge from the children's imagination. It covers what children strive to say and what we can infer and learn from the children's cultures. Chapter eight includes a reflection and discussion resulting from this journey. Chapter nine is the concluding section. It is a summary of the whole study and provides educational insights and implications. In addition, it gives some suggestions for further research.

CHAPTER 1

INVITATION: EVOKING AN INQUIRY

"Once there was a little boy who had a bad time at school. He wanted to make friends. The friends he wanted to make were called Robert and Eric. They were fun but they spoke good English all the time. The little boy tried to speak good English, too. He tried and tried. But when Robert and Eric played with their blocks, they would only play with each other. When Robert and Eric ran in the schoolyard, they would only run with each other. At snack time, when Robert and Eric ate their snacks, they would only share with each other. They did not want to share with the little boy. They did not want to. This made the little boy very sad.

This made the little boy angry."

-Leon, age 5

Whenever I had an opportunity to spend time with my nephew, he would tell me stories relating to his kindergarten experiences. Through his stories, I would get some insight into how he viewed himself in his classroom and in his culture. He was suffering from the anxieties that often beset children in a multi-cultural classroom. How much do we consider what children say? How much value do we put on the stories that relate to those experiences? How do young children create themselves through narrative? What Leon gave me was a glimpse into his life that opened wide the doors to this study.

1.1. History of the Research

We all tell stories about our experiences to ourselves and to others. These stories serve many different functions. They may be told for entertainment, interpersonal bonding, or as a moral lesson. In accordance with this theory, Sutton-Smith suggests the following:

...it can be argued that since storytelling is as old as human history in every group about which there is knowledge (Prince, 1973), narrative is a fair candidate for being such a basic model. From this point of view, the most basic human mind is a storytelling one. It envisages its life as episodes of excitement and drama, as villainy and deprivation and their nullification (Sutton-Smith, 1981, p. 37).

Attention to narrative as a human phenomenon has increased significantly in the field of educational research over the last several decades. What once fell under the domain of literary critics and theorists (Barthes, 1977) has moved the focus for philosophers (Carr, 1985; Ricoeur, 1984, 1992), and psychologists (Bruner, 1986; Polkinghorne, 1988). Accordingly, writers have called for greater sensitivity in listening to children's narratives (Brown & Gilligan, 1991) and in considering the integrative function of the act of constructing and narrating the stories of one's life (Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988).

Traditionally, narrative, as an active creative process (Rosen, 1980), had an ancient role as a medium for carrying a message, something to convey and learn. Now, it has become a means to capture the situation, context, and complexity of human action. Narrative is more than a story, a teller, or a text. It appears to be a fundamental phenomenon, a "primary act of mind" (Lyons & LaBoskey, 2002, p. 3). Likewise, Hardy (1977) assumes the notion of narrative to be "a primary act of mind" (p. 12). Narrative is a mode not only of describing reality but also of constituting

reality and of conferring meaning on experience. It is the rudimentary ways that human beings organize themselves and their worlds (Britton, 1970; Hardy, 1977; Meek, 1977; Rosen, 1980). In this way, it provides us with an invaluable window into children's lives and their images of the world, and is a crucial context for learning and development. Children use a variety of narrative activities, not just to represent the world but to make sense of it—both factually and emotionally—and to find their place in it (Nicolopoulou, 1992, p. 157). I believe the interest in narrative, especially the growing recognition of its socio-cultural perspective, suggests that narrative provides a very powerful means for understanding human experience.

Accordingly, the awareness of the functions and potential power of children's narrative, in connection to the diverse socio-cultural landscape, should be refined and heightened. Children are regarded as social actors; human learning and development originate from the social and cultural contexts in which individuals live. Children's lives are filled with the diverse stories that they hear, invent, and tell. Stories make up an integral part of children's selves. Childhood is reflected by the diversity of visual, aural, and textual representations that surround children in their daily lives. Children tell stories not only to represent experience as they know it to be, but also to represent experience, as they would like it to be. Therefore, narrative in childhood is fundamental in the sense that it allows children to reconstruct their experiences and enhance their avenues of communication. Each narrative represents part of a self-portrait and a portion of the experiences that a child reflects on, refers to, and revises. Using the idea that children make

sense of experience through narrative, educators, particularly in early childhood education, pay close attention to children's stories (Egan, 1989; Wells, 1986).

1.2. Research Purpose

As a performance of human life, narrative serves as a form of self-exploration and the positioning of self. By telling one's own story, the narrator reveals what is happening to the self and implies what it means. Through stories, we translate and interpret the diverse context of our lives. For this reason, narrative is an alternative to individual consciousness (Ricoeur, 1984). Ricoeur stresses that narrative is more than tales about human experience, because human life, itself, is narratively organized. In other words, narrative is not a simple reflection of memory or experience; rather, it is an activity of reconstructing and reproducing experiences. Narrative is the way in which we make sense of our past, and provide perspective on the self (Bruner, 1991; Fivush & Haden, 2003). Narrative does not reflect reality; human reality itself takes the form of a narrative (Widdershoven, 1994, p. 103). Sharing stories and reflecting on what these stories mean, how they have affected and continue to affect an individual, opens the possibility for a much greater understanding of self.

Persons tell their lives, or they report particular experiences, only they have access to. The stories they tell belong to them and are shared with an audience in particular situations. Sharing an account presupposes that the teller wants to share the experience and that there is a personal purpose for sharing it... Any analysis of the story is supposed to take the perspective of the teller, bringing forward aspects of how the person makes sense of himself or herself as a person or of the particular experience that is of interest (Bamberg, 1996, p. 90).

Stories are reflections and reconstructions of personal identity and self-understanding, for they may assist in providing answers to the question, “Who am I?” Stories are a means of examining one’s “being-in-the-world” (Heidegger, 1962). Through sharing of stories, people build shared beliefs and values in their culture or the world. The stories we tell to create ourselves reflect that dialectic:

To reveal in all its purity the space in which discursive events are deployed is not to undertake to re-establish it in an isolation that nothing could overcome; it is not to close it upon itself; it is to leave oneself free to describe the interplay of relations within it and outside it (Foucault, 1972, p. 29).

Regardless of the value placed on narrative, research into young children’s stories has been largely ignored. To date, the importance of early stories has received little attention. While there are some examples of research on children and narrative in the overlapping disciplines of psychology and linguistics, focusing on narrative skills or functional aspects (Chang, 1998; Heath, 1982; Kyratzis, 2000; Miller, Mintz, Hoogsta, Fung & Potts, 1992), studies of spontaneous stories composed by children themselves are still rare. Thus, little is known about children’s naturally occurring stories or narrative practice involving children.

Many scholars in the field of early childhood education are more interested in narratives written for children than in the stories that children themselves compose and tell (Dyson, 1997; Halldén, 1994). Before the age of three, children’s stories concern events involving family members, friends, and neighbors (Heath, 1983). Children’s narrative activity should be understood as a form of modified and redefined symbolic action, links to the construction of

reality with the formation of self. Then, what stories do children create? How do children represent their experiences? What can we learn from the stories children tell?

Parent: Storytelling helped me to understand my child by reducing the barriers between us. It was an enriching experience for myself as a parent and as a teacher. Through conversations with my child, I learned a lot about her critical views of the world. I came to realize that, although she is young, she is wise. She is busy at forming her world. I encourage my daughter to do craft activities and write a drawing diary. I also collect all of her artwork. It is easy to see how she develops her imagination.

Stories first arise in the context of relationships, when small children acquire the potential to verbalize experiences for themselves and others. Through verbal/ non-verbal acts, children become narrated selves who are able to present their own experiences, who invent stories about themselves, and who share interpretations with others. When children make and tell a story, they disclose their inner thoughts in terms of how they perceive the world around them. For these reasons, narrative forms a significant part of a young child's life.

To children, stories are a step beyond mere reporting. The conversational nature of storying, both listening to stories and telling stories, helps children develop imagination and communication skills. As they construct oral and visual narratives within their experiences, children connect their individual and social being with a tissue of narrative. Story is a tool for exploring connections, expanding one's horizons and expressing different points of view.

Literature has proven that narrative is very important to the human experience, as we often talk

about and come to understand events happening around us in narrative form (Bamberg, 1996; Bruner, 1986, 1990, 1991; Kerby, 1991; Kristeva, 2000; Polkinghorne, 1988; Ricoeur, 1992).

Given these perspectives, it is critically important to explore the affiliation between narrative and young children's representation and understanding of self and the world in order to understand child development better. Narrative serves as a powerful social tool for children when they are trying to convince, persuade, negotiate, redefine, and gain entrance to peer groups. As far as these issues are concerned, children's stories are transparent enough to reveal how they perceive themselves through constructing/recreating fragmented experiences. Children represent themselves through narrative in an oral or a visual context.

Researchers give ample evidence of the importance of narrative in children's lives. In Fernie, Davies, Kantor & McMurray's (1993) study, the authors theorize that children and their teacher jointly construct a peer and a classroom culture as they produce oral and written narratives concerning events of everyday life in the classroom. In that study, the children were viewed as beings who can account for the process of self-construction (Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoostra & Mintz, 1990). Narrative was shown to be a connective tissue in the conceptualization and the comprehension of the world of children. Narrative, as symbolic activity, operates as a device to construct personhood through participation in narrating. Kyratzis (2000) also explores the use of narrative among younger children. The author analyzed preschool children's stories that were jointly composed by their friends to describe peer culture, friendship patterns, and identity. As

the above research shows, narrative plays a role in constructing and identifying one's self in relation to others, appreciating differences, evaluating one's self, and judging others.

Early childhood has long been considered a critical time in the formation of self-esteem, self-identity, and self-concept (Sunal, 1990). Children come to understand who they are by not only reworking and transforming their experiences in a solitary context, but by hearing and sharing stories in a conversational context. That is, children represent themselves in a multi-faceted fashion through oral, written, and visual text. Narrative is ideally suited for identity construction as it occurs in everyday conversation with exploration of possible selves.

Referring to self-concept formation through narrative in early childhood, a few studies try to show that narrative is an important medium of self-formation and self-creation for young children (Kyratizis & Green, 1997; Miller, et al., 1990). Early childhood is a crucial time, when young children recognize and develop the concept of who they are. The stories that we generate about our lives begin in childhood, and arise out of a matrix of relationships with others, and the meanings we make of our life experiences. Children are able to participate in narrative activities such as sharing personal experiences, retelling stories, expressing themselves through art, and in make-believe play. Young children use personal narrative as a vehicle for reconfiguration and building a concept of becoming (Chang, 1998; Eisenberg, 1985; Heath, 1983; Kyratizis, 1999; Miller & Mehler, 1994). Story gives participants a safe haven to try out new positions and identities, to explore "possible selves" that may be powerful, weak, or even ordinary. Children construct and position themselves in particular ways through a diverse use of stories.

Children's own narrative opens up a forum for the interplay of experiences, imagination, and joint scripting that emerge from differing viewpoints. In their narrative play, children show a command of strategic, linguistic devices that position narrative as an ideal medium for their collaborative connection to the world. Under this assumption, how children act in their narrative imaginings is vital to translating their understanding of the world. While recent research has begun to look at the relationship between children's self-representation through narrative (Chang, 1998; Kyratzis, 1999, 2000), it has not addressed issues beyond the domain of the functional aspect of narrative usage in a peer group. Previous studies remain focused on linguistic aspects of narrative analysis, such as different usages of narrative in gender or statistic-based research regarding social construction of self through narrative.

Convinced that narrative portrayal of human experience illuminates understanding and meaning-making, I utilize interpretive and socio-cultural approach to this study to investigate young children's representation of themselves through play and art. Through these avenues, children reveal their understanding of the many complex interactions and experiences of their lives. Polkinghorne describes narrative as a form of 'meaning-making' that recognizes the meaningfulness of individual experiences by noting how they function as parts of a whole (1988, p. 36). In this instance, I look upon narrative as the way children make sense of experiences in their lives and the relationship of these experiences in their world. The purpose of this study is to explore what young children (specifically, five-year-olds) reveal through narrative. Thus, my research question deals with how children describe and represent the self and others through play

and art by the stories that engage them with the real and imaginary worlds. In particular, this research study focuses on children's language in the oral and visual contexts.

Telling stories is a rich and spontaneous kindergarten activity. Children's own stories illustrate a fascinating interplay of experiences and imaginative worlds which only a child can invent. Further, children tend to construct play plots and talk openly about what they learn or have experienced. This study investigates: (a) what themes emerge, as told through play, art, and stories in the circle time of a kindergarten classroom, (b) what are inferences from their narrative description, and (c) what we might, as educators, learn from their tales. In addition, this research study inquires into the possibility that children develop a sophisticated means for understanding and expressing who they are through play and artwork. How young children perceive themselves in relation to others (including peers, parents, teachers, schoolmates, family, community, and culture) is significant to the understanding of children's evolution into adulthood.

Simultaneously, through this process of inquiry, I am curious to see what I learn as an individual, a student, and a researcher.

I begin with the assumption that narrative exemplifies a vital process of meaning-making in everyday life and that we can tap into this process by using children's spontaneous interest in stories or narrative in related forms. This research takes a qualitative approach in an attempt to understand experiences, based on phenomenology, hermeneutics, and narrative. Each approach addresses the subject in different but collaborate ways. Listening to children's stories and living with children in the same context inspires and informs this research. This research is located in

between spaces where children and understanding flourish (Aoki, 1991). In this study, the reader will have opportunity to listen to children's voices and also gain access to their unheard voices. I expect that the reader will have the opportunity to see the children's world through a new lens, one we have not attended to despite its significance.

Now, I would like to begin my journey into the "mini-culture" of children. As children say in play, "Let's pretend..." "Once upon a time...", I would like to invite you into such a world of children. In this study, I will embark on an adventure, both in my role as interpreter and fellow passenger on a journey that shapes children's lives. Essentially, this research study attempts to question the dynamics of the situations I witnessed and participated in. Story opens up the text and uncovers what lies hidden. Narrative represents, constructs, and reconstructs reality. It is the primary means of interpreting life (Bruner, 1991). This approach shares a common focus on narrative as a central aspect of human existence, one that endows sequences of events with meaning, and thus provides a uniquely powerful vehicle for understanding human existence and human experience.

The “eruption of artistry” among 5-to-7 year-olds in music and dance, block building, and storytelling, as well as in drawing and painting—seems to stem from their new command of the expressive media (Engel, 1995, p. 20).

CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF UNDERPINNING LITERATURE: RUMINATIONS AND AWAKENINGS

The objective of this chapter is to review theoretical perspectives and research findings that are relevant to this study and to furnish background for my conceptual work.

2.1. Conventional Understanding

2.1.1. Narrative as Representation, Narrative as Generative Action

A life as a whole when then embraced in a single glance appears to us as the field of a constructive activity, borrowed from narrative understanding, by which we attempt to discover and not simply to impose from outside the narrative identity which constitutes us (Ricoeur, 1991, p. 32).

Narrative is a fundamental human activity—international, transhistorical, transcultural: it is simply there, like life itself (Barthes, 1977, p. 79).

We live with stories. Through stories, we see the fragments of experience and make, reconfirm, and create new stories. The art of storytelling is the art of exchanging experiences. Human sciences have been undergoing a paradigm shift from the conceptual world toward a more epistemological and humanistic language in which narrative plays a transitional role in the understanding of self and our relation to others. When there is one story, it becomes *the* story, *my*

story. Narrative deals not with a mode of representing only, but with a specific method of constructing and constituting reality.

Personal, everyday narrative is a representation of life that provides a context for living. Personal narrative can be a tool for expressing and recognizing one's self. Human beings are authors as well as actors in self-narrative. Narrative can configure the diverse events of one's life into a meaningful whole. Narrative is a powerful instrument for arranging human experiences; it is fair to say that it is a metaphor for examining and interpreting human experiences. It is an honored form of self-representation that allows the self to be grasped as a whole, in which meanings of individual life are connected to the whole. Narrative constructions are inherent to human meaning-making. This construction is an activity that pervades all aspects of learning. When story-telling becomes a given expression in words, the resulting stories effectively make one's own interpretation of events and ideas available to others (Wells, 1987, p. 194).

Bakhtin (1981) argues that people become who they are through communication, and the dialogue between voices constitutes context. Narrative gives a form and meaning to our lives. I am part of a story involving my parents, my sister, my friends, and other random interlopers (Kaplan, 2003, p. 95). Essentially, my story becomes intertwined with other stories and is shaped by the thoughts of many individuals. It is widely assumed that there is a special affinity between narrative and self, such that people conceive of themselves in terms of stories (Polkinghorne, 1988). In the following quote, Polkinghorne (1988) summarizes the way that narrative enables us to understand the meaning of human lives:

Narrative is a scheme by means of which human beings give meaning to their experience of temporality and personal actions. Narrative meaning functions to give form to the understanding of a purpose to life and to join everyday actions and events into episodic units. It provides a framework for understanding the past events in one's life and for planning future actions. It is the primary scheme by means of which human existence is rendered meaningful. *Thus, the study of human beings by the human sciences needs to focus on the realm of meaning in general, and on narrative meaning in particular* (p. 11, *my italics*).

Kerby (1991) also argues that narrative is a primary embodiment of our understanding of the world, of experience, and, ultimately, of ourselves. Narrative is useful to the extent that it opens a deeper view of life in a familiar context. Stories make the familiar strange, and the strange familiar. The stories we tell and hear are part and parcel of our becoming, and we embrace their meanings for our lives, both implicitly and explicitly. They are a mode of vision, plotting what is good and what is bad for us, what is possible and what is not and helping us see who we may become. The notion is that narrative somehow mediates between self and world, either evoking or simply creating order and meaning.

Human experience is riddled with stories, which is related to experience itself. Ricoeur (1992) writes that stories offer us models for the redescription of the world. Narrative gives unity to the self by connecting the stories of our lives. A life can be represented by narrative and shared with others. From Arendt's (2000) perspective, our life is a narrative and that narrative is an action. We are living through stories and with stories. From what theorists argue, people reveal meaning through performing narrative. Narrative is a mirror reflecting who we are and how we are becoming.

The use of stories is productive in many ways; past and current version(s) of self are juxtaposed in ways that produce different layers of meaning, understanding, and reconstruction of identity. We can produce contradictory constructions of ourselves, just as we are, simultaneously, both vulnerable and powerful, choosing to recreate and present certain versions of ourselves rather than others. Narrative illuminates life by making us see, hear, and taste our lives.

Our own existence cannot be separated from the account we can give of ourselves. It is in telling our own stories that we give ourselves an identity. We recognize ourselves in the stories we tell about ourselves. It makes very little difference whether these stories are true or false, fiction as well as verifiable history provides us with an identity (Kerby, 1991, p. 41).

Narrative is an appropriate way for the exploration of the self and the construction of selves in the context of time and space. Narrative is woven into the tapestry of inner representations, producing the patterns that give it significance (Wells, 1987). In other words, a person's view of the world is influenced by the stories that other people serve up, just as they interpret their experience to others and readdress stories of other people's experiences.

2.1.2. Children's Representation through Narrative

The function of narrative as a route of thinking and of showing experience is as important in the lives of children as it is in those of adults (Bruner, 1986; Coles, 1989). In this study, I follow how children process 'meaning' and what children portray through narrative in oral and visual contexts. Children's lives are based, in part, on their stories. Children's narrative plays a crucial role in developing and constructing their lives. Children's stories function as a kind of textual crossroad, allowing children to bring the world together in intellectually, socially, and emotionally satisfying ways (Dyson, 1994). In telling, listening to, and reading stories, children transform experiences into original compositions by combining reality and fantasy. Childhood is the time one learns to bridge the immense gap between inner experiences and the real world. These stories are encoded with messages about what human experiences are, and how to deal with basic human predicaments. Through the power of imagination, children use stories to bridge the gap. The resulting narratives allow children to construct an individual "being" that holds personal values, concepts, and perspectives. Furthermore, by helping to mold personality and bring about a basis of identification, these stories encourage children to internalize individual values and transform themselves into mature human beings.

Young children are, inherently, great performers with the ability to give meaning to who they are and who they are becoming. Who we are and how we come to see ourselves is increasingly viewed as the ongoing and ever-changing story we tell about our lives. Children's understanding of self/others is negotiated in emergent narrative and their participation in socially-situated

narrative activities, and peer-oriented storytelling. Miller and Mehler (1994) observe the following:

How children develop their identity would have to take into consideration not only the child's moment-by-moment interpersonal encounters, but his or her participation in iterative narrations of those encounters, which are themselves embedded in moment-by-moment interpersonal encounters (p. 47).

Personal storytelling serves as a resource for young children as they come to express and understand who they are. Furthermore, narrative is a spoken discourse that allows for co-constructing of meaning through collaborative play and storytelling.

A growing body of research suggests that narrative, even if only in rudimentary forms, is used by young children to reconstruct their knowledge and understanding of personal experiences and general events (Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra, & Mintz, 1990). Children encounter and use narrative in diverse ways. For instance, it happens through telling and retelling personal experiences (Miller & Mehler, 1994), creating stories while playing with others (Chang, 1998; Kyratzis, 1999), reading and listening to literature (Bettelheim, 1976), and drawing and painting where narrative is used to explain an event, idea, or some phenomena (Kellman, 1995; Malchiodi, 1998).

The ongoing stories that children create about themselves are embedded within the social, familial, and cultural contexts in which development occurs. These stories serve not only as a venue for self-expression and communication with others, but also as a means of meaning-making out of lived experience. Narrative integrates action and consciousness into a whole self-

understanding,

Early childhood researchers have begun to explore the role of narrative practices in early self-concept development. For example, Fivush (1994) investigates the role of parent-child conversations about experiences in the development of young children's self-conceptions, and Miller and her colleagues described personal storytelling plays in self-construction in early childhood (Miller, 1994; Miller, et al., 1990). These researchers have stressed the affinity between narrative and self-concept. While there have been a lot of researches on children and narrative, studies of children's own stories have not been undertaken seriously (Bettelheim, 1976; Chang, 1998; Eisenberg, 1985; Heath, 1983; Kyratzis & Green, 1997; Kyratzis, 1999; Miller, et al., 1990; Miller & Mehler, 1994). One impressive research study about children's own stories was undertaken by Miller and Mehler's (1994) investigation of personal story-telling in families and kindergartens. That study showed that young children use personal story-telling as a powerful means for expressing and making sense of who they are. Personal story-telling can be an avenue of childhood socialization and self-construction. Further, conversational stories of personal experience provide a site for the representation of self (Miller, et al., 1990). In fact, stories from children are useful, particularly those that show us how children have perceived themselves in their relationships to the people in their community, society, and culture.

Bettelheim's (1976) approach has special significance because it uniquely explores the meanings and importance of fairy tales in the perspective of personal, inner self-concept construction and presentation. According to Bettelheim (1976), children create a conception of

the world through what they learn from literature. Literary narrative deals with questions which are concerned at a basic level. As children develop, they learn step-by-step to understand themselves, and in doing so, become better able to understand others and eventually relate to them in ways which are mutually satisfying and meaningful. Although the deepest meaning may be different for each person, and also different for the same person depending on the moment, through an imaginary world, children can visualize what they need to learn to become human beings.

A story's value lies in what it can teach children about the universal inner conflicts of human beings, and about the solution and resolution of predicaments in any society. Through fairy tales, children gain a feeling of selfhood and self-worth, and a sense of moral obligation. The imaginative world experiences found in fairy tales offers a new avenue for children to restore meaning to their lives. This is an important device, for it makes obvious the fact that the fairy tales' purpose is to provide not only information about the external world, but also insight into the internal processes of constructing themselves.

2.1.3. Children's Play and Art as a Narrative

Play is the central tool for making sense of a child's world. The play of children reflects their effort to meet social expectations, their attempts to understand cultural-appropriate behaviors, and their struggles to learn to manage emotions. Educators have long viewed play as critical to young children (Piaget, 1962; Sutton-Smith, 1980; Vygotsky, 1978). Children explore the world through this activity; it is also the context in which they practice social behaviors and skills inherent to their social/ cultural context (Schwartzman, 1976). Play is one of the first opportunities children have to make meaning. They begin to experiment with relationships between their real, physical world and their constructed, fantasy world (Bruner, 1986). When children create imaginary situations in pretend play, they reformulate themselves and inhabit alternative or possible worlds. Many children make up their stories in the context of pretend play, creating and enacting their own dramatic narratives and re-enacting favorite stories they have heard being read aloud. Indeed, one of the things that attracts young children to pretend play is the chance to tell stories. Vygotsky argues that play "is not the predominate feature of childhood but it is a leading factor in development" (1978, p. 101). For Vygotsky, children's play is a way of grasping the meaning of real-life situations and dealing with problems. Play is not simply a reproduction of the adult world; it is rather a reproduction within their peer culture. It is often fascinating the way children can make a playtime's fictional situation and reality coincide. Play allows children to make new forms of desire and allows children to construct 'possible roles in possible worlds' (Dyson, 1997, p. 14). Through play activity, children reach personal

achievements and these achievements will have an impact on reality. Play is also the time during which much fantasy and collaborative story-telling spontaneously occurs. By using language during play to describe other worlds, events and characters, children begin to experiment with what successful “decontextualized” language is, how to assume multiple perspectives, and how to resolve the conflict between what was *meant*, what was *said* and what was *understood* (Vygotsky, 1962).

Play provides a forum for children to create imaginary situations (Vygotsky, 1978) into which they infuse their own ideas, their own voices and intent, and their own meanings. According to Vygotsky, play is merely an illusion because children replace the rules of ordinary life. Play allows children to assume possible roles in possible worlds, in a space where appropriate identities may emerge. As long as we do not interpret their behavior too literally, we can learn much about children’s concepts of social rules and obligations, their understanding of their physical environment, and their knowledge through play-acting. During play, individual and/or collaborative narratives emerge naturally among participants (Heath, 1983; Pellegrini, 1984). These narratives combine children’s past experiences with their dreams and hopes for the future. As these studies suggest, narrative in play is used to characterize the building of self-other relationships. This calls for the child to form a conceptualization of the peer group that leads to appropriate social behavior and it comes from the major premise of Vygotsky’s theory, which is the view that humans are subject to dialectical play in the process of producing and constructing a culture.

Children's play contributes to the burgeoning recognition of a peer culture where children reproduce themselves through acquisition of social knowledge and interaction. By symbolic enactment of roles, investing feelings, and acting and interacting with other children, they can gain mastery over many aspects of themselves. The developing self-image of children is reflected in play behaviors. Creating meaning through socialization relates especially to identity building, which could be seen as building a meaning system of Self.

Aside from play and oral story-telling, children show who they are through art, an activity that plays an integral part in children's self-representation. It is essential to respect children's art for all its richness, uniqueness, complexity and spontaneity. Children's expression through visual text is a reflection on their experiences, their knowledge, and what they want to reveal about themselves. Art expression is a modality that allows children to communicate their experiences. In this area of research, Kellman's (1995) work is vital to an understanding of the importance of visual language in childhood. This researcher investigated children's narrative, through art, by examining three different functions: invention, description, and negotiation. The author determined that children's stories are not only crafted in the verbal register, but nonverbal messages are an especially rich source by which children share their experiences and explore their responses to events. The visual arts enable children to build a bridge between action and expression, and help them effectively represent their experiences. The importance of narrative in children's art is that the child not only provides a representation of his or her life experiences, but also serves as an example of describing lived experiences. Narrative helps children to

interpret and integrate new ideas into familiar images and feelings by conceptualizing their meanings and relationships.

The role of drawing in children's learning is frequently misunderstood. Even within classrooms, where the opportunity to draw is often freely available, there is usually an adult focus upon 'mark making leaning to writing' rather than communication and creativity. Yet drawing is one of the many languages, which children use to talk about their world, both to themselves and to others (Dyson, 1993; Gallas, 1994).

As with all art, children's art is a unique human endeavor. It is a form of personal externalization, an extension of oneself, a visible projection of thoughts or feelings. Therefore, visual arts guide our understanding of the general phenomena of occurrences in human life. As far as a function of children's art is concerned, research consistently shows that art is a means of investigating what children know. Art has the potential to modify the dominant view of verbal knowledge as the primary presentation of what average people know, and ultimately to advance knowledge of the role visual memory plays in human understanding of the world in which they live (Peterson, 1997, p. 7 cited in Kendrick & McKay, 2004, p. 111). Engaging children in research through art is an approach that has been used over many years and in many different ways. There is a large body of research analyzing the aesthetic and compositional aspects of children's drawing, often aligned with their physical and emotional development (Cox, 1993). Rather than focusing on the elements of children's drawing, more recent research has considered drawing as a means to communicate effectively and as a means of helping children to "make their thinking visible to others" (Robertson, 2000, p. 161).

Through art, children can represent action, emotion, ideas, or experiences (Malchiodi, 1998). Art is a natural language for children, and is useful in understanding and evaluating children's development (Gardner, 1980; Golomb, 1992; Kellogg, 1970). From Golomb's (1992) perspective, children's art, at least in its early stages, is an autonomously guided, problem-solving activity; in other words, it reflects the children's own interests and concerns. Art creates an imaginative representation of an aspect of a child's world. Artworks are expressive statements about what one knows, feels, and strives to understand. Such expression is a dialogue with oneself and, as such, is intrinsically affective. Artworks speak louder than words, in the early stages of a child's development, and are, therefore, an ideal means to uncover information about the inner self. Children's artworks are seen as revealing children's conceptions of the world as graphic statements that provide a kind of cognitive map or "print-out" of their expression. Art is a mirror of children's emotional concern, and is a reflection of children's feelings. In another sense, children's art could even be treated as a mirror of a young child's thought processes. There exists many opportunities to foster the construction of the self in drawing. This study takes a socio-cultural approach to the study of young children's drawings. It recognizes the following:

- the child is a co-constructor of meaning and an active player in his or her world
- culture acts as mediator between the child and his/her environment
- the role of adults and peers is significant in scaffolding learning
- the role of the peer group is significant in a young child's learning

(Bruner, 1996; Vygotsky, 1962, 1978)

Children use art to integrate their inner experiences and perception and also to link their experience of the outside world with the inner self. The creative arts enable children to create a bridge between action and expression by helping children represent their experiences nonverbally. The importance of narrative or story in children's art is that these activities not only provide an excellent example of children's coming to terms with life experience, but also serve to both describe and invent experiences. Therefore, we are alerted to the symbolism contained within children's visual works and we have the ability to read stories woven within them.

Art provides children with the potential to tell stories, convey metaphors, and present their views, both through what is present in the image itself and through their own responses to their images. Kindler (1997) has pointed out the importance of social interactions in art exploration with children. Visual/pictorial narrative portrays and reflects the concerns of the growing child. The act of drawing becomes a vehicle for the expression of personal fantasies that are embedded in emotionally significant themes of a collective nature, and thus provides the means for

participating in the shared imagination of youth culture. The act of drawing, therefore, allows for multiple interpretations.

Art provides an avenue where negotiation between people takes place and where new meaning in relationship becomes possible (Bruner, 1986). Children operate in this narrative environment in their art-making. Children have a particular world to imagine, state, investigate, and make real in the images of their art; these art expressions allow us to see the children's impressions of their inner worlds, responses to their environments, and individual stories.

Children's artwork is often a form of communication and, in addition to indicating what the child is thinking, may also provide insight into the child's fears, sorrows, joys, hopes, frustrations, and environments (Golomb, 1992). Children's artwork is an effective modality for communication because it helps children express themselves in ways that verbal or written language cannot. An encounter with art opens spaces that require reflection and reformulation, and the arts themselves provoke questioning that supports sense-making and the understanding of what it is to exist in the world.

Children's art expands as their worlds expand, and as their interests and activities move beyond the home to ever larger territories. Artworks not only allow children's narratives to emerge naturally, but permit us to use these visual narratives as a way to interact with children, thus serving as a catalyst allowing children to communicate thoughts and concerns.

The following is a composition that I had a chance to read while in the kindergarten classroom. In light of my research, and from an educator's point of view, each line seems significant to me.

Art is important

It provides the child an unparalleled opportunity

to express his or her feelings

visually, perceptively, personally

as the child learns to see

to explore

and to respond to his or her world

in an intelligent, sensitive, and creative way.

Art is an experience—an adventure

a time of discovering

of new ways to communicate an idea

to make a personal statement with paint or clay

by producing a print or by building a

three dimensional form.

Art is the delight and wonder and joy of personal accomplishment.

Art is time for the child just to look

and see

and to become critically aware of his or her environment

natural and man made

and to participate in decision-making

to improve the essential quality of surroundings.

-hanging on the bulletin board of a Kindergarten classroom

2.2. Personally Established Understanding

2.2.1. The Image of the Child

From the experiences of being with young children, I learned that there is an unlimited potential for young children to construct their own perspectives about the world. With this belief, my study is based on the supposition that children have the ability to construct and demonstrate their own understanding. This understanding revolves around actions and related ideas. Children illustrate how they define moral, cultural, social, and gendered beings within play or artworks. Furthermore, children's understanding increases as they learn from each other. Peers can be used as a good source to negotiate meaning, find solutions toward problems, and then, to develop thoughts. They are regarded as competent social actors and their competence differs depending on personal interests and needs. Children are co-creators of knowledge, culture, and identity (Dahlberg, Moss & Pence, 1999). When children are regarded as social actors, children deal with their own perspectives and are subjected to their own intentions. Childhood is understood by examining the context in which children live.

2.2.2. The Generative Significance of Narrative in Early Childhood Research

As I have mentioned above, children's narrative is a meaningful avenue by which to explore a child's perception and interpretation of the world. For this reason, it is imperative to pay attention to the role of narrative in early childhood education. What follow are the points of my expanded understanding of young children's narratives in oral and visual contexts.

Firstly, children's narrative makes it possible to follow children's thinking. Children manipulate the point of view and expression which Sutton-Smith (1995) calls "multi-vocal" selves (p. 83). Further, Witherell (1991) sees the value of story in its function as a cultural bridge that forces us "to confront worlds other than one, to see people and those we are close to in the stories of others, to address injustices, and to find ourselves changed" (p.47). Narrative juxtaposes children's experiences alongside those of others, thus enabling us to interpret personal and cultural meanings, as well as consider the possibility of new formulations. Making and sharing stories enhances not just children's interpersonal growth, but also an awareness of an individual's own viewpoints.

Secondly, a child's narrative is a unique conversation with the world. Children are active participants in their own growth; how they interact in the world, and come to see themselves, is shaped by their experiences in the real world, especially the world of relationships. In *Wally's Stories* (1981), the author, Paley, describes how children interact with each other through stories told in her kindergarten classroom, in an environment where children are encouraged to learn using their stories. The author shows that in the course of creating their own worlds, five-year-olds are capable of formulating concrete thoughts and composing language at a more sophisticated level than adults imagine them to. Children use stories in a written, oral, or visual manner to express "who-ness." It is a way of conversing with others, encapsulating their thoughts, beliefs, and desires to show who and where they are.

Thirdly, children's narrative is a mirror of children's transformation. Narrative is a symbolic action. Children use stories as a symbolic construction to represent themselves to adults as well as to each other. The representation of events in narrative discourse allows experience to become internalized and owned. Children's narrative, as a form of personal storytelling, is a story of children's "becoming or self-construction." In other words, it is the process of reconstruction of self, a way of assembling meanings. Narrative emphasizes the active, self-shaping quality of human thoughts, and strengthens the power of creating and refashioning personal identity.

Lastly, children's narrative plays a role in the construction of reality. Narrative is a socio-cultural rather than a purely individual activity. Children's narrative exists in the socio-cultural context of everyday interaction with group life and in cultural worlds as well. If we watch and listen, we can see the natural way strangers quickly become participating members of a society. Stories blend with facts, not to deceive us, but, rather, to involve us in the emotional issues that underlie every event. They help children interpret and integrate new ideas into familiar images and feelings by conceptualizing their meanings and relationships. In addition, they play a role by bridging children's imaginary worlds to their real world.

As a supple mold of investigation that allows itself to be, in some respects, recast by the subject it is committed to understanding or "seeing", narrative affords to others the tools of research necessary to allow the world to remain in its labyrinthine form and yet reveal the rich meanings of life. The crux of the narrative perspective is that stories of personal experience are social constructions—they reflect and transform the relationship between self and others.

The concept of narrative is our way of experiencing, of acting, and of living both as individuals and as communities. Likewise, narrative exists in children's every moment. It is a significant avenue by which children disclose how they perceive themselves as individual beings and as social beings. As Sutton-Smith has argued (1986), the study of children's narrative activity forfeits much of its potential to deepen our understanding of their experience and development "if it is constrained by artificial situation." In short, the potential of children's narrative has an enormous impact on the development of educational programs for young children.

CHAPTER 3

RESEARCH METHODOLOGY

This chapter is divided into four sections. The first section outlines the framework of my research methodology. The second section describes the pilot study which led to the final study. The third section addresses the main research questions. The final section defines the research participants, data collection, and data analysis.

3.1. Narrative and Conversation as an Inquiry

Stories are fundamentally about the vicissitudes of human intention (Bruner, 1990; Ricoeur, 1984). Storied narrative (Clandinin & Connelly, 1994) describes everyday conversations that people share to understand events (Bruner, 1990). Narrative is a personal interpretation of events, facts, and situations; it is the means by which people give meaning to what has happened to them, and it shapes how they will interpret future information and experience (Mishler, 1986).

Narrative inquiry ultimately attempts to understand how people think and act in the contexts by which they live. Narrative inquiry's focus on meaning-making shares the ontological and epistemological assumptions of constructivism. A perceived strength of narrative inquiry is its emphasis on actively engaging participants in a joint process of reflection, construction of narrative accounts (in the form of stories), and in meaning-making with the researcher (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). In addition, the researcher is able to draw and construct meaning

from interpretive research texts. Correspondingly, narrative inquiry provides the dynamic and interactive process needed to explore the experiences of children.

To understand what is happening in children's lives through their representations, I need a methodology that can grasp both the dynamic and complexity of children's worlds. Therefore, my study is qualitative in nature and employs a narrative inquiry—an exploratory qualitative methodology—since the focus of this study is on the interpretation of emerging narrative that young children express through play, drawing, and group story-telling. Through narrative inquiry, children's experiences are unearthed and translated into stories that lead us to inquire who they are and where they are. My interest in early childhood narrative is more specific. Since I begin with the assumption that narrative exemplifies the meaning in everyday life, I am able to jump into the process of narrative construction with observation of children's spontaneous play and drawing. This enables me to uncover what is unrecognized, unspoken, or taken for granted in a child's world.

In my approach, I proposed to explore and interpret what young children portray through imaginary play and artwork. This exploration is conducted with the analysis of children's oral and visual narrative. Narrative is mirrored by the children's own experiences and individual lives are interwoven through the stuff of stories. Storytelling is an essential experience and imperative for children because it is a way they construct meaning. Moreover, it preserves what it is they know, how they think, and what they retain in the midst of their experiences. Narrative inquiry is defined, in this research context, as the process of synthesizing and creating meaning (Clandinin

& Connelly, 2000). It combines the use of stories, as a means of capturing individual experience, with the reflective process of inquiry. The inquiry process involves itself with analysis and interpretation of children's narrative.

A qualitative approach using narrative inquiry is a powerful way to integrate life events and to make experiences meaningful. Children's narrative plays an important role in understanding their world-making and detailed lives. Narrative is an acceptable way of telling, writing, thinking, and presenting. Humans are story-telling organisms who, individually and socially, lead storied lives. The study of narrative, therefore, is the study of the ways humans experience the world (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). The concept of narrative inquiry is defined by the view that education and educational research is the construction and reconstruction of personal and social stories; learners, teachers, and researchers are storytellers, characters in their own stories, and in the stories of others (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, p. 2). The role of narrative in research has received a considerable amount of attention during past years, particularly in the fields of literature and historical research (Ricoeur, 1984, 1992). Over the last few decades, there has been broader interest in the use of narrative, crossing a range of disciplines, significantly anthropology (Bateson, 1989; Geertz, 1973), psychology (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Coles, 1989), sociology, and education (Carter, 1993; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 2000; Gudmundsdottir, 1996; Grumet, 1988; Mishler, 1986; Pinar, 1988; Van Manen, 1997; Witherell & Noddings, 1991). Narrative is a complex but illuminating field of inquiry.

The following basic features of narrative inquiry explain why this kind of inquiry is an appropriate method for this research. Narrative inquiry is an inquiry of experience. The landscape of narrative text does not set itself apart from life (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). It is natural for us to want to make sense of children's lives and the contexts in which they live through the telling, the hearing, and the reading of stories. In this study, I have the opportunity to listen to the stories about children's lives and the contexts in which they live through the narratives they create. Narrative inquiry is not a prescription but a pursuit of understanding (Clandinin & Connelly, 2000). The telling of stories usually has a profound impact on both narrator and reader; occasionally the experiences connect the reader to the text with startling intensity. The interpretation of children's experiential narratives often leads to a greater understanding of how children construct meaning and preserve what they know, how they think, and how they capture comprehension in the midst of experiences. Meaning does not exist in a ready form; meaning-making is the processes within a culture (Bruner, 1990). Bruner (1990) calls this the creation of a "transactional relationship" between reality and imaginary/narrative worlds. Transactional connections help learners contextualize what is unknown, thereby affording the learner the power to control understanding and knowledge.

Stories are powerful research tools. They provide us with a picture of real people in real situations, struggling with real problems. They banish the indifference often generated by samples, treatments, and faceless subjects. They invite us to speculate on what might be changed and with what effect (Witherell & Noddings, 1991, p. 280). Furthermore, they have an additional

transformative function, one which is achieved through exploring personal narrative collaboratively.

The subject and the emphasis of this research project firmly positions the study within a phenomenological framework. Drawing on van Manen's (1997) concept of phenomenological understanding, my research aims to draw out the meaning of children's experience and to explore the process of reflection on experience as revealed through narrative texts.

Phenomenology addresses narrative as a significant tool for understanding experiences. It also emphasizes an openness to a variety of meanings, the context in which meanings are created, and the diverse ways that humans view the world. Hermeneutic reflection significantly enlightens narrative as a research methodology. Hermeneutics is based on the philosophical theory that, as researchers, we cannot obtain objective knowledge through research, but can only come to a greater understanding of a phenomenon through our engagement with a context, be it text or dialogue. Hermeneutics searches for questions and meanings that remain open-ended.

Hermeneutic inquiry has been greatly influenced by the work of the German philosopher Hans-Georg Gadamer, particularly in his book *Truth and Method*:

To understand what a person says is, as we saw, to come to an understanding about the subject matter, not to get inside another person and relive his (sic) experience (Gadamer, 1989, p. 383).

According to Gadamer's (1989) idea of the hermeneutic circle of understanding, we require old understandings in order to have new ones, and just as our remembered old understandings are revised with new knowledge, our interpretations exist in an endless circle of mutual

specification and elaboration. So, the process of interpretation is made up of an ever-evolving hermeneutic circle of understanding. Through reflection, we revisit the story, as well as our interpretation of it, in order to develop a new interpretation based on our greater understanding, which comes as a result of our conversing and reflecting. Bontekoe (1996) describes this circular, hermeneutic nature of human understanding:

All human understanding, by virtue of its occurring in time, is hermeneutically circular. Because... we are located always at some moment in space during some moment in time, information becomes available to us only serially... Understanding occurs only when we recognize the significance of the various items that we notice—which is to say, when we recognize the way in which those items relate to each other. Understanding, then, is essentially an integrative activity (p.2).

In addition, hermeneutics is about understanding that happens through language (Smits, 1997, p. 289). It is always related to events and conversations. Understanding is the result of making meaning in the situation. Situations are more than the contexts that are so often referred to in contemporary research. The purpose of conversation is to allow the participants to construct new understanding:

Conversations are a process of coming to an understanding. Thus, it belongs to every true conversation that each person opens himself to the other, truly accepts his points of view as valid and transposes himself into the other to such an extent that he understands not the particular individual but what he says (Gadamer, 1992, p. 385).

Therefore, conversation is a meaning-making activity. It leads to the generation of new knowledge and understanding. From a poststructuralist perspective, discourse is the process of knowledge construction. The idea is important in that it reflects critically on possibilities for

establishing understanding. Spaces of human understanding are within the lived world of experiences and human relationships. Although other discourse contexts for self-construction need to be incorporated into a comprehensive account, the contention here is that conversational narrative is especially worthy of attention. Consequently, narrative inquiry is a hermeneutic practice based on interpretation and reflexivity.

3.2. Pilot Study—Observations and Interviews

Before embarking on the main study, I designed a small-scale pilot study to help me devise the main research study. This pilot study consisted of observations and interviews done in an inner-city, multicultural kindergarten class during a two-month period from March to April 2004 in Vancouver. Interviews were conducted with four five-year-old children (two boys and two girls) and observations were made during two three-hour visits, per week, to their classroom. These observations were made while children participated in morning learning activities and free-choice playtime.

The original intent was to spend several sessions with children and parents, in their homes, for the purpose of data collection through interviews. However, this proved impossible because I found that not every child showed interest in talking to me individually. As a result, he/she answered questions with a brief yes or no. For two mornings a week (from 8:50 until 1:30), I observed each child in the kindergarten setting. The child was interviewed twice (in a semi-structured form) during free-choice playtime, with each interview lasting approximately 30 minutes. The interview focused on family and friend relationships. In order to obtain additional information about each child, a further interview of approximately 60 minutes was conducted with each child's parents. The parent interview focused on the parents' thoughts about their children's narrative and the ways they responded to these stories.

The children's play narratives and interviews were audio-taped, and the children's visual works (with transcriptions of the children's descriptions of their drawings) were collected. A

thematic analysis of this initial data set indicated that children's narratives are a rich source for understanding how they perceive themselves and their worlds. This pilot study provided me with insights into the design of the major project. What I learned from the pilot study was that I should broaden the specific contexts in which children use narrative (i.e., not only oral contexts but also visual representations of children's meaning-making). What children express in the visual context, in terms of peer relationships or family matters, reveals a meaning unique to them alone. Thus, I redesigned my research project to focus on children's narratives that occurred during imaginary play, circle time and drawing. Since the major project was meant to be an intense exploration of just young children's narratives, I came to the decision to discontinue interviews with children and parents together.

3.3. The Research Focus and Questions

Individuals, including children, are active constructors of the social "reality" in which they find themselves. Narrative reveals how people experience their world. By using narrative inquiry, I intended to listen to the narrative told by young children in three different settings in a kindergarten environment: imaginary play area, drawing centre, and group story circle. These three settings were selected as being the most common locations where one might see or hear children's creative narratives. The narratives told by children aged 5 years, individually and with their peers, were used to explore how children come to represent connections between their lives in relationships with others, their environments and their experiences.

Therefore, the research questions were as follows:

1. How do young children represent themselves, their relationships, their experiences, and their environment in the narratives that they create?
2. What themes, issues, or concerns emerge in children's narratives?
3. How do young children represent themselves and others in the roles that they create in their own imaginary play and artworks?
4. What might the narratives tell us about children's imagination, fears, priorities, wishes, and dreams?

The above questions were designed to address a number of issues identified by the literature review and pilot project. The following questions were considered initially, and then revised and redirected during the pilot study. In the final study, following observations, I realized I needed to have more clarifications and specifications regarding questions. It was at this point I realized exploration of the many ways in which children represent meaning-making was beyond the scope of this study. A decision was made, therefore, to focus primarily on the children's accompanying oral language in their imaginary play and their visual representations. Thus, the questions were revised:

1. What emerges in the narratives in imaginary play and drawings?
2. How do young children make connections between their lives and their conceptualization of themselves?

3. What can we learn from the narratives children tell through their drawings and imaginary play?
4. What are the implications of using a knowledge of narrative in developing educational programs for young children?

3.4. Watching, Listening, and Exploring

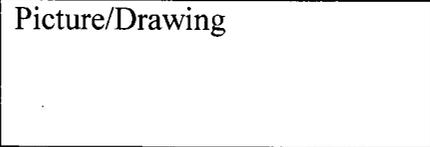
3.4.1. Defining the Participants

The objective of this study was to describe specific aspects of children's composition by identifying interactions, both verbal and non-verbal. The study was conducted in the kindergarten classroom at the early childhood centre attached to a large Canadian university. The majority of children enrolled in the program come from upper-middle class families and represent a mix of cultural, ethnic, and religious backgrounds. The program at the classroom is based on the child-centred philosophy that learning occurs through self-directed exploration.

This study concerns itself with the narratives of six children observed over three months in the kindergarten classroom. Participants were six five-year-old children (a mixed group of three boys and three girls) at the early childhood centre attached to a large Canadian university. After the teacher agreed to a period of classroom observation, she contacted potential participants on my behalf. Ethics approval was also received. In recruiting participants, ethnicity was of no concern; this study was not linked to any specific cultural group since the purpose of this research was to address young children's narratives, in general, told through play and drawings.

The following is a description of each of the participating children, based on our informal conversations and my observations.

Example of sheet

<p>Picture/Drawing</p> 
<p>My name is...</p>
<p>My favourite colour is...</p>
<p>One of my favourite foods is...</p>
<p>I like to play with...</p>
<p>I remember...</p>

* Edward (5 yrs 0 mth)— His favourite colour is blue, his favourite food is pasta with cheese, and his favourite toy is Lego. His memorable event is a trip to Hawaii with his family. Differing from other children, he likes to be alone and he works by himself. He shows much enthusiasm for art activities such as colouring, drawing, and painting. His concentration during the art activities is remarkable.

* James (5 yrs 2 mths)—His favourite colour is purple, his favourite food is pasta, and his favourite toys are Hot Rods. He is proud of having been to Switzerland. He is very active and likes to be around friends. Sometimes, he has a tendency to dominate the peer group.

* Matthew (5 yrs 1 mth)—His favourite colour is blue, his favourite food is spaghetti, and his favourite toys are Hot Wheels and trains. He is a very imaginative boy. In addition, he shows his reasonable and logical thoughts in play.

* Holly (5 yrs 4 mths)—Her favourite colour is light purple, her favourite food is macaroni and cheese, and her favourite toy is her stuffed lamb. She has a little brother named Ryan Alexander Hubert Snelling, whom she describes as “real cute.” She also reports that she and her father are going to see a real volcano explosion some day. She has a relatively outgoing personality, and has a tendency to be a leader in the girls’ group.

* Jessica (4 yrs 10 mths)—Her favourite colour is blue, her favourite food is ice cream, and her favourite toys are horses. She is proud of her ability to run quickly. She is also very good at drawing and painting. She does a lot of imaginary play involving her dog and stuffed bear.

* Kathy (5 yrs 0 mth)—Her favourite colour is pink, her favourite foods are sweets, and her favourite toy is her real little pony. She was born in Canada but has visited Japan. During free-choice time, she spends most of her time in the area of the house centre in the kindergarten classroom.

3.4.2. Use of Qualitative Data Collection

The use of narrative, as both a way to create meaning and as a vehicle and product of this meaning-making process, was fundamental to my study of narrative inquiry. Narrative was collected in three different categories: drawing and other related child-centered activities,

imaginary play, and the stories children told during circle time. Those categories were kept flexible in order to capture all aspects of the children's emerging perspectives. Before I began my formal visit, I had observed the classroom several times, in a casual manner. During the initial phase of the visits, my objective was to feel relaxed with the teachers and the routines of the classroom, and to begin building a rapport with the children.

In my formal visits, I went to the kindergarten classroom every day and listened to what narrative themes emerged during the children's free-choice and circle time sessions.² A morning session lasted roughly three hours (8:30~11:30). The children were greatly influenced by each other. Therefore, it was easy to observe and gather stories from them. The narratives in this study were gleaned from the six children's collaborative play and from their work. When a narration was co-constructed, it revealed not only how one child portrayed him/herself but also how others responded to this portrayal (Miller, Mintz, Hoogstra, Fung & Potts, 1992).

Basically, I placed myself as an observer in the classroom to explore children's narrative. However, my role as a researcher shifted occasionally from a passive to a moderate participant. During children's play and activities, I was a passive participant. Other times, I was a moderate participant, answering questions and playing a role when required. Although I engaged in dialogue with the children, both during and after play, I was still a vigilant observer. I observed children's acts and interactions with peers during imaginary playtime. The children's talk during

² Free-choice time allowed the children to select from a number of activities such as block play, table toys, sand table, art activities, and dramatic play. In circle time, children were generally involved in group activities such as show-and-tell and storytelling with the teacher.

their play was audio/video-taped. In play, children freely entered into and existed within the world of the narrative, sometimes speaking as the teller (and imitating the voices of distinct characters) and other times dropping out to ask for information or help in remembering. They could return to the tale, never having dropped a stitch. In children's diverse imaginary play during free-choice time, I observed their acts and interactions with others and took pictures with my digital camera. In their conversations while at play, the children made use of many of the voices they had developed elsewhere. Since the different or sometimes continuous narrative thread of children's play could weave through several days, my observations extended over this longer time period. I kept detailed field notes to help me understand the context of the children's narratives. In addition, I included interrelated situations such as conversation at the table activities or during snack time. Children's narratives, shared during circle time, were audio-taped as well. Large group sharing time was more teacher-centred. I did not really focus on this, although it provided additional information that helped me gain insight into each child.

Children were encouraged to draw or paint, at their own pace and style, and were reassured that I was not looking for 'good' or 'pretty drawings.' All their artworks were collected and the children's descriptions of their artworks were audio-taped. The ensuing collection of drawings, paintings, and three-dimensional artworks was photographed by digital camera. In addition, conversation with the child, about his or her artworks, was conducted either individually or in groups. All related conversation about the children's artworks was audio-taped and transcribed. I also kept a personal memo as a researcher, a learner, and an inquirer to remind me of my

impressions, views, and issues of potential bias at different stages in the research process. The short memo writing resulted in a set of reflective field notes, including non-verbal observations and impressions from conversations with each child. These notes helped me form and re-form the collective narrative.

3.4.3. Representing Stories into Text

In the social sciences there is only interpretation. Nothing speaks for itself. I call making sense of what has been learned the art of interpretation. This may also be described as moving from the field to the text to the reader. The practice of this art allows the field-worker-as-bricoleur (Levi-Strauss, 1966, p. 17) to translate what has been learned into a body of textual work that communicates these understandings to the reader (Denzin, 1994, p. 500).

The narrative analysis of this study aimed to uncover and reflect upon the particular meanings and values in a child's world. This study drew on analytical approaches to identify emerging themes embedded within storied texts and then used these themes to interrogate the process of synthesizing, ordering, and articulating meaning into a collective narrative form. Analyzing data was an intricate process of reducing raw data into concepts or themes. It involved uncovering layers of meaning. Data analysis commenced during the data collection phase and continued through to the completion of the writing phase. The process of analysis and interpretation, or the drawing of meaning from analyzed data, involved synthesizing and mining for meaning within the collected data, then elaborating on this experience through ongoing interpretation.

To develop and review the narratives, I transcribed them, from the verbatim, into written texts which I collected during playtime and circle time, along with the artworks accompanying the children's conversations. In the process of transcription, I combined other researcher's protocols (Wortham & Rymes, 2003) and my own.

<Transcription conventions>

'?' Rising intonation

'.' Falling intonation

',' Pause or breath without marked intonation

'...,' Segment quieter than surrounding talk, time transition

'...,' Leaving vague statement

[] Observation, transcriber comment

Bold Emphatic comments

Based on the process of transcription, the following steps were taken, in order to analyze the data (Leggo, 2004):

Step one: Read

Reading the children's whole narratives collected from playtime activity, circle time, and artworks to obtain a general sense of children's narratives.

Example: Reading each episode in the transcription

Step two: Interrogate

Exploring the data to identify what issues emerge through the telling of stories and to develop the framework for organizing the narrative into meaningful units, such as using words or concepts within narratives.

Example: Picking up meaningful units such as, “I am a teacher”, “Teacher can order” (Narrative 1 in Chapter 6) and “I am a boss” (Narrative 3 in Chapter 6)

Step three: Thematize

Teasing out the themes and identifying the narrative to that theme, while identifying possible links between key concepts.

Example: Making a theme of “power”

Step four: Expand

Developing and integrating emerging themes reflectively, to identify connections and present possible meanings.

Example: Acknowledging the hierarchy and re-configuration about what they already have in the culture

Step five: Summarize

Summarizing the themes in a statement which clearly represents what is learned from the children's narratives (i.e., what we can learn by way of connections, questions, and insights from the narratives told by five-year-old children).

Example: Referring to each episode commentary

Review and analysis continued throughout the study. Observing, connecting, inferring, and concluding all occurred simultaneously. Interpretations, dispositions and complexities were discovered continuously and these new bits of information made me revise the text more clearly. A recursive process was used to reach meaning-making; it involved reinvestigation, reinterpretation, and deeper inquiry into the texts, then re-examining the narrative to identify themes. As Heidegger notes, "inquiry itself is the behavior of the questioner" (1962, p. 24). In the process of interpretation, I tried to balance my subjectivity by listening to the children's voices embedded in the data. I inquired into the relationship between emerging themes to reveal the meaning of pre-existing themes. My interpretive understanding revealed the meaning of the phenomena through further development and refinement. Interpretation is the unearthing of

hidden meaning and explication in a practical fashion that leads to understanding. Interpretation entailed studying children's ways of acting with their peers and understanding their relations with others. Through a form of intertextuality, I developed my own pattern of understanding for children's themes. The interpretation was not a linear one; it went back and forth between the narrative and the context in which it occurred, before it could be clarified. Taken together, the narrative forms that emerged from this proposed research were used to frame an understanding of young children in the events, experiences, and influences that impacted upon their development.

As Bruner put it, "the central concern is not how narrative text is constructed, but rather how it operates as an instrument of mind in the construction of reality" (cited in Dyson & Genishi, 1994, p. 105). Interpretation is not only the key to understanding human life but also a central condition of human thoughts and action itself. Merleau-Ponty (1968) says that the major goal of the interpreter is to make the invisible more visible. At the same time, the re-reading and rewriting of children's stories/ texts allows conversations to continue within this text, and serves to deepen and enrich the meaning of the story. The interpretive process thus elucidates and decodes not only the superficial meanings of the stories, but also hints at deeper patterns of organization and information. The relationship between the meanings assigned to the whole of a text (story) and its constituent parts will illuminate it. Taylor states this clearly:

We are trying to establish a reading for the whole text, and for this we appeal to readings of its partial expressions; and yet because we are dealing with meaning, with making sense, where expressions only make sense or not in relation to others, the readings of partial expressions depend on those of others, and ultimately of the whole (1989, p. 28).

Children's narrative, in its varied forms and with its symbolic interpretations, offers a valuable and privileged window into the minds of young children. Narrative inquiry is not a procedural system. Rather, it is an experiential activity.

Searching for Unknown...

Children

In the narratives

Affirming of self ability

Confidence,

Inner struggles,

Contested

Conflicts,

Children

In the narratives

Conceptualizing of the world

And the self

Through their creation and re-creation

Children

In the narratives

Forming the sense of self

Crossing re-configuration

Re-interpreting

Re-evaluating

Re-assembling

CHAPTER 4

CONTEXTUALIZATION OF CHILDREN'S REPRESENTING

The present chapter describes the context within which these young children's narratives unfolded. It includes the teaching philosophy of the teachers, continues with a description of the role of the investigator and, finally, introduces emerging themes.

4.1. Surface of the Landscape

To perceive how children represent and use narrative in delineating themselves, their relationships with others, and the environment, we need to see where they are and how they act in the classroom. In general, the children follow a classroom schedule, but this is subject to change depending on special events such as a field trip or a birthday party. However, the children have plenty of time for free choice activity. Through free choice play time, children are able to choose from a variety of activities depending on the children's interests. It is impossible to avoid interacting with diverse personal attitudes, understandings, and interpretations.

The first day of visiting the classroom, I went to the kindergarten classroom with curiosity and wonder. When I entered into the children's place, children were so busy. My inner struggle was how I might show myself toward children and how I could collect their narratives. After three hours of visiting, I came out from the classroom with fear and concern.

Classroom Schedule

8:30~10:00 Free Play & Table Activities
10:00~10:05 Clean up and Wash for Snack
10:05~10:20 Group Snack
10:20~10:45 Group Time
10:45~11:45 Outside Playtime
11:45~12:15 Lunch Time
12:15~12:25 Story Time (Quiet Reading)

This classroom schedule is based on the teacher's philosophy. According to the head teacher, the philosophy of the classroom is as follows:

“We believe that children learn by discovering and exploring their environment. Each child needs to be nurtured and encouraged to express his or her individuality. Children are entitled to a safe, warm, stimulating environment where they can freely develop within their own world through creative play. Moreover, five year old children want to be good and mostly succeed in being good, enjoying life, being enthusiastic, optimistic, and sunny, and living very much in the here and now; they care very much about their own room, own house, own kindergarten classroom; they are expansive intellectually, have difficulty distinguishing between reality and fantasy, have a sense of humor, and begin to understand consequences of behavior.”

The philosophy of the program is based upon social-constructionist and constructivist theories (Vygotsky, 1978). Children are encouraged to investigate, create, and question through planned and unplanned play experiences. The daily curriculum is generated, negotiated, and constructed by all classroom members including teachers and children. A strong sense of community is built as work/activities flow from the children's ideas. That is the explicit motto in the classroom. Based on this philosophy, there are guidelines for the children in the classroom. To create a better learning environment for the children, the guidelines include:

- Establish clear, consistent, and simple limits
- State limits in a positive rather than a negative way
- Reinforce appropriate behavior
- Gain the children's attention in a respectful way
- Recognize and label your child's feelings in situations which may be difficult for him/her

The term guideline describes the teaching and learning process by which children develop socially acceptable and appropriate behavior as they grow to maturity. While there are a wide variety of theories and approaches related to these guidelines, the goal is to assist children in developing self-control, self-confidence, and self-discipline.

As the teacher says, this classroom is a place where we can grow together by providing the freedom to explore the world, the freedom of each child's spirituality, and the freedom of crossing the boundary between the imaginary world and the real world. Reinforcing this philosophy, I noticed the following signs in several different places in the classroom:

In my classroom

My work is safe- this means that no one will disrupt or damage the materials that I am working with

My body is safe- this means that no one will hit me, kick me, push me, or hurt me

My feelings are safe- this means I can express my feelings and opinions without being interrupted or punished



Figure 4. 1. Art Table Setting



Figure 4. 2. Art Centre Setting

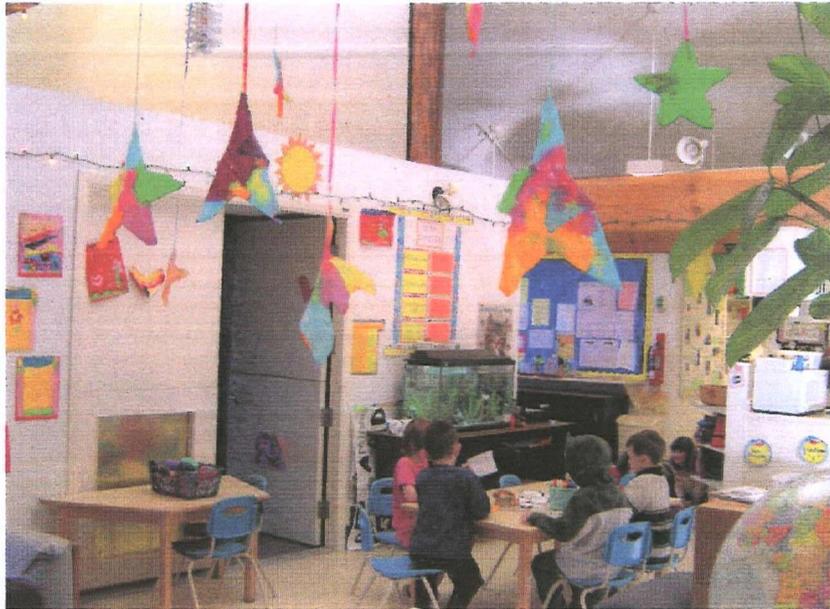


Figure 4. 3. Free Artwork Setting

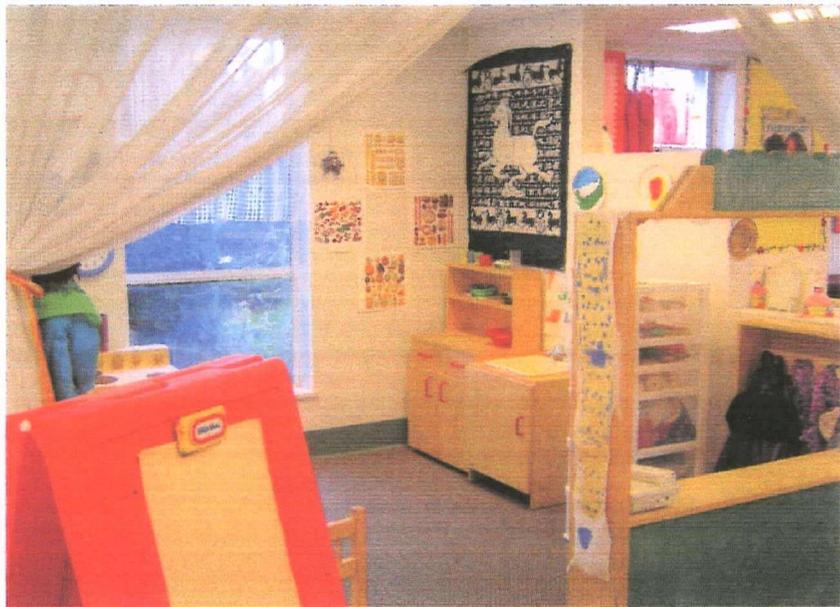


Figure 4. 4. House Centre Setting

4.2. Going Underground: Listening and Responding

When I first arrived in the classroom, I spent some trying to listen to children's stories.

However, initially it was too difficult to concentrate on what they were talking about. Children's speaking at the same time sounds like a cacophony to me. Children always accompany narrative during their activities in the classroom. The analysis of children's transcripts of narrative shows how children make meaning by representing themselves, their relationships, their experiences, and their environment in diverse ways.

To be able to describe how children represent themselves, including their connections with others and environments regarding the issues that naturally emerge during play and related activities, I explored the dynamic processes of meaning-making among the children. Through the analysis of what occurs in children's activities in the classroom, I have been able to identify and describe children's cultural and social themes. What I realized from children's representations was that children go through different stages of being positioned. While I listened to and read children's narratives, I also found that children use narrative as a tactic in showing themselves, protecting themselves, or keeping themselves in the same line with others. The ways of utilizing narrative in the classroom

Second is better than first, and third is better than second! As I always say to myself, today is better than yesterday, and tomorrow will be better than today. As time went on, I felt at ease and the children also became familiar with me. Some children still wondered why I came to the classroom. Children were engaging to say their own ideas, and thoughts through play, and group story time.

Story is important to the children to represent what they think, even if it is undeveloped. For them and also for me, good/ right or bad/ wrong is not important. Story is a good channel for expressing their voices in front of others and a means of transferring their thoughts.

provide a basis for understanding the images in children's meaning-making. Narrated self is a relational self; that is, a self that is defined in relation to others. In other words, the child portrayed himself or herself as "being with" another person.

The following chapters (Chapter five, six, and seven) are emerging themes which children show in their imaginary play and other related activities. All narratives are collected from six children in the classroom activities. Children do not split up play in sequences or linear time, and they talk about play material as part of play even though they do not use it. Sometimes, future events and persons, which have not yet arrived, are involved in the children's narratives in play. These six children's relationships are deeply intimate. These children spend time together during most of the school period; further, they are together, from time to time, after school, for birthday parties and during at-home play or for a sleepover.

*Going and seeing with
children's eyes, from
children's
perspectives, as what
they naturally express-
I am a transfer, a
message carrier to
interconnect two
worlds going through
unsettled boundaries.*

We are playing a role in the world. Likewise, children are playing a role in their world to awake our understanding. Let's pretend to be in their world with their eyes, soul, and spirit. As what children say in the beginning of their play, "Let's pretend..., let's pretend to be a child or in childhood."

CHAPTER 5

ENGENDERING AND PROVOKING

Collaborating with children's narratives opens our eyes to see how young children create and recreate understandings of being and being related with others. Children's artworks and comments suggest the areas that were important for them in their contexts. They are not claiming to be representative of all children; rather, they indicate that young children are competent social actors, aware of their contexts and their ability to influence, as well as able to be influenced by other contexts. Children demonstrate their sense of belonging to the community, as well as the meanings they have constructed through negotiations, interactions, and relationships. Children actively make sense of themselves within the contexts of the people, experiences, and expectations around them. During childhood, although children experience complex and ambivalent feelings defining themselves in their positions, what children represent from emerging perspectives indicates that they are producing the image of social beings. The first common theme I can see in the narrative of children's play and artworks is the 'engendering' of self. This theme emerged from observing how young children show themselves in the beginning stage focusing on "I." Children slowly put themselves into the world by describing themselves in certain ways.

At this stage, children go through the process of recognizing the self by showing how they construct the self through interconnection with peers. Children reveal themselves through many different positionings. In other words, children take many different perspectives as they *position* themselves in the world. Such positioning *provokes* us as teachers and adults to try and understand how children are developing their points of view. They create an image of self as a social and moral human being through interacting with peers, not only in play contexts but also in spontaneous conversations. So, this chapter introduces the first of the three themes to emerge from this study of children's oral and visual narratives. Nine narratives are offered as examples of this theme. A discussion of these examples illustrates what is meant by *engendering and provoking*.

Who is the child? What does it mean to be a child? We have all been children, and we have all experienced the joys, the challenges, and the woes of childhood, to a greater or lesser extent. However, when we stop to reflect on what childhood is, what it means, we need to draw the image of child from diverse contexts.

Imaginary or make-believe play is a multipurpose instrument, remarkably flexible and sophisticated. One of its functions is to enable children to manage their interpersonal differences and conflicts in the story. The playing children transfer their conflicts into the imagined world of play. They pretend that the struggle is conducted not between their own selves but between imaginary figures in the fantasy world of their play.

Narrative 1: “First kid has the first”

Background

Kathy and her close friend, Jane, are in the house centre³. The two girls usually spend their playtime in the house centre and make many different and imaginary plays. Today, they are putting on a play about “Becoming a Princess.” Before they begin, they search for a hairpin to use as part of the costume. Simultaneously, they find it. Evidently, Jane picks it up abruptly and presumes she is the first because she picks it up first. Kathy does not agree with her decision and insists that she found it first. As the two girls are arguing who is the first, Matthew jumps into the situation and makes his observations.

³ House centre is an area for pretend play in the classroom. It is a miniature of a real house setting. There are kitchen supplies and many kinds of clothes, shoes, and accessories to dress up with.

[There are two girls, Kathy and Jane in the house centre. They are playing to become a princess. To dress up and fix a hair, they are busy.]

Kathy: I am the princess. Oh, I need a big pin for hair.

[Jane is not happy about Kathy's decision.]

Kathy: (moving elegantly) Oh, where is my hair pin?

[Jane found the hairpin in the accessories box in the house centre.]

[Then, they are negotiating having a hairpin.]

Jane: This is mine. I am the first.

Kathy: I wanna a pin. No, **I AM THE FIRST.**

I need it.

Jane: I don't think you're the first. I found it first.

Matthew: No. **WELL, FIRST KID HAS THE FIRST.**

Kathy: (to Matthew) You're trying over to her.

Jane: (to Matthew) You're not in charge.

Kathy: He is not in charge of it.

Jane: We don't need a help.

Kathy: No, stop Matthew.

Matthew: (answer in the negative) No. **IT'S UNFAIR.**

[Kathy and Jane show uneasiness toward Matthew. They try to get him out from their area.]

Matthew is providing his judgment. He tries to be balanced between two girls.

Commentary

My initial understanding of this scene is that it is a simple example of being positioned within the context of play. Matthew stands to one side of the two girls' play area for a while. After observing them, he provides a solution to the girls' disagreement. He suggests a morality by saying, "first kid has the first," and "it's unfair." He also shows his negative reaction to the girls' behavior. Matthew emphatically expresses the "fairness" in peer group play. He is keen to make a distinction between what they should do and what they should not do in the classroom. While I observe and listen to Matthew, he highlights his own morality. He keeps in mind what are good manners and what are bad manners toward others. Then, what he says is influential towards making order among his peer group. He gives us insight into how children make the transition to develop a moral/ethical order from their own perspective. His behavior, illustrating the concept of morality, is shown again in the next episode:

Narrative 2: "Everybody needs to clean up"

Background

In the house centre, children are pretending. It is time to clean up. From Kathy's notice, most of the children put on an act, pretending to be busy in cleaning up what they did during playtime. Each child goes through the motions of taking charge of the area where they were playing.

Kathy: (pretending to be a teacher) Everyone,
it's time of clean up.

[But, the rest of the children ignore her notice,
and continue their own conversations.]

Holly: Are you also making a picture frame,
Jane?

Jane: Yes, I am.

Matthew: Yes, I am, too.

Holly: There, picture frame takes time.

...

Jane: I did not play in the house centre.

Holly: Me, either.

I didn't play.

Jane: I know.

Holly: I don't need to get cleaned up anything.

Matthew: **YES. YOU DO. EVERYBODY
NEEDS TO CLEAN UP.**

Holly: No. when I came here, you guys were
playing, so I just came in the tidy time
and then everybody cleans up, but I
didn't play with anything.

Matthew: **I KNOW, BUT EVERYBODY
STILL HAS TO CLEAN UP EVEN
THOUGH THEY DID NOT
COME IN THE PLAY TIME.**

*For children, moral
identification seems to
arise from natural
tendencies to imitate the
parent or other model, a
desire to conform to the
parent's normative
expectations, or a
perception of similarity to
the parent.*

Commentary

Holly and Jane disagree that everybody needs to clean up even though they do not spend much time in the specific area. Matthew, however, does not agree with the girls. As far as he is concerned, everybody has a responsibility to put things in an order after each activity. Once again, he calls attention to what one needs to do in the classroom to be considered a good boy or girl. Matthew insists what each child needs to do in the classroom, through pretend play. His last comment, "Everybody still has to clean up even though they did not come in the play time," signifies the way Matthew describes himself.

Narrative 3: "This is yours and it is mine"

Background

Jane, Holly, and Jessica are in front of the drawing board. Their collaborative drawing begins with Holly's red heart. Holly is drawing a big heart in the centre of a blank piece of paper. She shows her authorship by taking the centre part of the paper. Drawing a big heart with dots indicates an expression of her wishes through her work.



Figure 5. 1. Discussing

Holly: You know what? I am drawing my heart.

We need to divide the space. Here is yours (to Jessica) and here is mine.

Jessica: No, it's not fair. Yours is too big.

Holly: No. I **DO NOT THINK SO**. Let's make a dot, dot, dot,,,,,
You can share my dotted space.



Figure 5. 2. Drawing

Jessica: Do I need to draw a heart here?
Holly: No. We can do whatever we think.
Ya, in your space. That's fair.
Jessica: See? I draw a heart.
Holly: Oh, it's nice.
Jessica: Watch!
Holly: I will do also another heart.
Jessica: I am done. You too do whatever you want.
[Then Holly is copying what Jessica does.]
Jessica: Don't do anything on my heart.



Figure 5. 3. Our Heart

Jessica: I gonna show my painting. After you see what I do, then you can do it.
Holly: I need to try to do.

Commentary

The issue is who assumes the position of conductor in the collaborative work. It depends on who claims the bigger space or who starts first. In this artwork, Jessica and Holly show their inner conflict over taking the space and assuming the role of leader. At first, Holly gets more space, then Jessica shows her unhappiness by denying Holly the right to copy her image. Holly is anxious to have Jessica copy from her, but Jessica does not give her permission to do this; instead, she states ownership.

Considering the narratives in these episodes, we can infer the conceptualization of intersubjective selfhood with morality in the midst of challenges in children's lives. The issue of morality or ethical confirmation frequently emerges in children's narratives during play. Children construct and develop intersubjectivity in peer interaction by negotiating their ideas and experiences. This development of intersubjectivity in peer interaction may be a gradual, continuous process. Right/ wrong and good/ bad and not interrupting others, and being obedient to authority or social order are major means of shaping the image of self. Narrative in play or natural conversation is a critical source of information for children informing them what is and is not normal in the particular worlds they happen to be dropped into.

Bruner (1990) identifies stories of personal experience critical to the development of moral voice. The stories children begin to tell about their own experiences encourage the attentiveness to their own and other minds. Bamberg's (1996) analysis of agency and perspective regarding children's self-other relations in narratives concludes a moral aim—the discursive creation of responsibility and accountability. Whatever children are able to do in the way of reciting moral imperatives or making moral judgments, it is when they position themselves and are positioned by others as moral agents in narratives that their moral identity is negotiated and their moral development takes relevance in their social worlds. What 'is' and what 'ought to be' are parts of a moral discourse. The formation of the moral self, or what may be called "moral internalization" is perceived as approval for moral behavior and idealization of morality.

Narrative 4: "Being like one another"

Background

Amy, Jessica, Kathy, and Holly are at the art table. After snack time, they are painting the picture book again which Jessica brought to the class today. These four children are painting an undersea image in the picture book. They are all under the sea with Mr. Crayons. Each color crayon is personalized. During painting, all of a sudden, Holly brings up the subject of Girls' Club. Playing with only girls after school is called "Girls' Club" among the children. Today, Holly is planning to participate in the "Girls' Club." She confirms plans with the others.

[Amy, Jessica, Kathy and Holly are together again with coloring book at the art table.]

Jessica: I made a house one day.

Kathy: What?

Jessica: You know what? Here, see? I made a house for fishes (she draws a small castle on the edge of the picture book). I am the queen of this castle.

Kathy: I am looking for Mr. Grey.

Jessica: Mr. Grey? Who is he?

Kathy: See (showing the grey crayon)? He is the daddy. I have a family, here is mommy (showing the orange crayon) and two kids (the red and yellow crayon).

Jessica: (holding purple, green and blue crayons) Hello. Here I also have a family.

[Then two girls are in the imaginary family relationship play.]

Kathy: (holding red and orange crayons) Mommy, mommy I want to play with friends.

Jessica: (saying to her crayons) What kinds of play can we do?

Kathy: Well...

[Then they are continuously talking with crayons.]

...

Amy: I will do extra one then you can do on the top. I am gonna do this.

Kathy: I am gonna do this, here.

Holly: Amy, after play with Illen, **WILL YOU GO TO THE GIRLS' CLUB?**

Amy: Yes, I will.

Jessica: I never been there, **BUT I DO HAVE A CLUB IN MY HOUSE.**

Kathy: **CAN I COME?**

Holly: **CAN I COME, TOO?**

Jessica: Yes, of course.

Kathy: **I CAN SLEEP OVER.**

Holly: **I CAN SLEEP OVER, TOO.**

Because I do have a sleeping bag.

Jessica: It's ok. You can just come over and play with me.

Amy: I can sleep over.

Holly: You can see my beautiful Barbie sleeping bag.

Jessica: Actually, I do not have a sleeping bag, but I do have a sleeping box. I actually have three of them.

Amy: Can I have one? Cause Kathy and Holly have a sleeping bag.

Kathy: No. I don't have a sleeping bag.

Jessica: Actually, you can sleep on my bed.

Kathy: No, I do want to have your sleeping box. I always wear a pajama.

Amy: I have a doggy spot.

Jessica: I have a little bear one.

Kathy: Are you happy?

Jessica: I don't know.

Kathy: Are you happy that your friends would sleep over with you?

Jessica:...

Commentary

As it is shown in the above narrative, affirming commonality leads to a sense of “groupness.” The issue of “being common,” “having sameness or similarity,” and “possessing mutuality” makes up a big part of the way children present themselves, and form relationships with experience and the environment. Following other’s behavior or roles in play provides the assurance of being together in a relationship. It serves to increase solidarity within the group. Groupness strategies are conversationally based and reinforce the group. Children point out the similarities in each other’s narratives, which is undeniably an act of establishing solidarity. Planning and remembering narrative are best understood in terms of other group affirming behaviors that occurred in this girls’ friendship group. In this episode, Kathy is anxious to come to an agreement with her but Holly also wants to have an agreement. Holly and Kathy try to compromise by stating their plan. Planning to go over to one another’s house or building common themes are examples of affirming behaviors in the girls’ group. These negotiations serve to increase solidarity within the girls’ group.

Narrative 5: "I am gonna be a coyote"

Background

James, Jessica, and Matthew are in the house centre. These three children are role-playing with animals through imaginary play. The title of their play is the Animal Kingdom. In this animal play, Jessica chooses a role as a coyote. To join in this play, James and Matthew decide to be coyotes as well.

Scene #1

[In the house centre, James, Jessica and Matthew are planning for animal play. Jessica is again baby coyote.]

James: Are you a coyote, Jessica?

Jessica: Yes,

James: **I AM GONNA A BIG COYOTE**

He is living in the mountain. He is strong.

Matthew: I am going to be a big coyote, too.

James: No, Matthew. I am the **BIG** one. We just need one **BIG** coyote.

Matthew: Why? We can have **TWO BIG** coyote.

Jessica: **I AM A BABY COYOTE.**

[Then three children are making a sound of coyote. They are walking and wandering in the imaginary forest to hunt some prey.]

...

[They are pretending the actions of a coyote randomly. Those three children's voices of groaning are getting high pitched. There is noise. In this chaos, James suggests an idea.]

James: No, Jessica. We need a rule. One time I get out, then you come, ok?

[Three children's coyote play continues.]

In showing self in the play, the utterance of each one is significant.

Scene #2

[Jenny suggests Jessica play in the house centre.]

Jenny: Jessica, you're always in the house corner.

Jessica: Because I like it.

Jessica: **I WANNA A BABY DOGGY.**

[Then Matthew and James joined in girls' play.]

[But James is not interested in the play very much; instead he is upset because Jessica is gone from his play area.]

Matthew: I will be a doggy, too, Jessica.

Jenny: I only need a baby sister.

James: Here, I have two spots for secretary in the grocery shop. If you do not come, I will never play with you, Matthew.

[Then children extend doggy game crawling and barking in the classroom.]

Commentary

In this narrative, Jessica plays a role as a baby coyote and a doggy. In the beginning, she assigns herself a specific character. The interesting point is that she does not want to have a more significant position; instead she insists on being the small and not highly influential role of a coyote, doggy, or something else to do with an animal. During my observation period, she consistently wants the role of the littlest one or the baby. In real life, she is the oldest in her family. She has one younger brother and one baby sister. However, in her play world, her self-representation involves taking a completely different role. In her imaginary world, she can be whatever she wants and she is free to act or represent anything she thinks of. In addition, whenever Jessica plays in the house centre, she likes to be an animal, such as a doggy or bear.

Moreover, she is always holding a stuffed doggy or bear. She seems to have empathy toward these objects.

Narrative 6: Kathy's story

Background

The following playtime activities take place between Kathy and Jane for several days. Through these particular conversations with (in) the world, Kathy is constructing the image of herself through ordinary experiences in play. The following scene represents a baby's delivery. In this play, she is copying from others and adding her imagination.

Scene #1: "Baby is coming out"

[Girls (Jane, Kathy and Jessica) are in the house corner. They are playing baby delivery.]

Kathy: I am a doctor.

Kathy: (to Jane) You're a baby.

Jessica: I will be a mom.

[Then three girls are taking a pose like an operation room in the hospital.]

Kathy: (to Jessica) push, push.

[Then she makes the sound of a baby crying.

Time change is very fast.]

[Suddenly, baby came out in the world. Jane is drinking milk holding a milk bottle. Then Holly comes to the house corner.]

Jane: Holly, you are a sister.

We do not have a dad. He is dead.

We only have mommy, sister, and doggy.

Scene #2: "Let's pretend..."

[Kathy and Jane are in the house centre.

They are repeating, "let's pretend"]

[Kathy does act even though there is nothing.]

Kathy: Jane, let's pretend (pointing to a cloth) this is your bed.

Jane: No, I will put this (pointing to another cloth) one on my bed.

Kathy: Ye, ye, ye.

Let's pretend a little kid.

Jane: I will be a grown-up lady.

Kathy: Jane, Meggie, Ben, Jessica and me will go camping.

Jane, you don't have much money, but I got lots of money. Jane, you put the money to our money then everybody will ask...

Jane: I do not have money.

Kathy: Your mom and dad will put the money, and everybody will put money to our money then we have a big stuff then everybody can make and get whatever they want but we won't.

Jane: I don't see my parents won't give my money.

Kathy: We will make our money together and everybody can buy what we want.

Jane: Well, but it won't happen because you need my mom and dad's money also and they won't give it to you.

Kathy: My mom and dad have more money then we can buy anything what we want.

...

[Then they decide to change their play. Kathy and Jane are pretending as students on the talent show.]

[They are wearing a dress.]

Kathy: Whao, we look like a rock star.

My sister always does like this. When we are in the home, we are playing like this.

(To Jane) you can be like a my sister.

Me: Do you have a sister, Kathy?

Kathy: Yes, her name is Eva.

Jane: No, I do not have a sister.

Kathy: We are in the rock star class.

The most interesting part in her play is that she is always confirming what is happening in the play, such as "let's pretend...", or "this is...."

This is not a real class, it is a club.
[Then Kathy wears a Japanese costume.]
Kathy: See? Do I look like a Japanese rock
star?
[Kathy pretends to lock the door; then she
still stands for a while to stop everything.]

Scene #3: "It's winter"

[Kathy and Jane are playing with winter
imagination in the skiing play.]
[Kathy wants to play a leader role.]
Jane: I do not want to play with you here.
Kathy: Oh, Jane.
Jane: No, I do not want to play skiing.
Kathy: No, Jane, you can play skiing.
Jane: No, it's not downhill.
Kathy: But, we can pretend.
Let's pretend.
Santa is our father.
Jane: Wha, Santa is daddy? Hahahahah
Kathy: We can pretend.
Jane: We need a winter coat.
Then I will make a frost, cause it is very
cold. It's very cold now.
Then we need some place to get into a
warm house.
[Then Kathy suggests under the table.]
Kathy: Here, this is our warm house.

Scene #4: "Playing mommy"

[Kathy and Jane are in the conversation. Then
they are building a ladder.]
[Kathy is building a ladder higher and her
voice is also higher and higher.]
Kathy: I saw a fire on TV with my daddy.
Jane: Let's pretend to be a firefighter.
[Then two girls are representing the scene of
fire.]
Kathy: Do you know we have another fire?
Jane: Where?
Kathy: In Canada.
Jane: Which house?
Kathy: Explains.
Jane: (she comes to house) Oh, in side of
home. It's a big fire. Here is a ladder.
You guys can go down with ladder.
Kathy: Help me, help me. Oh, no, fire is

higher and higher (then her voice tone is also getting higher and higher).
[They imitate a real situation. Then two girls are playing with mini house and dolls.
Mommy and sister play!]
[They are cooperating very much.
They have three different mini dolls, one is mom, one is older sister and the other one is a younger sister.]
[Kathy is mom and Jane is a daughter (she pretends to be older and younger sister).]
Kathy: Zee, (to Jane) you watch a TV, see what your sister does.
Jane: No, I am going to ballet class.
Jane: Bye, mom, bye, mom.
Kathy: Oh, you had my shoes.
[Then they bring a mini house and make a street.]
Kathy: This is a dental clinic.
Jane: No, it's a ballet class.
[Then Jane brings another woman doll.]
Jane: This is a teacher.
Kathy: Why?
Jane: Because she wants to teach me.
Kathy: But I think she wants to teach me, too.
Jane: You can be my ballet class, too.
But you need to be older.
Kathy: I am enough old. Then both of us could be old.
Jane: I am gonna home.
Kathy: I am gonna to mama.
Kathy: (as a mom) Hello, dear (like mom voice).
Kathy: (as a younger sister) Hello, mama.
Jane: Mom, I don't like her. She came to my ballet class.

In the conversation with the world, she is going through interactions with subjectivity and objectivity.

Scene #5: "We do have a dog"

[Kathy and Cindy are in the house centre.

They are making a space for baby dog.

Cindy is an owner. Kathy is a baby.

Cindy is fanning.]

Cindy: I'm hot. Doggy you must be hot, too.

[Then she is strongly fanning.]

Cindy: Pretend baby is here (pointing under table).

Cindy: Baby, baby, come back baby.

[Kathy is under table.

Under table is a space for Canada dog.

Kathy is lying on the floor with blanket.

Cindy is pretending to wash her doggy.]

Cindy: You know where this is from?

Me: No.

Cindy: It is not from kindergarten.

I brought it from my home. It's mine.

Cindy: You need to dry. Are you hungry?

Cindy: (to Kathy) Baby, it's time to eat.

[In a few seconds]

Cindy: Baby, it's time for nap.

Cindy: That's a Canada dog's space. You can not lie there.

Baby, it's time for Canada dog to sleep. Get out of here.

[But Kathy is trying to take the same spot.

Kathy and Cindy come back to the house centre. They are arranging all cups to begin another playing- selling.]

Kathy: Let's set up for store. We sell everything.

Cindy: But we need somebody to buy.

Kathy: First of all, we need money.

[Then she is searching for fake money.

Both girls work hard in setting up.]

Kathy: (shouting) Come, Come.

Holly: Maybe nobody comes.

Kathy: No, get out of here.

Kathy and Cindy are playing three different episodes within one play. Children are going around their play world.

[Kathy and Cindy are discussing what kinds of drinks to sell.]

Kathy: Lemonade?

Cindy: Kathy, I think you need to get more money.

Kathy: (to me) You can have money.
Then walk over there. We have a table for Lemonade.

[Then I went in front of them.]

Kathy: Do you wanna Lemonade?

We have many flavors.

Me: Do you? So what kinds do you have?

Kathy: We have this (pointing to the peach can) peach and fruit cocktail flavor.

Me: I'd like to have a peach flavor.

[Kathy is pretending to make it.]

Me: Thanks, how much is it?

Kathy: One dollar.

Me: Here.

[Then Cindy also persuades me to shop.]

Cindy: We also have shoes. See?

Me: But I do not have enough money.

Cindy: It's okay. I have a lot of money.

[Then she gives me some money.]

Me: How much?

Cindy: Five dollars.

Me: Here.

[Kathy invites me again into the house centre.

Then she suggests I have a sandwich.

She also makes me pay money.

After playing with money, then Kathy pretends to finish her play.]

Kathy: Yes, the store is closed.

[She also locks the door of the store.]

Kathy: Here is your sandwich.

You need to pay for it.

[Then she gave fake money.]

Me: How much is it?

Kathy: Fifty.

[Then, I give two quarters.]

Kathy: Thank you.

[Then she put the dollars on top of the sandwich.]

Me: How can I eat money?

Kathy: No, this is a chocolate.

...

What underlies the event in this shopping scene is the predictable routine and familiar aspect of ordinary life.

Kathy: The store is closing.
Cindy: Thank you so much for your shopping.

Commentary

Kathy experiences many different roles through play. By changing roles in her imaginary play, she is building a concept of herself in appropriate places. These evoke how she is acting depending where she is. She also weaves various settings with the actions and numerous voices of characters. From this perspective, she begins life as a social being within defined social network and, through the growth of communication and language, and in interaction with others, constructs a social world.

In the first play, Kathy assumes her role as a doctor. What she shows in the play, while describing the delivery of a baby, is her expectations and her anticipation of the baby's arrival. When Kathy acts as a role of seller in store, she positions herself in the commerce world. She demonstrates the role of seller by considering the item which they choose to sell and calculating the price of the item. In the role of cashier, she not only follows the routine but also determines what is on sale and the price of each item. Kathy is exposed to diverse female roles through multiple narratives. However, she typically chooses the roles of woman such as mother, cashier, and daughter. These roles and her voices revolve around her social world. Her narratives disclose her understanding of gender, family relationships, and economics. Overall, her narratives articulate the ways she makes sense of the world and examines the possibilities of her life.

Narrative 7: "I know better than you"

Background

James and Edward are sticking pushpins on the light board. Unintentionally, they make an abstract image. Then, they develop their story by weaving in a scientific theory. Holly observes them for a while and then interrupts their story.

[James and Edward are putting color pushpins in the light board, called Lite Brite.]

[James and Edward are competing in the number that they had.]

Holly: Every people can different picture, then, other designs and creation.

James: Why not the same color?

Holly: Maybe not the same color as you, then not the same design.

James: No.

...

James : I'm making a creation.

Edward : (pointing what he makes) **THIS IS
ALL FIRE AND IT'S A
NUCLEAR.**

Edward: **IT'S HEATING ON THE EARTH,
ALWAYS HAS FIRES ON THE
EARTH.**

Holly: I don't think that's true.

Edward: Yes, it is.

Holly: It can only get fire, maybe not there.

Edward: **NO. IT GOES SO FAST BY SUN,
IT BURNS UP EVERY HOT, THE
CLOSER TO THE EARTH, THE
HOTTER, IT GETS AND THAT IT
BURNS UP.**

Holly: I don't think so. I think it has to go flow
the surface on the Sun.

James: I know it figures out two hundred, it has
to be too many ways from sun it gets
burned.

Holly: No.

Edward: Usually, miles away hits up very
fast.

Holly: You know what, I heard before about the
space. It is joke.

Edward: No it isn't.

Holly: Kind of joke.

Edward: No, it isn't.

James: Yes, it is.

Edward: No, it isn't.

Holly: Edward, it is a joke.

Edward: No, it isn't. My friend, Jake, had told
me that. He knows a lot more about
space than you two.

Commentary

In this narrative, Edward is explaining his scientific theory to others. He is very confident in what he believes. Edward demonstrates his position firmly by asserting his scientific theory. His superior knowledge is a useful way to establish credibility and show off his personal ability.

Knowledge is a way to build a concept of self.

Narrative 8: "We need to tell them"

Background

Holly and Amy are at the art table. Suddenly, while they are making their personal creations, they bring up the issue of Christmas presents. In the following conversation, Holly has her own theory about why children need to give explicit instructions to adults.

[Holly and Amy are talking about Christmas presents regarding adults.]

Amy: I am making a present for my mom and dad.

Holly: You know what?

Amy: Today, I will make a Christmas present. We should make a present for Christmas.

Holly: No.

Amy: My dad is now in India, so I can make it for him.

Holly: Is Christmas in India? What do you do Christmas in India?

Amy: Yes, I can give a present to my mom and dad. Hum,,, in India my dad gets lots of present.

Holly: I know India does, but you know what?

**SOME ADULTS DON'T KNOW
WHAT PRESENT FOR YOU. YOU
HAVE TO TELL WHAT PRESENT
YOU WANT. MAYBE YOUR MOM
AND DAD NEVER DO. IF THEY
DON'T KNOW WHAT PRESENT
YOU WANT, THEY WILL NOT
GIVE IT TO YOU.**

Amy: No, it' weird. It's not real.

...

[James who was listening to the conversation of two girls was whispering to Holly.]

Amy: No, James. That's not good.

[Then Amy showed discomfort in terms of James' act.]

Commentary

From Holly's perspective, even children need to express their opinions honestly to adults. This reveals her intellectual analysis of the adult world. In addition, she expresses what she expects or anticipates from the adults. She reveals herself as a being who has the ability to communicate her thoughts.

Narrative 9: "Talking with inner self through constructing metaphor"

For children, the creation of a metonymy/metaphor is another way of communicating. In this study, the children are interested in presenting themselves, their experiences and their memories through metaphor. Jessica recreates the following:

Drawing is one of the many languages which children use to 'talk' about their world, both to themselves and to others (Dyson, 1990; Gallas, 1994; Lindqvist, 2001).



Figure 5. 4. My Bear (by Jessica)

Jessica: This is my Bear. I like bear very much. I have many different kinds of bear dolls in my home.

Jessica is very interested in drawing and painting. She is excellent at representing/ expressing her emotions through art, especially drawing. She has great potential as an artist. It is hard to believe what a five-year-old can draw. Her drawings and story lines are wonderful. But why does the plot of her stories focus on an animal, the BEAR. She has several picture books created by herself. She shows her picture books and her favorite items several times at show-and-tell time in the larger group.

Jessica is the child who likes to express herself through visual works such as drawings, paintings or making three-dimensional objects. What commands my attention is that her drawings are closely attached to her personal favorite subjects or objects. Jessica's drawing is always related to an animal such as a bear (beary, as she calls it) or a dog (doggy, in her words). When she is given the opportunity to express herself in a visual form, she draws a bear as a symbol of herself. These are all connected to her lifestyle. What I assume, from her storytelling about herself, is that she likes to read a lot of animal picture books. Evidently, her interest revolves around the world of animals. Ultimately, her impressions are represented and reconstructed in play as well as through playing a role involving one of her animal friends. Her life story is similarly shown by interweaving play and artwork.

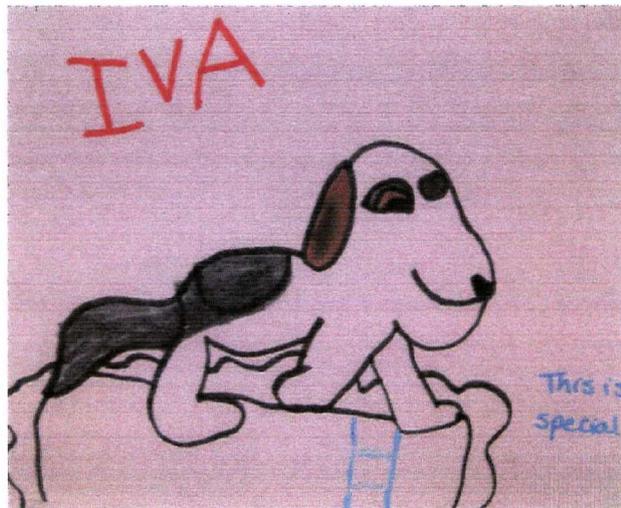


Figure 5. 5. My Doggy (by Jessica)

Jessica: This is my special toy, doggy doll. I got this one on my birthday. He is beside my pillow in my bed.

Her life is also interlinked to what she considers important. Her doggy toy has very special meaning to her because it was a birthday present from her parents. It was given to her by the most influential persons in her life. She explains why she is so strongly attached to this toy. The most important reason is that this dog toy always has a happy face. This is another way that she expresses her own joy. When she draws this picture, she is recollecting past experiences and reflecting on those moments.

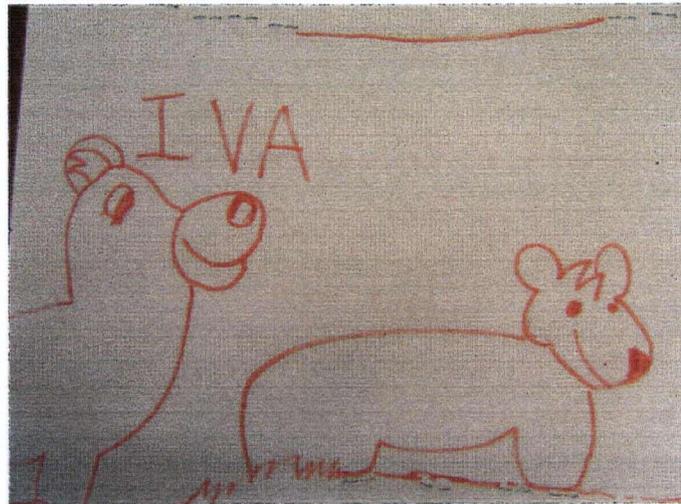


Figure 5. 6. Mommy and Me (by Jessica)

Jessica: This is mommy pony and baby pony. Like my mommy and me.

This is another drawing illuminating her reciprocal engagement with her mother. Again, she uses her metaphor of an animal. As Thomson (1995) says, young children tend to modify their ideas for visual expression by creating a series of works on a single theme. What I interpret from her drawing is the peaceful atmosphere between the two ponies. Stability and warmth are shown in this drawing. One of the interesting ways that children create themselves is by making a

picture storybook. Young children are not mature enough to express themselves verbally.

Therefore, using art (a story book, in particular) with drawing provides them with a way of conceptualizing their thoughts. In this sense, the following story is a helpful way to make sense of Jessica's moral/ethical thoughts. It is a story about cleaning the teeth of her bear friend.

Jessica is going through the experience of losing a tooth. In this story, her experience is mirrored by her imaginary friend. Jessica's visual story illuminates clearly how children construct meaning to enrich their understanding of the world.

Title: Cleaning teeth (by Jessica)



Figure 5. 7. Cleaning Teeth

This book is "Brushing teeth." Once upon a time, there was one bear.



Figure 5. 8. Cleaning Teeth

He likes sweet things very much. He always eats sugar, candy and chocolate. His teeth becomes black like me (then she shows her own cavity in her mouth). His mother tells him "Clean up your teeth." But he does not like to brush them.

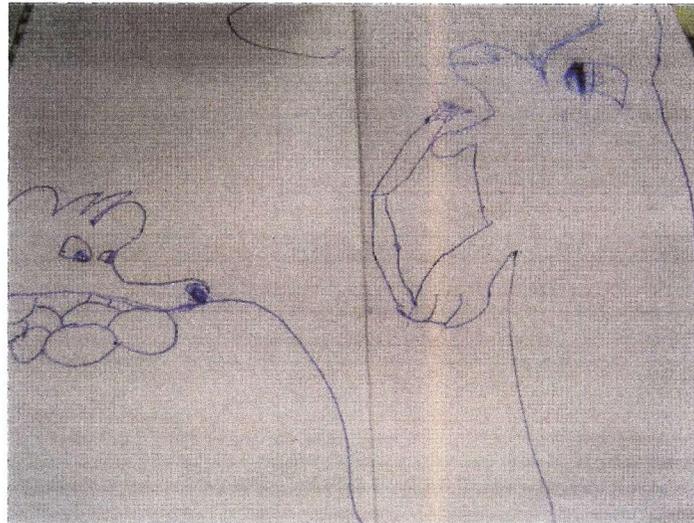


Figure 5. 9. Cleaning Teeth

One day, the bear and his friend brush their teeth together.



Figure 5. 10. Cleaning Teeth

Then they have clean teeth. So mommy bear hugs the little baby. Then they smile and they are happy.

Jessica: I also need to brush my teeth everyday. My mother says that if I do not, I will lose my teeth. Isn't it funny. See? I lost one of my teeth. Today, I can see something white. I think my new tooth is growing.

What Jessica shows in this picture book reflects her own experience. "Good girl" is the one who listens and follows her mother's advice. She changes her disposition from negative to positive. Drawing is another avenue by which to reinterpret one's image of the self. It is a transforming mirror that reflects experience using metaphor or symbol. To represent herself, Jessica uses the image and character of a bear. What I infer from her drawing is that she uses the metaphor in the construction of significant meaning. With all the visual materials available to children today, it seems natural that they borrow from cultural sources in creating their own art work (Wilson & Wilson, 1982). In Jessica's drawing, she simply copies her favorite superheroes and characters, and then she re-invents her own characters and narrative plots. Likewise, children

use drawing as another way of reinterpreting and reflecting on themselves. In their drawings, there exists joy, hope, past memories and dreams of the future.

The symbolic world plays a role as a “third space.” This is a generative place where children can negotiate with their real experience and the reflected experience created via symbol or metaphor. Bruner (1990) calls this the creation of a “transactional relationship” between reality, memory, and imaginary/narrative worlds.

Edward is a relatively quiet boy. He is not really involved in group activities. He usually plays by himself and spends a lot of his time in the art centre, working at drawing or painting. The following are his representations of beauty and himself. In the first drawing, I uncovered his concept of beauty. In the

wonderland, there are smiling people, sun, trees and flowers. Interestingly, he is the centre of that world. According to his explanation about this picture, he wants to live in this kind of world. There is his freedom.

Gallas (1994) takes an expanded view of children's narrative, not confining them to the spoken or written word, but including the stories they tell from early childhood in dramatic play, in their drawings and paintings, in movement and spontaneous song.

Gallas (1994:xv) takes the view that children's personal narrative, formed in an attempt to order and explain the world from all aspects of their experience, are often part of the silent language that embodies thinking.

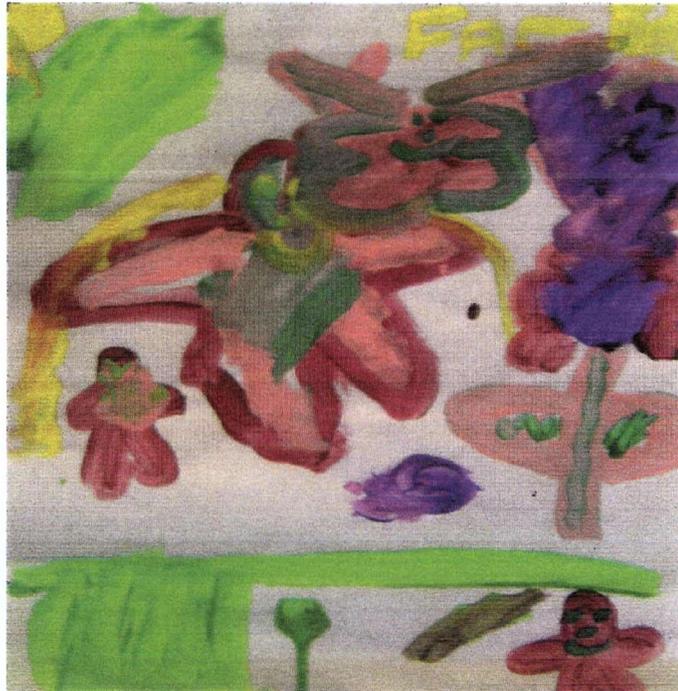


Figure 5. 11. Wonderland (by Edward)

Edward: Here is the world. There are trees and flowers. See? Everybody is flying.
Because this is the wonderland.

The second picture of Edward's is an expression of himself. It shows a reflection of his life. As it shows a smile on his face, it reflects what he feels about his daily life. Differing from his ordinary life in the classroom, when he expresses himself on blank paper, he is very confident and even his self-esteem is strong. He expresses wishes that are opposite to his real life. Although he is a passive and quiet boy, in his drawing, he becomes a 'king,' in a high ranking position and powerfully strong. This indicates how drawing is a means of revealing the hidden feelings of children. As the following drawing shows, Edward uses diverse colors to reveal his feelings.



Figure 5. 12. Myself (by Edward)

Edward: I am smiling. This is what I think about king. Yesterday, I read a book. I would like to be a king. So I am wearing a crown.



Figure 5. 13. Love (by Kathy)

Kathy: This is a flower and heart. My heart has eyes and mouth. She can speak. My mum always says to me 'I love you' and I also love my mum.

Kathy is keen to express herself by creating a metaphor of a plant, such as a tree or flower. She likes to draw flowers. Her drawings include flowers and also bright colors such as red, pink, or orange. This is her expression of love. From her perspective, love is to do with the heart, and this is also represented by a smile. In addition, the meaning of love is rearticulated through the motif of a flower. The metaphor of her life experience is shown by the following painting: This is from her memory of a picnic she went on.



Figure 5. 14. Picnic (by Kathy)

Children reveal their own memories in two-dimensional drawings and paintings and also in three-dimensional structures. When Holly constructs something with volume, it is more realistic to her. Her experience seems to reconfigure itself through the process of building this work.



Figure 5. 15. Helens Mountain (by Holly)

This is Holly's representation of her trip. She remembers the joyful experience of having been at Mt. St. Helens with her daddy. The most memorable family event was a trip to the volcanic mountain. Through this three-dimensional object, she describes the sight of the mountain with running magma made of red paper. Further, she expresses the process of exploding. When she represents her experience through art, she shows her excitement and awe of nature.

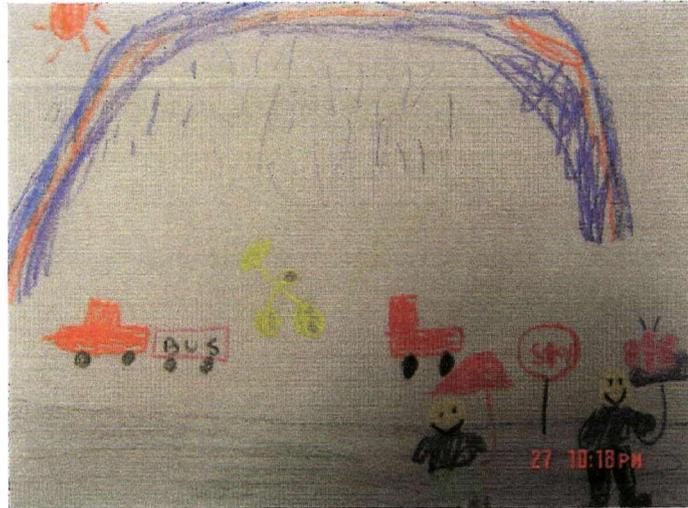


Figure 5. 16. On the Way to School (by James)

James: Today, I came to school with my daddy. It was raining. We walked with umbrella. I saw the school bus and other big kids. I like to come with my daddy. See? My umbrella is pretty. Mine has a butterfly. I got this one from my grandma. She is so nice. She always gives many presents to me.

This is James' daily experience of coming to kindergarten. For him, coming to kindergarten is a big pleasure. What I infer, from his facial expressions and the colours he has chosen, is that his life is filled with a lot of joy and enthusiasm for the new day.

Children are building a conceptualization of self. How they act as social and moral beings is expressed by their play and art narratives. Through describing the image of self directly, they imply how and what they think and feel. This is the first stage in the process of molding a self.

CHAPTER 6

CROSSING TEXTS AND RE-CONFIGURATION

What I realize from listening, reading and capturing the essence of children's narratives is that children are in the stage of configuring. In developing one's self through interaction, children represent how they reconstruct themselves through the experiences of contested negotiation and defining the concept of self via appropriate positioning. What children show in their narratives is that they reveal social and cultural values, such as hegemony and gender distinction. Children go through the transition experience from "I" to "We" or "We-ness." They are crossing the boundaries of "self" to "othering." This chapter introduces the second of the three themes to emerge from this study of children's oral and visual narratives. Eleven narratives are offered as examples of this theme. A discussion of these examples illustrates what is meant by *crossing text and re-configuration*.

The world of children's narratives may look like a microcosm of the world of work they will soon encounter, but it is neither a world they are required to reproduce nor one to which we have a simple or direct relationship. The interpretation of narrative texts can show us how children understand their world in complex, socially available, organized ways, and how we, as researchers actively construe meaning as we try to understand children's stories. Interpretation is the articulation, that is, the laying out and explication of possibilities that have become available in practical understanding.

Narrative 1: "Let's play a teacher"

Background

Holly, Matthew, and James are in the story centre. They are busy preparing to play teacher. Holly brings a chair, puts it in the centre of the space, and arranges it in place. Then, James picks out one of the books from the bookshelf. He sits on the teacher's chair while Holly and Matthew sit in the children's area. They call this activity the 'game of being a teacher.'

Children are providing and enriching their voice to make us understand their world.

James plays the role of a teacher. Like the usual schedule with a real teacher, James checks the children's attendance and he gives the new announcement for the day. After that, he announces that today is Show and Tell day. During this play time activity, he changes his voice, making it deep and low like a male teacher. In the beginning, it seems to go well. However, in the middle of the activity, conflicts emerge over the role and status of the children.

[Holly, Matthew and James are imitating the game of show and tell like a teacher.]

[They are negotiating to take a role of teacher. Holly suggests he be a teacher in turn from her.]

James: No, that is so mean. **I WILL**

SUGGEST THE WAY OF DOING.

Each for two turns. James, James,
Holly, Holly and Matthew, Matthew.

James: Are you guys with ok?

Holly: Why are you doing all?

James: **BECAUSE I AM A TEACHER.
YOU SEE, TEACHER ALWAYS
CAN ORDER. TEACHER CAN
DO WHATEVER.**

James is finding his subject by constructing a social reality.

Commentary

James is trying to maintain his position in the group by borrowing the teacher's authority. He demonstrates his strength by acting out verbally what it is like to be big and strong. The teacher seems to have extraordinary authority in the classroom; he or she is the one who makes decisions and rules for the students. Therefore, the children are arguing about who takes the role of teacher. Taking a teacher's position means controlling the group and dominating the others. In this process, I observe the underlying hierarchy. James wants to emphasize his position in the group by saying, "I will suggest the way of doing," or "Teacher always can order," or "Because I am a teacher." By vocalizing the current situation repeatedly, he solidly asserts himself as a power-holding person.

Narrative 2: "James' Restaurant"

Background

When I enter the classroom, several children are busy and rush into the house centre. On the blackboard in front of house centre is written "James' Restaurant." James shouts, "Today, we open the James' restaurant, James's restaurant, James' restaurant." Then he goes around the classroom and shouts. He also comes to me and says, "Come in James' Restaurant." Holly, James and Matthew are arguing over choosing a role in the restaurant play. Simultaneously, I can hear their high-pitched voices debating/negotiating each other's roles.

Day 1

[In the house centre, Matthew, James and Holly are role-playing in a brand new restaurant.]

James: Hey, Holly. You can set the table.

Holly: Yes.

Matthew: Sorry, **YOU CAN'T MAKE YOUR OWN WAY ALWAYS.**

James: Can I set the table?

Teacher: Who is a cook?

James: It's me.

Teacher: What is your job, Holly?

Holly: I am setting the table.

Teacher: I will bring a cash register.

Matthew: (pointing to each one) James, you're a cook, Holly, you're setting, though.

James: Can I be a cashier?

Matthew: No, I am.

James: I am not playing here.

Holly: No cook now.

Matthew: (to Holly): Do you wanna be a cook?

Holly: I will give it up.

Matthew: I will start the game.

...

Matthew: It's ok. You guys keep going.

Holly: You might forgive your friends and you get out from here. I will do a cash register.

Holly: (bringing a doll of baby) It's normal to baby.

Matthew: No. No. No baby.

James: Babies are allowed to have a meal.

Matthew: No. I do not want to have a baby here.

...

James: My birthday is coming. I will invite all my friends on my birthday, **NO MATTHEW, YOU.**

Holly: **MY MOTHER TOLD ME DO NOT DO BADLY TO FRIENDS.**

James: (to Matthew) **YOU MIGHT FORGET. THE IMPORTANT THING TO OTHER FRIENDS.**

Matthew: I'm not.

Day 2

[Today, James' Restaurant is re-opened.
James and Holly are in the house centre to set
up James' Restaurant.

Matthew and Benny also joined.

Teacher leads how to set up the restaurant.

Silvan and Nathan are the first customers.

Then Holly introduces all menus such as
main dishes and dessert.

James, Benny, Holly are all wearing same
bow tie.]

James: (shouting) James' Restaurant is
opened.

Matthew: (shouting) James' Restaurant is
opened.

Holly: (shouting) James' Restaurant is
opened.

Teacher: Say James' Restaurant is opened for
business.

[Then three are again shouting.]

Teacher: Now you need to set up for
everything for customer.

[Regardless of teacher's advice, three
children are still shouting to gather customers
to their restaurant.]

Teacher: Then, you can introduce your
restaurant.

Holly: Would you come to James' Restaurant
and then we have many tasty menus.

We have a Spaghetti, and for dessert,
we have cake, fruit, and ice cream.

James: No, we don't make an ice cream.
Instead, we have a Rolly Pops.

...

[Benny, Illean, and Matthew are the second
set of customer.]

Matthew: No, there is nothing what I want to
eat.

James: Illean, open your menu. What do you
want to have?

Matthew: Give me your dessert menu.

James: No. This time is for ordering a main
dish.

Matthew: Huh, waiter, can I get another
menu? I cannot read this menu.

James: No. You made this menu. You wrote
down with yellow crayon on yellow
paper.

[Then James does not have any more customers. For a while, he waits for a customer. Finally, he decides to close the restaurant and he moves to another activity area.

Even though James moves to the art centre, he still stares at the house centre because there is his own James' Restaurant.]

...
[While he was away for a few minutes, the other children are coming into the house centre. After he sees this, he gestures with locking the door.]

James: Kathy, the restaurant is locked.
Nobody is allowed to come in while
I am not here. This is locked.

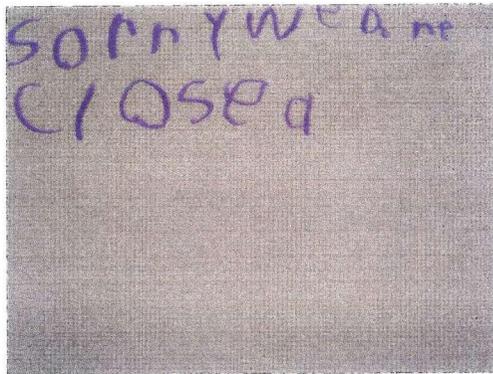


Figure 6. 1. Sorry, We are Closed

There is a hidden tone of competitiveness and hierarchy building in James' case, who is used to being or who wants to be a leader in the group, and who chooses his favorite role.

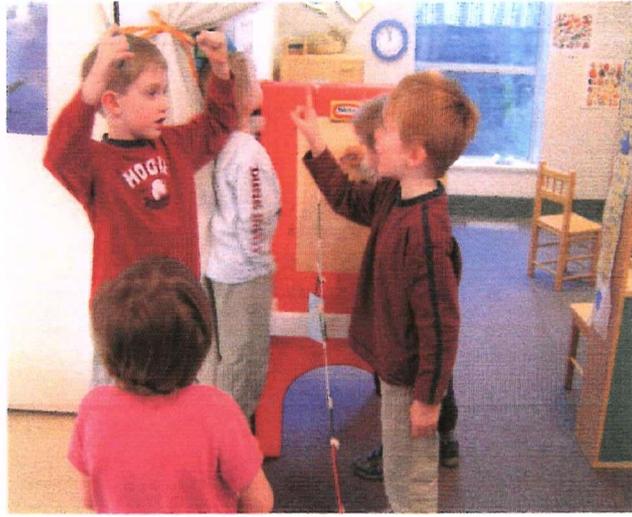
Commentary

This play lasts for three days. In it, the children are shifting positions, crossing between an imaginary world and the real world. James wants to take a leadership position in the play, but Matthew does not agree with him. James does not give up his position as the owner of the restaurant and Matthew continuously shows tension/ confusion/ rejection toward James. Finally, James is capable of controlling his anger and he defends himself by taking Matthew off his birthday party invitation list.

Narrative 3: “How about making a Gondola”

Background

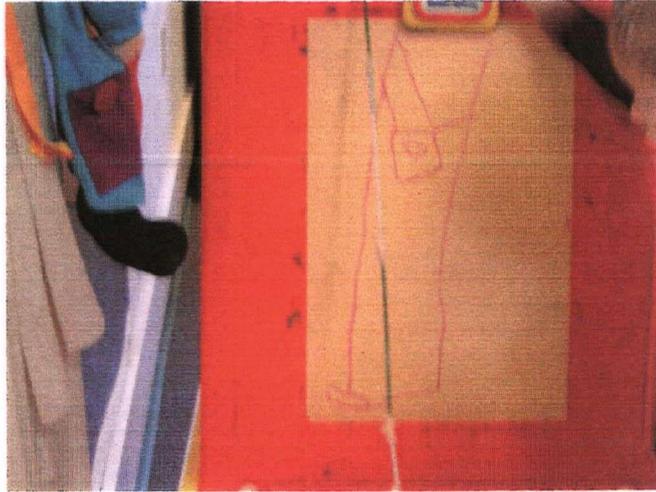
James, Matthew and Edward are envisaging an idea for a gondola. Finally, after a long discussion and an attempt to draw it, they begin to construct their imaginary gondola. They build the gondola out of recycled straws.



Stage 1. Brainstorming



Stage 2. Discussion



Stage 3. Making thinking visible

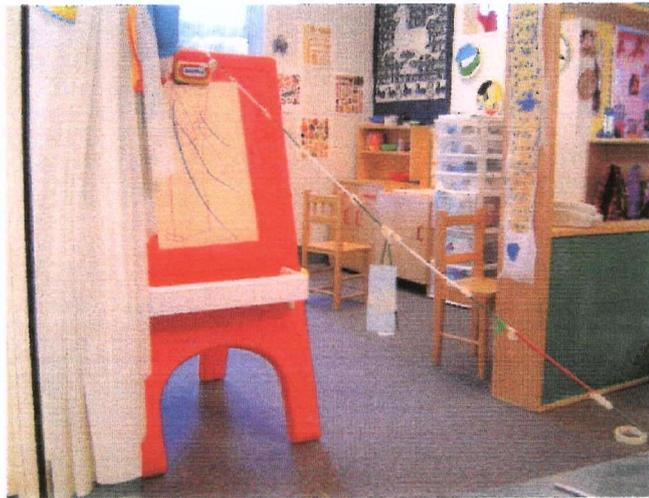


Figure 6. 2. Gondola Making

[James, Matthew and Robert are working at a station with straws. Actually, they are building a gondola on Grouse Mountain. The boys are so excited to be building a gondola. James, Matthew, and Robert are busy working on a rope and gondola.]

James: I am making a gondola thing.

Matthew: Gondola is cool.

Robert: I've taken the gondola.
James: I've taken the skytrain.
Matthew: No, the skytrain is not exciting.

...
James: (pointing to the connection of
straws) This is not a gondola, this is a
line for gondola.

Robert: I know this is in the Grouse Mountain.

Matthew: We also need a cable to connect
bottom with upward. One more, radar,
too. We need to see it from there (he
is pointing to the upper part). Suddenly,
the gondola falls down and also the line
is broken.

Matthew: Look, it's not strong.

[Then three boys discuss how to build
sufficiently strong and real gondola.]

[They found the connection is important. Then
the boys looked for how to move the gondola
through the line.]

James: (to me) Look, we made a gondola.

Me: Great, it seems like Grouse Mountain.

Boys: No, this is Mt. St. Helens, the bigger one.

James: By the way, we need a motor to move a
gondola, kind of electric thing.

[Matthew made a moving one with scotch tape.]

James: Wha, it's cool.

[Boys are so satisfied with their jobs.]

James: It's moving, it can slide.

...
[Boys are arguing who has the power.]

James: I am gonna be a boss who is with
electricity.

Matthew: No, I am gonna be a boss, boss.

Robert: (just looking at them)

James: No, hey I am the boss. I am the first
here and also I made it. **SO I AM THE
BOSS.**

Matthew: I am the boss of my gondola.

James: **I MADE A BIG ONE.**

*The image that
appears can be
interpreted as
children
understand but do
not accept their
subordinate
position in the
group.*

James' dominant positioning is revealed again in the next episode.

[Jessica, Robert and James are again in the house centre. James is a leader, and he appoints a role for them.]

Jessica: Can I be a doggy?

James: Robert, you are a cat.

James: Jessica, you have to chase the cat.

Jessica: James, I am a boy.

James: Kitty, here kitty (he pretends to give cat toys to Robert).

[Then Robert pretends to be a cat.]

James: You're a baby cat.

Here is a lunch (giving him a cabbage).

No sweet thing.

[Then he also gives it to Jessica.]

James: Eat doggy.

No sweet thing is good for your body.

...

James: Robert, (pointing to Holly in the distance) Holly is a mouse.

Watch out!

[Robert goes around.]

James: Kitty, time is to bed.

Actually, kitty goes away.

James: Whatever.

[In a few minutes, Robert comes to again and moans.]

James: No, I will lock the door.

OH, YOU DIDN'T LISTEN TO ME.

YOU NEED A PUNISHMENT.

Commentary.

Again, the boys argue over who might be the boss, controlling and taking care of the gondola for the rest of the playtime. Each boy is convinced that it is reasonable that he be the boss. Superficially, the rest of the boys acknowledge the status of James based on past play experiences. For those reasons, they are sensitive and at the same time reluctantly submissive toward James. However, James persists in the idea that he needs to be a leader or boss.

James, as the acknowledged leader of the group, provides a yardstick against which to judge the relative success of others. As he shows in the above play narrative, James follows the fact that he introduces or engineers many of the group's themes, routines, and objects. Moreover, he does so in a subtle way that belies his power and status within the group. James always uses some of the play elements that demonstrate and define the group's cultural knowledge such as object possessions, object use, role play, and appropriate language use. In many instances, James' leadership and modeling creates a template that becomes accepted within the group. Even if power structures are assumed to be hidden, James argues convincingly and makes the other children aware of them. They construct a shared meaning about the authorities in their daily life. In this process, children are building a concept of reciprocity in the midst of peer aggression. This reciprocity is vivid not only for boys but also in the girls' group.

Narrative 4: "I am the mommy"

Background

The next day, James' restaurant is closed. Holly, Jessica, and Amy are taking over the area of the house centre. Among the girls, Holly has the tendency of taking a superior position in the play situation. The following play scene occurs among the girls. They are constructing a new family and creating a situation that possibly happens among family members. Here, Holly holds a leading role in controlling the whole play scenario.

[Jessica, Amy, and Holly are in the house centre.

They are creating a "Family play."]

[Holly is suggesting she be a mother.]

Holly: I am the mother. Are you ok?

Amy is a daughter.

Then, Jessica, you are a dog.

Amy: I'm a baby. Don't forget it.

Jessica: Holly, I'm the doggy.

[Kathy comes to the girls in the house centre.]

Amy: Kathy, you can be a sister.

Holly: I'm the mommy.

Amy: I'm the little baby, you are a big sister.

Jessica: I'm the littlest puppy.

[Holly seems to be satisfied with her play of mothering. Amy is making scrambled eggs. Holly is wearing an apron. Holly is holding a baby doll very carefully. The baby doll is the little child in this family.]

Holly: (to Amy) Pretend to take care of a baby.

Amy: First, Holly and then take turn.

Kathy: (pretend to come from school) Mom, I did not have a good day.

Holly: Why? Does your boy friend make you feel bad?

Kathy: I did not smile at all. One of my friends always copied mine.

...

Kathy: Can mother take care of baby?

Holly: No, I do.

Kathy: Do you want to be ever?

...

Holly: Today's dinner is egg scramble and Spaghetti.

Amy: I will help you, mother. What do we need, mother?

Holly: Hum, we need eggs and noodles.

Holly: I will take care of a baby, ok?

...

Kathy: You can make this for baby.

Holly: Oh, Amy, Kathy, you had a good job for table.

[Then two girls look around all tables. But when Holly find out the cup.]

Amy: Mother, actually, this is not for baby. Can baby drink with cup?

Holly: Oh, no, Am~~~~y, Ka~~~~th~~~~y.

[Jessica is doing her role as a doggy. She is lying down on the floor. Sometimes, she is acting like yearning with a big mouth.]

James: Can I join with you? I can be a doggy.

Holly: No, we do have one doggy in this house.

One is enough. No more.

[Then James is still showing his suggestions and complains.]

Holly: **NO, STOP, STOP.**

Amy: Mommy, I will make some tea for you. Do you like to have a tea?

Holly: Sure.

In children's play narratives, how to interpret the themes and how they are regarded both belong to children's reality and something beyond real life.

Commentary

When children perform the theme of hegemonies, they deal with power relations both in family and in society. A big sister or a mother seems to be an extraordinary authority in a family; she is the one who makes decisions and rules her younger siblings or children. Play narrative gives children an opportunity to try out what is not allowed in reality, to test the boundaries, and to be aware of what can happen if they break the rule.

Narrative 5: "Wedding of Princess"

Background

In the girls' play group, they are living interchangeably between their real and their fantasy worlds. In constructing an imaginary situation, children combine the situation which they see in the real world. Likewise, in the following scene, the girls are acting out the issue of a same sex wedding.

[Girls are playing with little dolls such as princess/ prince. Holly, Kathy, Amy, and Jessica are in this play. Again, Holly is leading this play. Jessica is only looking at Holly.]

Holly: This is not ready (then she puts important characters in the box).
You can be this or that way.

Kathy: Can I play with you?

Jessica: I will be a follower.

Kathy: There is not more princess.
(to Holly) You took a lot.

Holly: Try other people like a princess, ok?
Do you know what?
After me..

Jessica: It's not fair.
Kathy: Somebody is terrible.
Holly: It's almost time to go to the castle.
Do you know what?
For the real life on the news, they
decide to marry girls. Boys cannot marry
boys yet, Huh?
Girls: We don't like to marry boys.
Holly: But that is the issue of prime
minister.
Girls: That's scary news.
Jessica: Actually, it makes me tired for
a long time.
...
Holly: Everybody, I will make something
special. I will make a carriage.
Then Holly makes a red carpet with
paper and red crayon.
Holly: This is only for princess.

Commentary

Children are vulnerable to and at the same time familiar with society's cultural values. By acting out problems, they create new solutions and possibilities. By including cultural themes in play, they construct meaning and enhance their ability to understand situations.

Narrative 6: "Because you're a boss..."

Background

Sometimes, the subordinate children express complaints toward James who continuously insists on being the leader in the playgroup. Then, conversely, they give him the responsibility or the burden of conducting the play.

[Matthew complains continuously about being a boss of James. However, in preparing a puppet show, James gives an order to each child what to make.]

Matthew: Why are you always a boss?

James: No, not always.

James: Are you ready?

Jessica: No.

James: Yes, everybody is not ready yet.

Jessica: My dinosaur is a nice one.

Matthew: What do we wanna call the puppet show?

James: I don't know.

Matthew: How about an "Amazing show"?

James: No.

Edward: How about Matthew, James, Edward, and Jessica's puppet show?

James: That's too long.

Matthew: Does it look like a rocket, Jessica?

James: You guys, the puppet show is almost ready.

Edward: No, after we finish all making, and then.

James: **NO, I AM CONTROLLING IT, I AM THE BOSS.**

Matthew: We are making the best puppet show in the world.

James: Oh, puppet show is almost ready.

[Then all the children go to the stage of puppet show.]

Edward: We need an audience.

[Then they brought a teacher to the front of the stage.]

Teacher: Is there anyone to explain the name of the puppet show?

Matthew: James, you can do.

James: No, Matthew.

Matthew: James, you are the boss.

[Although James shows reluctance about being an introducer, he does.]

Commentary

In spite of Matthew's objections, James does not express any regret toward his friend. Rather, James takes it as a matter of course. A child begins life as a socio-cultural being within an already defined network and grows through communication and interaction with others. Children use narrative to construct power relationships and valued social identities within the peer group. Different roles or ways of participating in narrative exchanges index and help construct the

social ranking of the reference group. The view presented in this section demonstrates the shift from viewing social competence as a static set of abilities, bounded by particular contexts, to a more complex, fluid and dynamic interpretation. Social competence is conceptualized as a dynamic process in which children are active and competent in interpreting subject positions, reading social cues, and accessing cultural knowledge over time and across contexts. The next story happens over a period of three days in a row in the lives of the children.

Narrative 7: "Harry Potter"

Background

Popular culture also plays a big role in children's play. Through the imitation of the characters in the story, the children assume the borrowed role of "third person." The following episode shows how they interact and present themselves in the context of the story of "Harry Potter." In this popular cultural text, the children are learning through representation of characters and through literacy involvement.

Scene #1. Day 1

[James, Matthew, and Steve are all holding Jigsaw Jones' books. They are playing "Harry Potter."]

James: Who hates a time?

Steve: Ron, Ron he is free. He spells it a bad mouse boy and then they comes out in the wrong end.

James: What comes out?

Steve: Spell. Then they got a shock.

Matthew: What kid can I be?

James: What shall we really do?

Matthew: What shall I be? Anyhow.

Can I be a kid?

James: Can I be a Harry?

[Suddenly Holly comes to the boys.]

Amy: I know what you got... two pennies
I have a box. I got a piggy box for money.

James: What I got tons of money.

Steve: Me, too.

James: I keep my money in the wagon.

Matthew: My penny bank is rabbit.

Amy: Do you know you cannot believe what I
am gonna do tomorrow.

Not gonna say?

Matthew: For India?

Amy: No.

[Then she left the boys.]

Matthew: James, where is my car?

James: No.

Matthew: I'm gonna spell it.

James: Ya, ya, he is gonna be a bad guy.

James: Ta da, you had a bad dream.

Matthew: No. I hate on you.

James: (to Matthew) You are our enemy.

Steve: No, no, he is a philosopher's stone.

He is a good guy.

Matthew: Who could be a bad guy?

(then he points to me) You could be a
bad guy.

Steve: No, we need a boy. Maybe Nathen could
be.

Matthew: Of course not, he is not here.

Edward is not.

[There is silence to decide among the boys.]

James: Back to the story corner, I will go on our
story.

Matthew: I wonder who could be a bad guy.

James: Me, too, I do not mind to be.

Matthew: Can we play Harry Potter outside?

Steve: I will be a Harry.

I am Harry.

[He continuously repeats to be a Harry.

Then James and Matthew ignore him, then they
murmur other things.

Finally.]

James: I wanna be a Wizard.

Matthew: I will start from the first page, bad
dream.

Matthew: Show me the haunted house.

Matthew: Is he a bad guy?

Steve: It's a stone.

[James explains.]

Steve: You don't need to say.

James: It doesn't say to start from haunted house. I am 42 year old now.

Steve: If you are 42 years, you could be a Professor Dumbledore. Because his hair is a little white.

[Then they perform the scene of bad guy and Professor Dumbledore.]

Steve: Who gonna be Ron?

Matthew: (to Steve) You.

Steve: I am Harry.

Matthew: Are you still Harry?

That's not funny.

Steve: Why? We are playing the second part.

Matthew: Who could be a Hedwig?

James?

Steve: No, He is a professor. (to Matthew)

You could be.

Matthew: No, I wanna be a kid.

Steve: It's easy. Just pretend.

Matthew: I intend to be a kid.

Both peripheral and central role characters are constructed through communication which shapes and strengthens the social structure in the children's peer culture.

Scene #2. Day 2

[James, Matthew, and Steve are in the house corner. They are gathering their imaginations about Harry Potter.]

Matthew: My dad is a Harry Potter. He watches when I sleep.

Steve: Did you see it?

Matthew: Not in the book. I saw it in the computer. I have a costume of Harry Potter.

James: Do you know Dumbledore?

Matthew: Yes,

....

[Matthew cleans up what all the boys mess up.]

Matthew: Come on! We need to clean it up here before we go.

Scene #3. Day 3

[James, Steve, and Matthew are in the house corner again to play a restaurant. Edward joins James and Steve's play.]

Matthew: (to Steve) You should come to my birthday.

Steve: No, you should come to my house first on my next birthday.

[Then they are again back to Harry Potter's play.]

[But James, Steve, and Matthew are still in conflict about choosing a character, especially, a more powerful position.]

Matthew: Humm, can you make a choice? Who can I be?

Steve: Maybe a Jacob.

Matthew: Can I start with Matthew's plan?

James: No, we need to move around.

Steve: I can have a good idea. We can play a famous five today and Harry Potter tomorrow.

Matthew: No.

James: No, we can't.

Matthew: I've been waiting for a week.

Steve: We have a plenty of time of playing, you know.

James: How about playing a different one?

Steve: No thanks.

Role characters and actions are ready-made and thereby available to be used again in similar situations. Established social structures can be exceeded in play when they define new situations and act in new ways.

Commentary

For several days, the children involved in the Harry Potter play are very excited. Interestingly, they do not use any objects to describe each character; instead, they expand the story line solely by verbal exchanges. As pretend play becomes increasingly dependent on language to create possible worlds and to express and communicate meanings, it comes closer to the experiences of storytelling and reading. While each child is constructing the story, he or she goes through the process of re-configuration by reexamination. Through this reorganization of story, children build an order of society and the preferences in their culture such as being nice to others and discussing the matter with others before making a quick decision.

Narrative 8: "Gender as performance"

Background

Children utilize narrative as a way of making gender distinctions through exploring selves through character in fantasy/ role play. In addition, the children themselves acknowledge the underlying value of difference between men and women.

Scene #1- Snow White princess

[Kathy dresses up as a princess and acts like a snow white princess holding a poison apple.]

Kathy: I am gonna play dead. I am dead.

[Then she lays down on the floor.]

Kathy: I have eleven books. My mother reads snow white princess. I really want to be a snow white princess. Everybody likes her. She is a girl and I am also a girl.

I can be. I like to wear a dress like her.

I like to wear skirts.

Scene #2- A clerk in the store

[Kathy and Amy are playing as a clerk and customer in the store.]

Amy: Can I pay here?

[Kathy is a clerk; then she talks on the microphone (in a tone of store clerk)]

Kathy: The store is closing in three minutes.

Amy: (imitating mother's voice): I need a drug for my baby, she is very very sick.

[Then, Amy shows me, and explains.]

Amy: My mom always did like this. I am sick often. Whenever I am sick, she always did like me.

Scene #3- Men and women are different

[Matthew and Jessica are in the sand box.]

Jessica: I am gonna make a castle for my bear.

[Then Holly joins with them. They are working very hard to make a treasure box and sandy bear.]

Holly: I am gonna make a tiny treasure box.

Matthew: What shall I do?

Jessica : (to Matthew) you can find a treasure.

Matthew: Where is my treasure box?

Jessica: (to Matthew) Here, dig and dig.... To find a treasure (they are pretending).

Holly is still in the making of the treasure box.

Holly: Maybe you know what, Matthew? In Amy's cubby, there are some accessories.

Matthew: What?

Holly: I can look for a small piece for you, ok?

Matthew: No, in your purse.
Holly: No, I took my purse home and Amy has it.
Matthew: Amy has your purse?
Holly: No, MY PURSE is MY HOME (slowly) and ANNESA HAS A TREASURE (emphasizing), A TREASURE BECAUSE THAT'S WHY WE ARE MAKING A TREASURE BOX.
Matthew, you don't understand, huh...
Matthew: Ya, because I am not your team.
Jessica: You know, Matthew, I do understand even I am not a team.
Matthew: **GIRLS UNDERSTAND GIRLS, BOYS DON'T UNDERSTAND GIRLS. ALL DIFFERENT TIMES.**

Commentary

This renders narrative an ideal medium of reflection, self-examination, and identity construction. From the above, we can see that children use narrative as a way of showing their gender characteristics through intimating situations. Toohey (1996) equates the process of appropriating voices with the idea of 'wrestling' language from 'other people's mouths' and 'other people's intentions' (cited in Kendrick, 2003, p. 161). Likewise, children in play situations try on other people's statements or the way they word things. As we can see in the example from Scene two, the two girls are imitating the clerk's words, tone of voice, and appropriate gestures. This situation is vivid in many different cases. When children are in the school play, they say, "Sit straight. Listen to my readings," imitating the teacher's attitudes. Memory of personal experience is intertwined with the development of self and the emergence of levels of consciousness, involving the child's reflective understanding of his/her own experience of events

in the light of parental representations of these events and, concomitantly, his/her new sense of a unique self in relation to the unique selves of the other person (Nelson, 2003). The use of voices of characters is another way that children understand the world.

Narrative 9: "Formulating cross-textual links"

Background

The following are Jessica's integrated thoughts and images regarding Easter. Like the other children, she is looking forward to celebrating a special Easter event. As I mentioned before, she is good at representing her thoughts and knowledge through making a story visible. Her story is significant since it strengthens her exploration of meaning in the navigation of the unknown world, especially, as this relates to the expectation, wonder, and cooperation/ collaboration in finding Easter eggs. Furthermore, this drawing has invaluable meaning in that it advances her concept of making a story and improving literacy. The stories she creates in play and drawing reveal her growing competence with literacy and storytelling, and her sense of identity.

Storytelling acts as a vehicle or metaphor for enabling children's creativity, experimentation, and language enrichment in their own oral and written stories.

Title: Easter Bunny (by Jessica)

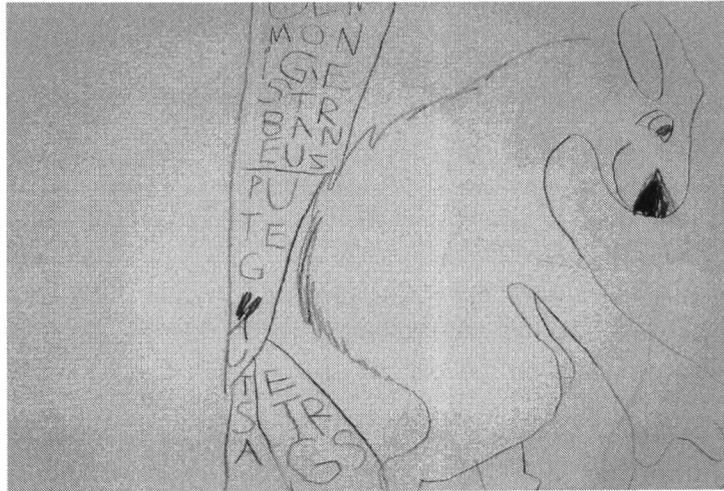


Figure 6. 3. Easter Bunny

One day, there is one Easter Bunny. She is walking and walking.

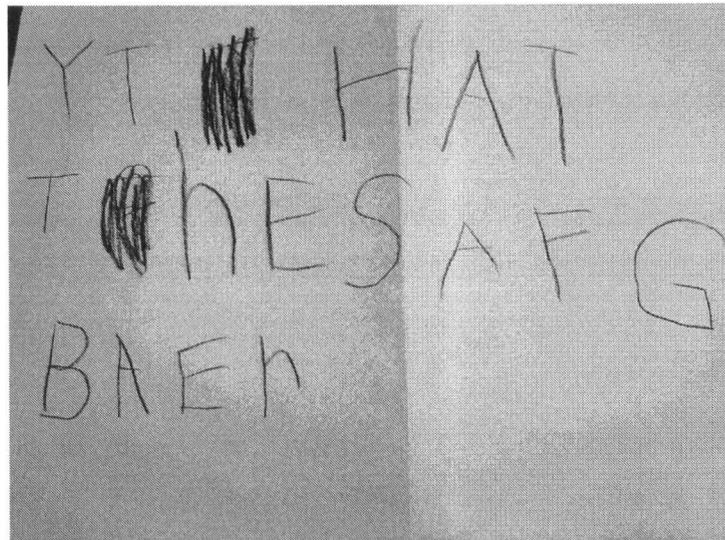


Figure 6. 4. Easter Bunny

YT HAT THE SAFG BAER

She has the big basket.

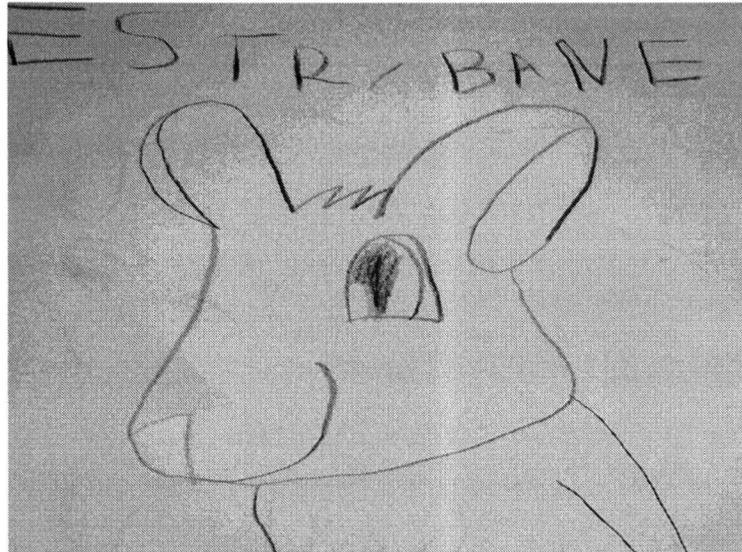


Figure 6. 5. Easter Bunny

ESTR BANE

The Easter Bunny is happy so she winks me.

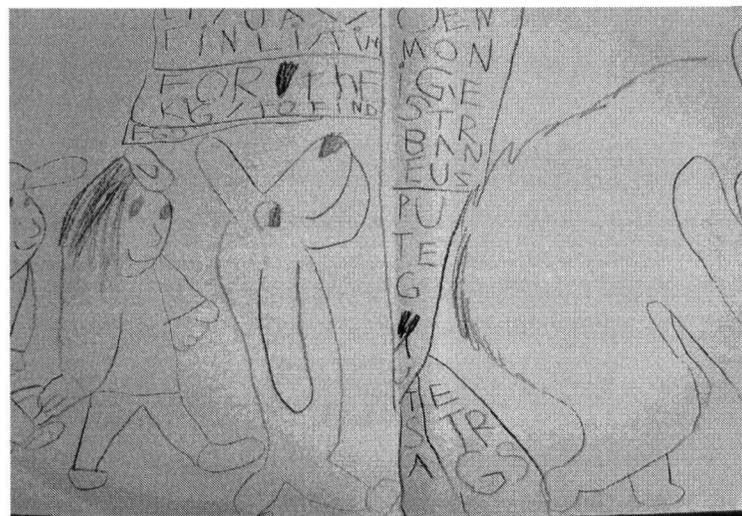


Figure 6. 6. Easter Bunny

**ITY UAS FINLITIM FOR THE KIG TO FIND EGGS
ONE MONI GESTR BAN EUS PUTEGUAU TSA ETRGS**

She has friends to find eggs for king in her land. One of them finds an Easter Egg basket.

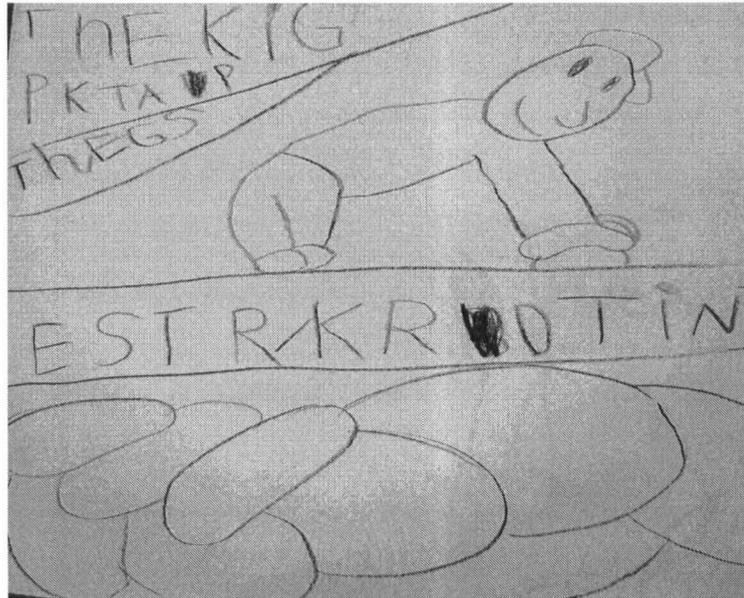


Figure 6. 7. Easter Bunny

**THE KING PKTAP THE EGGS
ESTPKROTIN**

The king got the eggs. There are many eggs in the Easter Egg basket.



Figure 6. 8. Easter Bunny (by Jessica)

IT USA FINLITIME

FOR THE KIG TO FIND EGS (her own writing)

It was fun because the king found the eggs. This is the end of story. Is it fun?

Commentary

By attempting to write, Jessica provides a communicative meeting place that supports her knowledge. Miller and Mehler (1994) support this with their findings that many educators believe personal storytelling serves as an effective bridge into early literacy. A literacy event is integral to the nature of children's interactions and their interpretive process. Emergent literacy suggests that children's narrative competence emerges through and is enhanced by repeated experiences with narratives including storybook reading, engaging in dramatic play, and participating in dramatic reenactments. Children's construction of original and oral texts contributes to developing the sense of literacy. Speaking of literacy development through oral storytelling, children also enrich it through visual contexts. As we can see with the above example, Jessica shows her interpretation of the relationship with the worlds through her creation of a storybook. The process of writing is simultaneously a process of meaning-making and a process of social interaction. This may serve its most important mediating intellectual function, not by facilitating communication or obtaining information, but by helping children create new worlds. In the following quote, Smith (1982) explains this power of writing:

The power of writing is not initially lost upon many children. A child writes, "The dog died." It is astounded at what has been accomplished. The child has put a dog into the world that did not exist before—created a world that would not otherwise have existed—and then has killed the dog. None of this can be done in any other way. And if the boy is contrite, a stroke of the pen is all that is required to bring the dog to life, something else again that would be difficult to accomplish in any other way (p. 129).

This is an aspect of literacy, the creation of imaginary worlds, and it has enormous implications for the development of thinking. It mediates the intellect not only by providing access to the real world and by offering expanded possibilities of broader or different experiences of the literate world, but also by creating new worlds that have not existed before. Here is another example of managing self-confidence with writing.

Narrative 10: "Do you know how to write LOVE"?

Background

In the art centre, Holly is writing something, and Matthew looks at her writing with curiosity for a while. Then Matthew tries to write some letters; not satisfied with the result, he decides to copy Holly's writing. Holly is writing down a love note for all her family (Mom, Dad, brother).

Holly: You know how can write "love"?

Matthew: No.

Holly: L, O, V, E, you can copy mine.

Here, see.

[Matthew is watching it.]

Holly: No, no not that one, here L. O. V. E.

Matthew: (angrily) You don't need to tell each letter for me.

Then he draws a person.

Matthew: See, I (proudly) wrote down these.



Figure 6. 9. I Love You, Mom (by Matthew)

Commentary

In this episode, I infer again the power that writing has to construct children's interrelationships between their selves and their world. Through attempting to write, Matthew becomes a more confident being. Heath (1982) finds that by providing young children with a wide variety of scripts and narratives to play with, they build a greater sense of narrative. This is helpful knowledge for aiding interpretations when reading and writing. There are also many ways of incorporating print into socio-dramatic play, such as the use of menus, writing letters, grocery labels, newspapers, price lists, and so on.

Narrative 11: “Story around relationship”

The following drawings represent common happenings in children’s lives, such as being with teachers, family, and friends. Those three elements make up a big part of what influences children’s lives. In particular, these drawings exhibit the meaning-making through how children interpret their world by observing these particular relationships. This drawing shows human relationships in children’s lives. In this classroom, there is one head teacher, one assistant teacher, and two part-time assistant teachers. As the child shares in this drawing, the vivid significance of the above roles in their world is indicated by the positioning of the teachers. Head teacher is represented as the biggest image.



Figure 6. 10. My Teachers (by Matthew)

The next drawing is the example of family relationship to Edward.

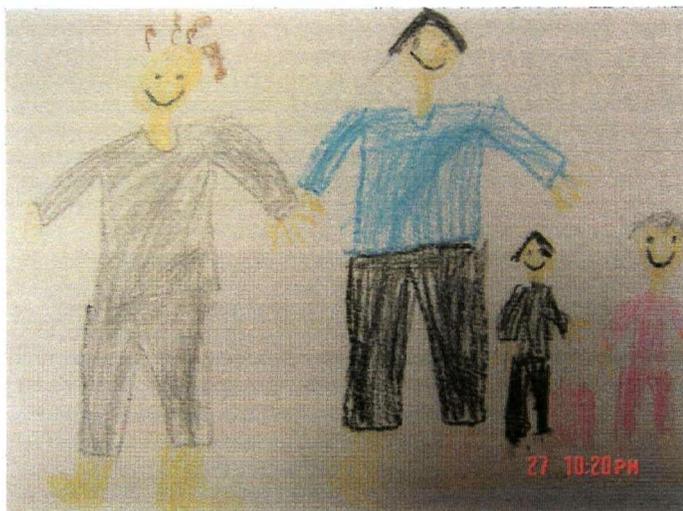


Figure 6. 11. My Family (by Edward)

Edward: You know what? This is my family. When we went to the “Superstore,” my mommy wears a training clothes. I want my sister (pointing the last one in the right) to grow quickly. Then she can play with me. Now, she is too young to play with me. She cannot speak, so I am not interesting to play with her.

In this drawing, Edward reflects his experience with his family. His relationship to them is symbolized by the image of a happy smile. As a member of his family, he is in the position of being loved by his parents and younger sister. What is interesting in his drawing is that he describes his young sister as bigger than himself. What he wants to believe is that his sister is growing much faster than him.

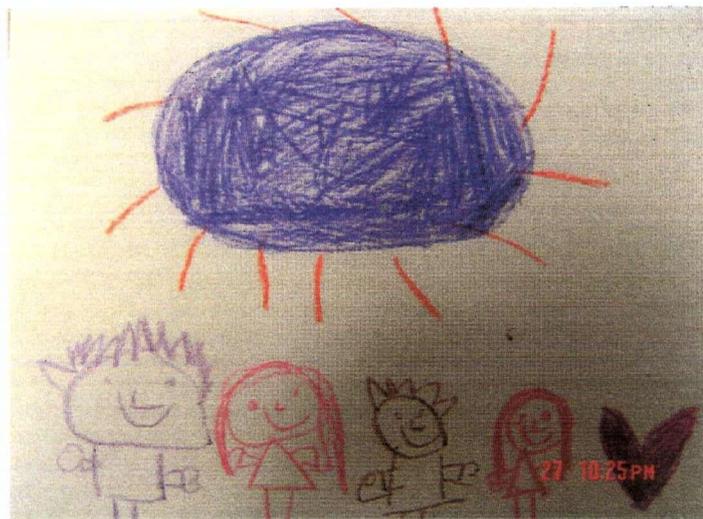


Figure 6. 12. My Friends (by Holly)

Holly: Me and with my friends are playing outside in sunny day. I like the time of outside playing time. Because I can run wherever I want to. And we can play with bicycle.

The above drawing is an example of the relationship of Holly to her friends. Contrary to what she shows in the play as a dominator in the group, her interpretation of friendship is being together with love. Her relationship with her friends is based on loving each other. As each face shows, there are always smiles and happy looks among friends. This is not only what she has previously experienced but also her expectations toward her friends and her relationships with

friends. The next picture shows an understanding of environment through drawing. In this drawing, James tries to show a fish under the water.



Figure 6. 13. Gold Fish

“There is a gold fish”

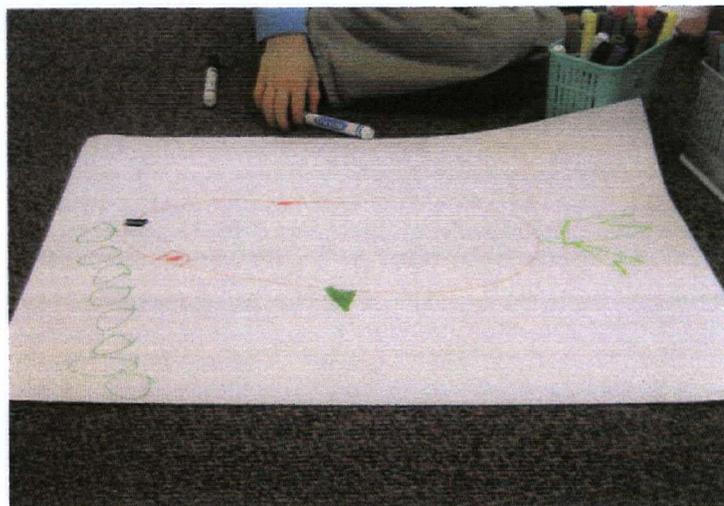


Figure 6. 14. He is Breathing

James: He is the biggest one in the ocean. He is the first one. See? The bubbles?
Because he is breathing under the water. If we breathe, we put out an air. It's
same as fish. If fish breathe under the water, they make a bubble. Is it funny?
Now, he is breathing very deeply. So he is making big bubbles.

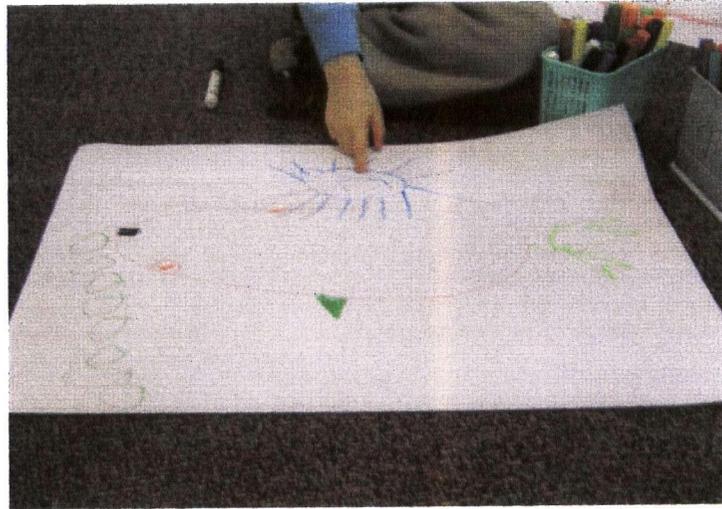


Figure 6. 15. He has a Friend (by James)

James: Then his friend the jellyfish is coming to him. And he is smiling at him.

When I see and read children's drawings, I see their memories, observations and imagination. They are aware of being in the moment. Their perspective shifts from inside of their community to other communities. In this drawing, James reconfigures the relationship of his life to his surrounding environment, such as the ecological system.

Children in the research study, here, use narratives to construct power relationships and their valued social identities within their world. They are part of an existing power relationship in their play. In conclusion, although the surface of ideologies of appropriate emotion deployed here as socialized through narrative are different in the boys' aspect and girls' aspect, the

underlying ideologies are more similar than different to have a power in the group. In terms of the type of story or the use of narrative depicting their world, boys construct worlds of contest while girls construct the world of community. Their underlying social-interactive purposes are more similar than they are different in becoming a leader.

Children freely cross between diverse contexts. When I read children's narratives, I appreciate the importance of emotional bonding between the children and myself. When children come to meet the word of culture, they neither completely accept nor ignore it. Rather, they recreate it via their own creative performances with interpersonal and intrapersonal relationships.

CHAPTER 7

RE-CONSTRUCTION/ RE-IMAGINATION

This chapter introduces the third and final theme to emerge from this study of children's oral and visual narratives. Ten narratives are offered as examples of this theme. A discussion of these examples illustrates what is meant by *re-construction/ re-imagination*. Children develop a means for expressing and understanding who they are through their routine participation in culturally organized narrative practices in which personal experiences are recounted. Narratives of personal experience can provide access to culturally specific images of self as well as to the ways in which those images are conveyed and evaluated. Stories provide children and their listeners with a culturally valued and explicit form for communicating important sequences of events.

The key reason to delve into children's narrative is for information and meaning. I look at them closely and listen to them.

Children use other ways of describing themselves and their understandings, for instance, fictional stories and three-dimensional artworks. Through those processes, children reconstruct and re-imagine their point of view. In general, children engage in their own deep imagination world. Although there is no clear story character or plot, they enjoy what they are doing. Children put together role, action and environment when they define the imaginary play world.

They use language both to tell about the situation and to justify what has happened. From the ten following narratives, I learn that children recreate their previous experiences and, at the same time, express their conflicts and wishes by recreating new stories using imaginary characters. Throughout these stories, emotions serve an important role in children's social play and narrative language, as well as early literacy. Children establish their sense of self through re-creating and re-organizing.

The children gradually spend less time in the house centre. Instead, they recreate or re- imagine using other play materials. Every moment during play, the children are pretending, and they are in the imaginary world. Moreover, in the play activity, they go back and forth between the real and imaginary world. Sometimes, children blend real situations that are based on true experiences with imaginary play.

Narrative 1: "A bad guy"

Background

Edward and Jacob are whispering to each other. They are beginning to retell a story. This story seems to be based on what they have seen on a TV cartoon program. The two boys are having trouble making appropriate characters in their story.

[Edward and Jacob are making an imaginary story.]

Edward: Remember he was a bad guy (holding his toy).

That bad guy has a hat.

Jacob: He was red.

Edward:

Jacob: Remember, he joined the group of robot with Spiderman.

Edward: No.

Jacob: Remember, the bad guy was in the rainy day.

Edward: No.

Jacob: He was in the big cave.

Edward: Yes, he was with his father.

Jacob: No, he did not have a father.

Edward: His name is...

Jacob: No, he does not have a name.

Edward: No, it's not a story.

In children's stories, particularly, sequence and plot are not always developed. The key to understanding, appreciating, and responding to the story often lies in understanding the meaning and the perspective of the narrator.

Commentary

In the boys' story-making process, I was able to see conflict and personal persistence. Jacob suggests an idea, Edward disagrees, and vice versa. In addition, Jacob and Edward can glimpse the building of theories that make sense of the world such as the strict dichotomy between positive and negative. When they speak about a bad guy, the bad guy does not have a father, or even a name. For them, "bad" is vice in the world. They exist in a world where virtue and vice definitely exist.

Narrative 2: Holly's fake story

Chapter 1: "We are in the ocean"

Background

Holly takes a lead in telling stories in her playgroup and also enjoys creating fictional, imaginative stories. The following examples of her stories invite us into her creative world. She brings her friends, Kathy and Jessica, to the big, empty space. Then she explains what will soon happen. Despite Jessica's reluctance to join in, she urges the others to dive into the deep ocean.

[Kathy, Holly, and Jessica are in the house centre. Holly takes them to the ocean. They are playing with a story, going to the ocean to dive into the water.]

Jessica: No, we don't want to go.

Holly: No, just follow the story. We need to go to the ocean.

Jessica: Why?

Kathy: Oh, I like to go to the ocean.

...

[Holly leads them to the story corner.]

Holly: See? Now we are in the ocean. It is really big and deep.
Time to dive (she directs to them).
We need to dive to see under the water.
Ya, let's do it...
Kathy, you go first.
(Kathy pretends to dive into the water)
Then, Jessica... your turn.
(Jessica hesitates to dive.)
Matthew: (he comes to the area) What are you doing, girls?
Holly: We are in the middle of storying. We are just playing, "going to the ocean."

Commentary

In this episode, although Jessica reveals her curiosity about Holly's fertile imagination, Jessica is preoccupied with scary things. In spite of this tension, Holly proceeds with her story. In Holly's case, she uses her power of imagination to make a story. Generally, when she makes her own story, she holds the high ranking position as a story teller who dominates the story regardless of others' responses.

Narrative 3: Holly's fake story

Chapter 2: "When I was in the ocean..."

Background

Holly is again involved in telling her ocean story. She makes a wide and deep ocean with her two arms. She is imitating the expanse of the ocean. However, Matthew is still uncertain about the width and depth of the ocean. He asks repeatedly, using metaphors, to understand it. Holly continues to stress the enormity of the ocean and she puts herself in the middle of the ocean, especially the deepest part.

[Holly and Matthew are in the story corner.
They are in the imaginary world.]
Holly: It's really deep and wide.
[Holly is in a hurry to take Matthew into the
quiet place.]
Holly: It's really big, even bigger than this
Classroom.
Matthew: Is apartment inside?
Holly: Yes, two apartments sink.
Matthew: Ya....
Holly: It's so big and so deep.
One side is white and the other side is
black. Do you know where is the deep
part? Then I will be here (pointing some
part and circling), the deep part. Over
here. Sooooooo big
Matthew: So where are you doing?
Holly: I am here, deep part.
I really need a deep part.
Matthew: Why?
[Holly thinks for a while, then she continues to
make a story.]
Holly: Do you know what they help to do?
A castle bat. That's a castle bat.
Then what I do? I did it by myself for
castle bat.
No doubt. When I went there with my
daddy, daddy did not allow me to go
them. But they were surrounded me.
Then I raced them.
Matthew: Oh, when?
So when?
Holly: For next time, that's why sometimes I do
race. I need to next time I go. It's really
fun. I will try to be fun.
Matthew: I will be trying to big race with you.

*Here Holly does
not have a private,
egocentric vision
of the world. It is
a vision in which
she puts forth her
belief that
everyone belongs,
and attempts to
respect each
other's point of
view.*

*The new narrative
becomes a vehicle,
particularly, for
pulling children
together through
their fictional
play.*

Commentary

In this fantasy world, Holly shares her imaginary thoughts freely. She attempts to reveal herself through affective responses in her story. Her story encourages an interactive response from the others. Sharing her world with others indicates how children perceive themselves in the world.

Narrative 4: Holly's fake story

Chapter 3: "A pity princess"

Background

This is another of Holly's fictional stories. Although there is a lack of consistent plot or storyline, it includes many feelings of scarcity, uncertainty, happiness, unhappiness, hopelessness, and desperation. What she wants to describe in this story are her own unsettled feelings as expressed through the character of a princess.

Holly: You know what then happen? You go to
the under blanket and to become a ghost.
And a scared ghost, then look. Then
princess says "look, help, help." And
says "here, here" then "look," then
pretend open the window
.....
Then they had a wedding so you need to
know how to do princess is still there.
You look for a princess.
Erika tried to chase a princess, we need an
Erika, I will pretend to be Erika for a few
minutes. Ok? Erika tricked so the wedding is
canceled. And you, princess escaped a
gate.
You say to remember the guy, you didn't
want to marry, but you have to marry

with him
Ok?
Princess who really want to marry with?
But the wedding is not allowed.
By the way, who could be?

Fictional stories expand children's ability to speak about issues of community, belongingness and exclusion, and unspoken wishes and desires to overcome barriers in a group.

Commentary

Holly mixes and remolds the ideas using her creative thinking and story-making abilities. Furthermore, she uses the dramatic play arena to discuss abstract scientific, philosophical, and moral questions that preoccupy all children.

Narrative 5: "Santa came to our place"

Background

One morning, Matthew and Edward made up a story about Santa. I wondered why the boys suddenly came up with the theme of Christmas and Santa, in early spring. For many children, memories of Christmas play a big part in their lives. By replaying the Christmas event with Santa, the children show their expectations.

[Matthew leads Edward to the house centre. He wears a Santa hat, then makes Edward wear it, too. Then he asks me as a Santa who is giving a present to children. Then Matthew asks me to close my eyes. At the same time, Kathy, Jane and Jessica come to the house centre to ask to play.]

[I play as a Santa. Children pretend to give and wait for a present. Children include me as a member of the gang as a representation of what they want to do in the real world.]

Me: How can I do it?

Matthew: Pretend to sleep here then close your eyes.

Go to sleep, go to sleep.

...

Matthew: Go to sleep, and close your eyes.

[Jane, Jessica and Kathy come to the house centre.]

Matthew: You're kid and I am a Santa.

Jessica: I wanna be a doggy.

Jane: Bigger than me.

Matthew: You guys need to wait for Santa.

...

Matthew: You guys need to go to sleep.

Santa comes to night time.

Jane: I wanna be a Santa.

Matthew: No, I am a Santa.

Jessica: I can be a doggy Santa.

....

Jessica: Everybody needs own stocking.

...

Jessica: I will be a doggy.

Matthew: I will be a doggy.

Jessica: I will be a doggy, too.

[Then three kids make a doggy sound and then change their voices.

I was playing as a Santa then put what they want to have in each one's stocking.]

Me: Ya, it's morning.

[Three kids get up and then check their stocking.]

Matthew: Now, Christmas is again.

[Then they ask to present again.]

Three rounds of play continue with children.

Me: **CHRISTMAS IS ONLY ONE TIME A YEAR.**

Kids: **NO, CHRISTMAS CAN BE EVERY TIME.**

Thanks to Matthew, I had the opportunity to go back to my childhood, and Christmas. I remembered one night—Christmas Eve. On that night, I decided not to sleep, in order to meet Santa. I waited for a while. Nevertheless, Santa did not appear in front of me. However, I was happy next morning. There was a Christmas present beside my pillow. Then, I was sure Santa Claus existed.

When children create imaginary situations in pretend play, they invent and inhabit "alternative" or "possible worlds."

Commentary

This story might be an example showing the gap of understanding between adult and child. The children involved in this play are really enjoying the Santa story. They are fervently pretending to decorate the house with long stockings, and they are eagerly awaiting their gift from Santa. There is a fluttering of anticipation regarding the future. They are already caught up in the spirit of Christmas. The children are continuously creating a happy time by saying, "Christmas can be every time." For these children, the pleasure and their wishes surround them.

Additionally, what I learn from the children is that they are recreating their 'becoming' or identity not only through inventing an imaginary story but also through visual voices. Art itself is a narrative, which emerges from children's thoughts and lives.

Color is another voice

Through the process of observing and understanding these children's drawings, I can fully appreciate that children have alternative voices. That is colour. Using colour, they are talking again. From another translation, I can enter their world. Although their language and my language are different, we can share with each other through visible language. The arts become a way of thinking about thinking.

Narrative 6: "Spring is coming"

Background

Kathy and Holly are at the art table. For a while, they discuss how they will decorate the big blank of paper. Both of them wish to create the atmosphere of spring with a painting. Without any concrete image, they decide to show it by using diverse colours.

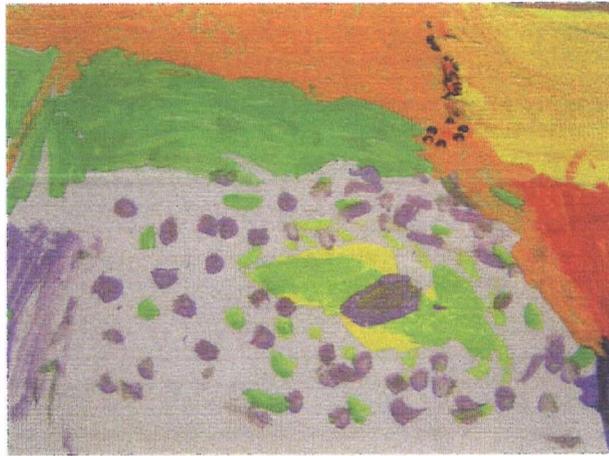


Figure 7. 1. Spring (by Kathy and Holly)

Commentary

Although they do not exactly draw specific thematic objects, by using a colourful brush technique, Kathy and Holly are expressing spring with spring-time colours such as yellow, orange, green, and purple. Even by painting, they are pretending to play.

Holly: Kathy, pretend here is a fire (then she points to a red color).

Finally, the painting becomes a great mosaic. The girls' spirits and joy were expressed like a new life emerging from the underground in early spring. What they wish to represent in this drawing is that colour is another voice, and a means of revealing their inner thoughts.

Narrative 7: "What I saw..."

Not only two-dimensional but also three-dimensional creations play a big role in explaining the experience and concepts of children. Matthew makes the following three-dimensional creations out of clay. He is recreating what he experienced with his family. The volcano comes

from remembering a volcano he saw on TV with his father. The next creation is an animal farm. He recalls the family journey to an animal farm.

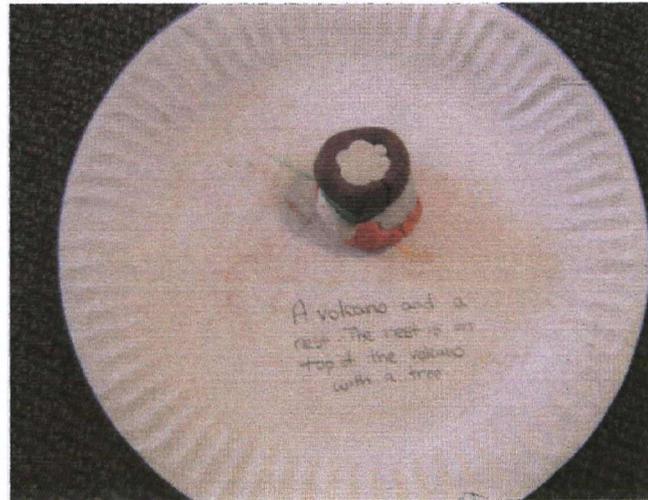


Figure 7. 2. Volcano (by Matthew)

Matthew: A volcano and a nest. The nest is on top of the volcano with a tree.

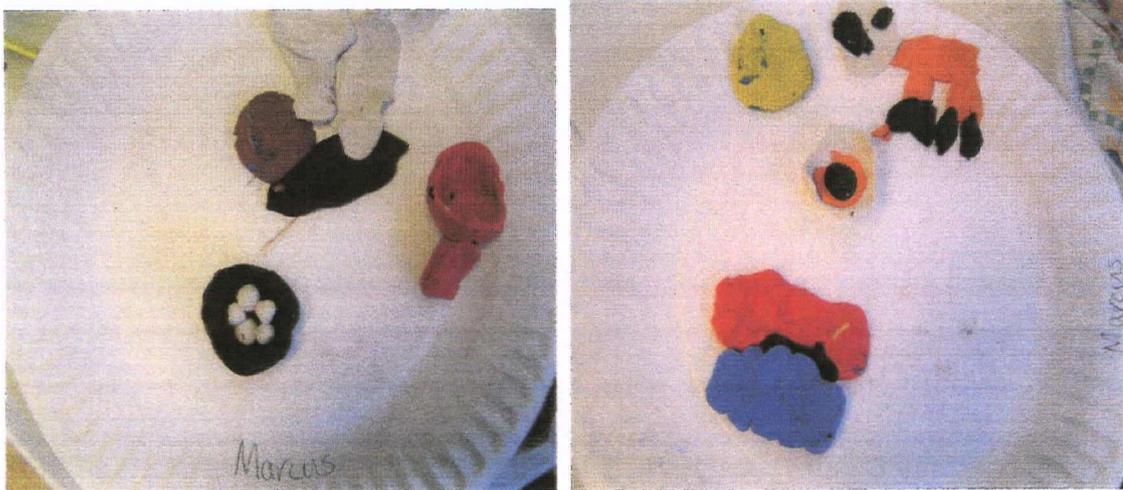


Figure 7. 3. Animal Farm (by Matthew)

Matthew: When I went to the animal farm with daddy and mommy.

Narrative 8: “The power of electric is coming from...”

Background

The following three-dimensional work is a collaborative creation by James and Edward. This electric station was made by connecting recycled straws and wooden sticks. The children’s creation is logical and is based on their understanding of the environment.

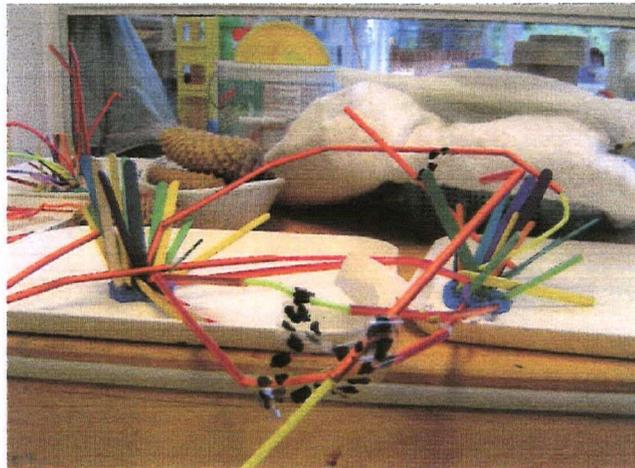


Figure 7. 4. Electric Station

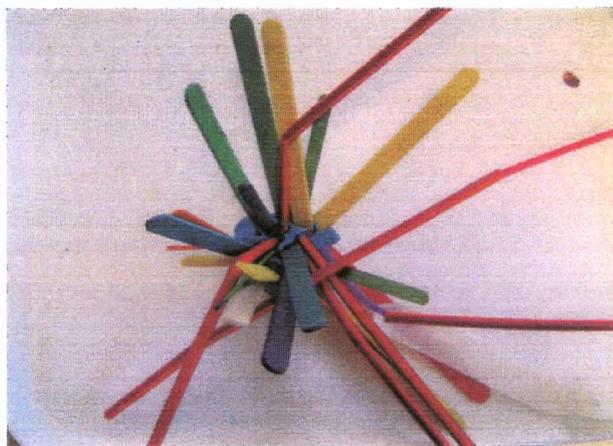


Figure 7. 5. Electric Station



Figure 7. 6. The Flowing Electricity



Figure 7. 7. Linked Electric Station (by James and Edward)

[James and Edward are making a power station using play dough, wooden sticks, iron strips, and straws. They are connecting all straws. Then Edward shows it to me.]
Edward: It's a power station. I make this big room here (pointing to the bottom part).
James: Let's connect it. How about attaching it together?

Edward: That's a good idea. We can make really big power station, like a real.
[Through this process, children are discussing and negotiating how they can make.
After they finish it,]
James: Whoa, it's cool.
[James and Edward are pleased with their work and then explain as following:]
James: Power station is a place of electricity is flowing. Then we can use it
everywhere.

Commentary

This was fascinating work. While James and Edward were constructing this electric station, there was continuous arguing before the boys could come to a compromise. Initially, they began with their own imaginations. James and Edward put all their ideas toward producing this work. After much hard work, they are finally fully satisfied. From this work and their narrative, I could get a sense of how much children develop their thoughts in a reasonable and logical manner. Furthermore, they were constructing a scientific theory and showing their work visibly.

Children are real performers and always entertaining on a daily basis. Often, children are hyperactive, but sometimes, they are very quiet. I was both an observer and an audience of the children's performance. Each child is a hero on a performing stage.

The next two episodes occurred during group story time. The first episode happened on the children's favorite day, "Show and Tell Day." "Show and Tell" is the time allotted to each child to show a personal belonging or to share a story with others in the group. "Show and Tell" is a privilege and an opportunity to present something in one's own way; the children are always amused by this activity, as if they are actors on a theater stage. The themes are open to the children. Whatever the children present guides the topic of discussion and the sharing of stories. "Show and Tell" is a significant opportunity for children to develop the meaning surrounding a sense of self and to enhance their development of literacy.

Storytelling not only contributes to self-representation, develops logic in a child's experience, and integrates the child into the surrounding culture, it also seems to play an important role in literacy development.

We are not listening for "right" answers. We want to know what the children think, feel and wonder. We believe that the children will have things to tell each other and us that we have never heard before. We are always listening for a surprise and the birth of a new idea. This practice supports a mutual quest for understanding. It is a practice of searching together for new meaning (Cadwell, 2003, p. 25).

Narrative 9: "Sharing stories in the group"

Group time scene #1

Show and share day

[As soon as they come in the classroom, on the morning of "Show and Tell Day," the children put their belongings in the big bag for "Show and Tell" time. Even during free choice time, the children are very anxious to tell others about their own item. Then, during "Show and Tell" time, the teacher chooses who goes first by picking items randomly from the bag.]

Turn #1- James (paper airplane): This is an airplane called Concord. It looks as a racing airplane. I also have a few more airplanes. You can make four each one. Actually, my mom just came yesterday from her work. You can make whole bunch of papers. Every, every kind she brought a book of airplane. There are many different kinds of airplanes.

Teacher: If you do not mind, please bring the book then we can see the airplane, then make an airplane using regular paper.

Matthew: After we can make it, then
can bring it home.

Boys: We can paint on it.

Teacher: Yes.

Turn #2- Matthew: (motor cycle) This is a fast
motor cycle. I got it on my birthday.
Hum,,, this is made from plastic, so I
need to handle it very carefully.
Actually, it moves with battery.

Turn #3- Jane:(little puppy) this is a little
puppy doll.

Turn #4- Jessica: (little fence) this is a fence. I
made it with stick and glue.

Turn #5- Nick: (Harry Potter hat and gown) I
got it from my cousin. I will dress up
on Halloween and then I will go
around my neighborhood.

Turn #6- Steve: (little toys) I got it from
MacDonald's. It flows on the water.
Teacher: Did you try it in the bathtub?
Steve: Yes.

Turn #7- Holly: (bracelet): I made this little
bracelet yesterday. Then I will give it
to Kathy, because she wanted to have
it today, then today, then I will get it
tomorrow.

Turn #8- Kevin: (power-ranger car) I got this
power ranger in Toy-R-US. My mom
bought it for Halloween.

*During "Show
and Tell," the
children express
how much they
are attached to
certain objects.*

Turn #9- Amy: This is something that I got it in front of my door that I am living near to. It a building, a very good building called Commons Block. It's something very good. They hang it on we read some sign. Then my mom reads it. It says "Dress up for Halloween then go to the Commons Block for trick and treat." I am glad to hear that. I am going there then I will draw and picture we do.

Although children do not have organized speech or storying skills, they seem to have strong self-confidence in what they are sharing.

Along the same lines as the "Show and Tell" theme, the children portray their items again by drawing during their inside as well as outside playtime. This process allows the children to enhance and develop their visible thinking. This is what Jessica describes. As Jessica demonstrates during most of her playtime, she again depicts in her drawing her favorite toy with her bear. She expresses her emotions through the depiction of her toys. When children draw their favorite toys, the drawing is as a representation of their inner feelings. In other words, drawing is a transparent representation of children's emotional transformation. Jessica shows her relationships to her belongings. Through those relationships, she also expresses her attitude of fraternity toward her surroundings or environment.

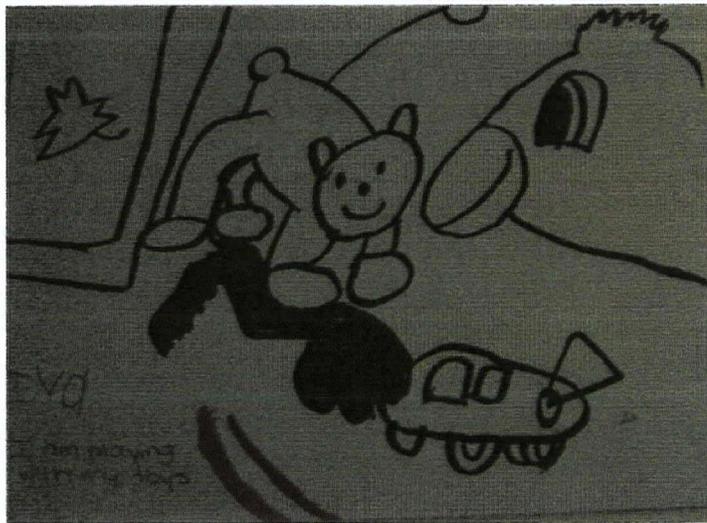


Figure 7. 8. I am Playing with My Toys (by Jessica)



Figure 7. 9. My Barbie (by Holly)

Holly: This is my Barbie I got for Christmas and it's very special to me.

Holly drew her favorite toy as a Barbie. For her, the reason of significance of that toy is given on a special day. She also shows her enjoyment with her Barbie.



Figure 7. 10. My Hot Wheel (by Matthew)

Matthew: This is my Hot Wheel.

His Hot Wheel is Matthew's most precious toy. In fact, he has a variety of Hot Wheels. Moreover, having a brand new Hot Wheel toy is a good way to get a high ranking position in the boys' group. From these two drawings, I can see the gendered culture such as the girls' inclination toward Barbie and the boys' inclination toward Hot Wheels. They are indicating their gendered traits through visual means.



Figure 7.11. Decoration of Children's Drawings

The following episode was recorded during the children's group discussion about friend/ friendship. The issue of 'being friendly,' 'being a good friend,' and 'making a friend' is widely regarded as integral to children's lives. From listening to each child's ideas, it is clear that each child has a different interpretation about what it means to make friends. This group discussion is a good source of knowing how children construct the complex relationships that enable them to stand as human beings inside their world.

Group time scene #2

Making a friend

[Discussion regarding the term of "friend" and "how do you make a friend?"

(sharing own ideas)]

Teacher: What is a "friend"?

Holly: The person who we know.

James: A friend is the person who I like.

Edward: The person who can play with me.

Matthew: Somebody who can go park with me.

Nick: Somebody who I know for a long time.

Teacher: Well, What about the person who you just met and have a fun with?

Nick: Hum, I know that is also friend. But my case, I met Daniel since I was born.

Teacher: Do you meet him often?

Nick: Yes, I meet him often and also we went to skiing together.

Teacher: So, friend is someone who you know, someone who you play with, someone who you might meet for a long time and also meet for a short time.

Teacher: Now, we made a good friends already. David, how did you make your friend? How did you make a friend, Jessica? Do you remember, Jessica?

Jessica: First, I found toy and then David came to me. David and I played with. Then I said to David, you can be my friend. Then snack time I was close with David.

Teacher: Jane, how do you make?

Jane: If I meet somebody, I say "could be my friend?"

Teacher: Oh, sweet.

Self is socially constructed from imitation and idealization from the social or communicative interaction between self and other in which the self, the "me" is constructed by taking the perspective of the other.

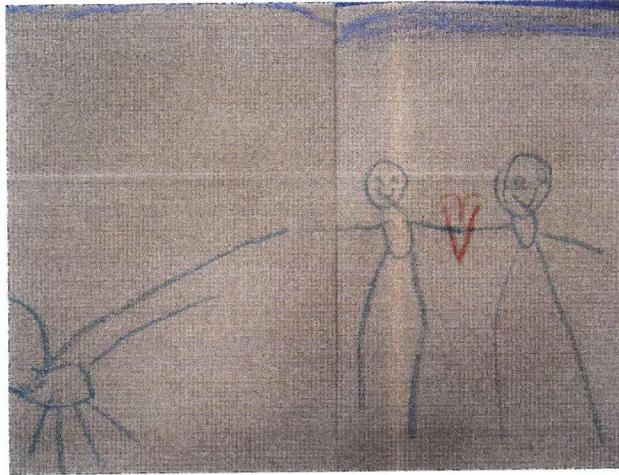
Teacher: James, do you have an idea?
James: I just play with.
Teacher: What is the important thing?
Children: Welcoming.
Teacher: How?
James: Say "Hello."
Children: Smile.
Teacher: How do you feel if you see somebody
at first, Holly?
Holly: Scared.
Teacher: But I think you make friends quickly.
Do you have any secret?
Holly: I can't remember.
Matthew: I was also scared at first time.
James: I did not remember what was happened
when I came here first. I didn't know
anybody except Benjamin. I didn't know
Louis.
Matthew: I know somebody before I came here
because I was another day care centre
with them, Cindy and Justine.
Teacher: Amy, you seem to have something to
say.
Amy: When I came here, Holly wore a beautiful
dress, then I thought she was a girl. She
was very crazy in working in the art
centre then I said to Holly, " Can you be
my friend?" then Holly said to me "Yes"
then we became a friend.
Teacher: Do you remember the moment, Holly?
Holly: Kind of.

Commentary

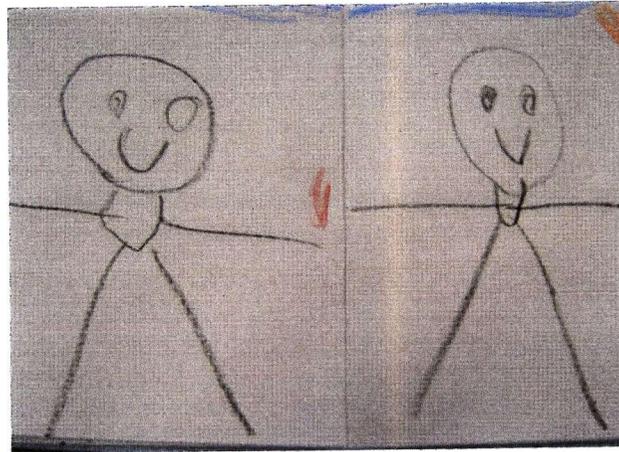
As we can assume from the sharing of children's ideas regarding "friends," there are diverse understandings and interpretations. Reflecting on my own memories or experiences, children are able to construct the meaning of friendship and their role / responsibility in becoming a (good) friend. Through storytelling, children integrate into the community. We can assume that children's own social and moral values in defining themselves as a member of the group lie where they can experience social, moral and cultural agency. After this group time, the children had an opportunity to represent their own understanding regarding friendship. The following drawings make up a picture book that reveals Matthew's understanding of friendship. His interpretation of friendship is based on close relationships revealed by the holding of hands. Interestingly, in his drawings, close friends resemble each other. They have similar smiling faces that demonstrate the love emerging between them. Being a friend includes an interaction, commonality, and sharing. Moreover, Matthew has made reference to the love between friends.



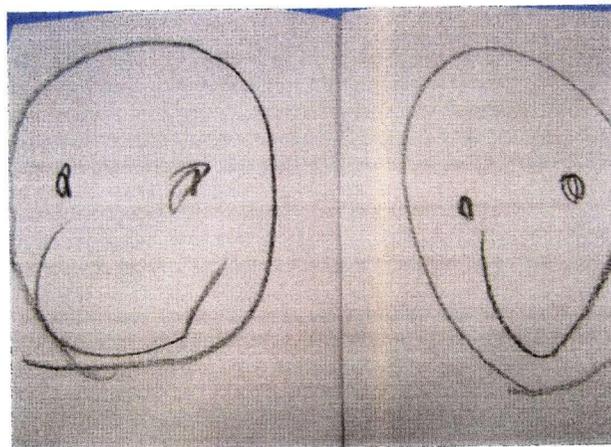
A: There are two people. They like each other



B: Both of them are playing on a sunny day. They are enjoying



C: So, they are happy



D: Then, they are smiling like this

Figure 7. 12. The Picture Book of Friendship (by Matthew)

Matthew: I am holding my friend's hands, friendship is the love of friends. See? My

heart. There is a heart between my friend and me. Then we are smiling. I like to give this book to you. Please keep it with you.

Reading and rereading children's representations and interpretations, I once again ponder on how educators/researchers make learning visible (Giudici, Rinakdi & Krechevsky, 2001). In this drawing, Matthew uses bright color, specifically, red. He declares that "red is love." He associates red with strong emotion. So, there is a strong connection between Matthew and his friend. To emphasize this, he uses a red color to symbolize love. After the children share a story about making a friend, the teacher leads a discussion about "responsibility." This is not only a way to emphasize the concept to the children but also is a way leading to literacy development. Through this process, the children become aware of the word.

Teacher: Can you tell me what "responsible" means?

[Then children utter as fast as they know about the word.]

James: Following rules in the classroom.

Matthew: Being nice.

Edward: Taking care of friends and toys.

Teacher: Then, how can we do in the classroom?

Holly: We need to take care of toys and hum... don't break toys.

Jessica: Treat toys gently.

Kathy: Being nice with friends and don't fight people.

Edward: Taking turns.

Steve: Putting things right place.

Amy: Treat books carefully.

Group time scene #3

Weekend news

Teacher: Why don't we tell your story on weekend?

James: I went to Sunshine Coast with mom and dad.

Holly: I went with my cousin, the pool in North Vancouver. There is water slide. I went to downhill. And there was a fountain.

Kathy: I went shopping with my mom.

Jeramy: I have two things.
I went to park, but I do not remember

the name of park.
Kevin: Hum... ????
Amy: Yesterday, I went to Zady's house.
Teacher: Did you have a fun time?
Amy: Actually, not. In the first, it was fun but
the ending was not good and we fought.
Teacher: Was it time to go? But still you two
are friends.
Amy: I went to by myself.
Jessica: One day, me and my sister and my
daddy went to Mt. Seymour to play a
skiing.
Matthew: I went to Clair's birthday party. The
most funny thing amongst was cake.
It was yummy.
Then I also saw the big eagle with my
mom on the way of home.
Edward: I played a soccer with my team, but we
lost.
Teacher: Oh, well...It's a good experience.
Edward: Better than lose.
Teacher: Better to play.
Kevin: Better to try.
Edward: Try better next time.
Teacher: Sometimes you can win and
sometimes you can lose.

*Sharing stories in
group time
provides the
children an
opportunity to
have a common
experience.*

*During group
time, children
develop the ability
to remember,
represent, and
reconstruct the
experience or
memory.*

Observing and listening to children...

The meaning of listening is not a simple discovering of children. There is a bigger picture beyond that of children's potentiality, tension, and the building of community. Through listening, I appreciated the trust the children placed in me, the voyage of exploration they invited me to join, and the sense of revelation they were eager to share with me. I took none of this for granted. Each one has his or her own creativity. Through creating, children are building a relationship with others, their environment, and world while their developing individual perspectives. Children take part in the landscape, manipulating their personalities, and promoting a multitude of images. What children talk about still rings bells in my head. It is an endless scenario.

Narrative 10: “Memory”

The following drawings represent how children recreate and reconstruct their experience through drawing to make it more visible.



Figure 7. 13. In the Playground (by Edward)

Edward: I went to beach. There was a playground. It was a sunny day. Me and my brother played a lot. We played on a slide. It was so fun. We came down from upside many times.

This represents Edward’s experience. He reconstructs his past experience through visual works. In particular, he expresses his feelings through the sun’s face.



Figure 7. 14. Beach (by Edward)

Edward: I went to the beach with my family. I was walking along the beach. Can you see? (he is pointing the end of right) these are bathroom in the beach. Ha, ha, ha. Bathroom in the beach is important. But it smells.



Figure 7. 15. Happy Flowers (by Holly)

[Holly is painting a flower.]

Me: What's this?

Holly: It's a violet.

Me: Did you see it?

Holly: Yes, I've seen it real with my mommy in the park.

It was so beautiful.

That's why I am painting.
[Then she is drawing a happy smile sun.]
Me: Oh, the sun is smiling.
Holly: Yes, I like it.

Interestingly, all three children reveal their feeling as a smiling sun. The happy sun is a good metaphor for their inner feelings.



Figure 7. 16. My Dream House (by Edward)

[This drawing is done by Edward. He uses his created colors for house and trees.]
Edward: I like a rainbow.
[Actually, he does not like to interrupt his work, so every time, it was very cautious.]
Does it look big for you?
Me: No, It looks small for me.
[Suddenly, Jessica bumped into him.]
Jessica: Why are doing your tree a blue?
Edward: I just want to do.
Jessica: It is a fall?
Edward: No, I want to have a blue tree.

I was struck by the importance of these transactions. They are significant dealings which are premised on a mutual sharing of assumptions, beliefs about how the world is, how the mind works, what we are up to, and how communication should proceed.

In composing play and visual narrative, children consciously choose the content and symbols that help to organize their inner thoughts. As we can learn from their narrative, children interweave diverse settings with the actions and voices of numerous characters through endless participation/ engagement. What I have discovered from children's narrative is that the children are always aware of their audience. As a result, after they compose a script for their play, they revise the whole text for further developed versions. Creating a play, an artwork, or a piece of writing are all about representing "self" and negotiating that relationship with others. These processes include not only taken-for-granted assumptions but also challenge understandings. These are more obvious with the following poems told by children.

Daydreaming

Chances are
I might be a prince
Or a might be a king
I dunno
I'll decide after breakfast
(by Holly)

The God Story 1

God has a birthday
Every winter
He flies like a cloud
Taking his wife for a ride on his back
All around the world
(by Edward)

The God Story 2

You know who are right or wrong

Maybe God!

Sometime we are right, but sometimes we are wrong.

My mom told me

God knows everything

(by Kathy)

Rain Dance

Daddy says the rain

Sounds like little feet

Dancing on the rooftop

But I think the rain sounds...

Like rain

(by Jessica)

From these poems, children show how they understand the world. Such narrative is used as a medium of presenting how they make the shift from strange to familiar, and how children become multiple authors of their story. Thus, the process of making thinking visible through oral and visual narrative promotes an integrated view of young children. Children make tangible connections between many interpretations and they learn through diverse experiences; in a larger sense, through storytelling, they relate their deep and very personal experience of the world.

Finally, I am comfortable with the space between the words which children express, orally and visually. I see how creating a small space for reflecting and inspecting the boundaries of discourse can allow both the children and me to move beyond what is given to what is possible. I am reminded of Grumet's (1988) words:

“...to harvest silence... to construct a special place for ourselves in our work... is to achieve the clarity, communication and insight of aesthetic practice—if it is, in short, to be research and not merely representation (1988, p.88-89).

Who we are in the world

Who we are becoming in the world

Hearing what children say is very intuitive

It becomes more explicit in understanding children

Personal stories are the process of self-construction. Self or selves, like cultures, are not so much preserved in stories as they are created; instead, they are reworked and revised through participation in stories in everyday narrative practices that are embedded and responsive to shifting interpersonal connections. In closing, the children’s humor is still ringing in my ears. What I have learned, by heart, is that children are direct, honest, and innocent human beings.

[Edward and James are talking about the name of a country.]

James: The country of Hungary for hungry people and Turkey for turkey?

Edward: So the hungry people eat the turkey.

Then the city eats the city? What?

James: Then the city is gone.

Then what happen?

Edward: Whatever, kikikikikikiki.

[Then the two boys giggle.]

CHAPTER 8

NARRATIVE, PLAY, ART, AND SELF: INTERSECTING WORLDS

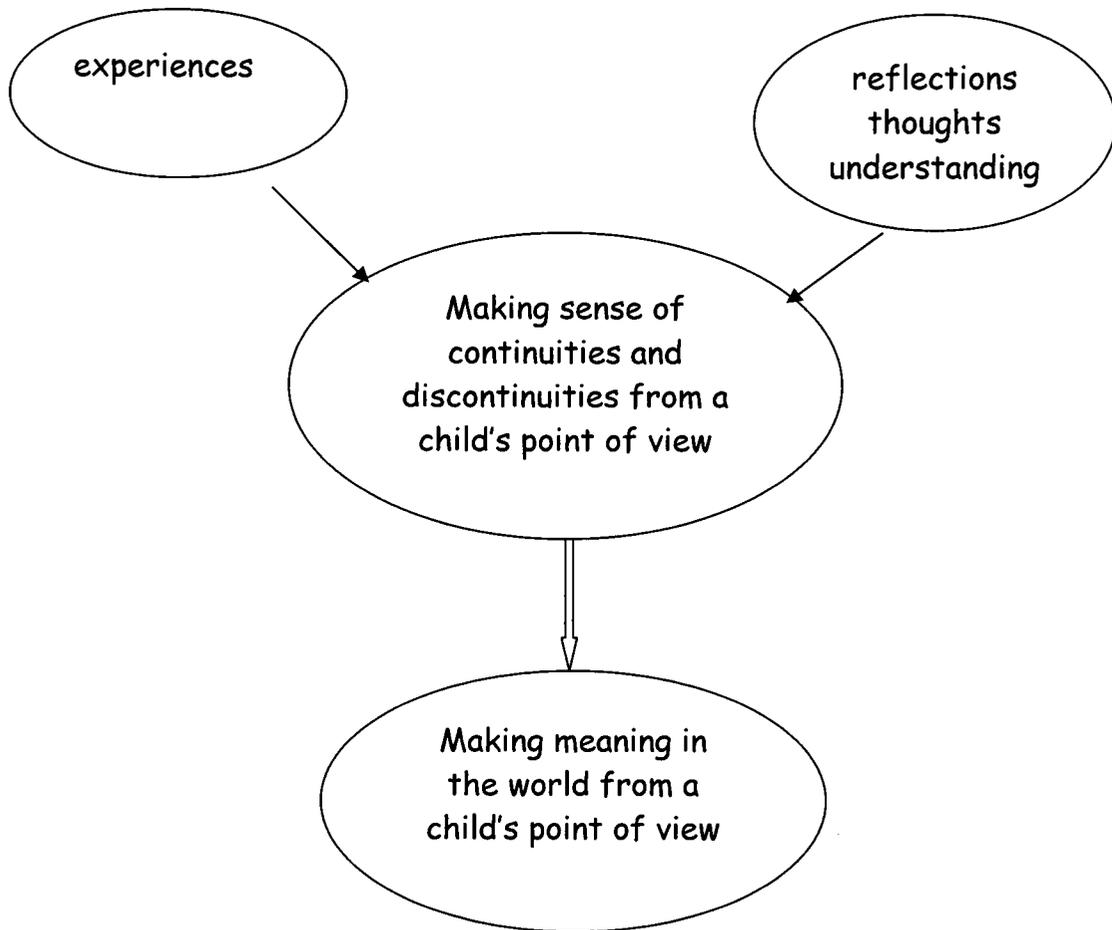
A Noiseless Patient Spider

A noiseless patient spider,
I mark'd where on a little promontory it stood isolated,
Mark'd how to explore the vacant vast surrounding,
It launch'd forth filament, filament, filament out of itself,
Ever unreeling them, ever tirelessly, speeding them.

And you O my soul where you stand,
Surrounded, detached, in measureless oceans of space,
Ceaselessly musing, venturing, throwing, seeking the
spheres to connect them,
Till the bridge you will need to be formed, till the
ductile anchor hold,
Till the gossamer thread you fling catch somewhere,
O my soul.

Walt Whitman, 1868 (cited in Gallas, 1994, p. 147)

I am not able to separate the children's and my search for knowledge and greater understanding in the microcosmic setting of the children's world from what I perceive to be a larger and less easily described search for meaning in the world. The metaphor of spider and soul captures the essence scene of what goes on in a child's mind. Children, as well as myself, exist within a larger framework of being. Stories go around in circles. There are stories inside stories, and stories between stories. If we look hard enough, we can find meaning through and between the storyline.



- Oral narratives/story-telling/role play
 - Mark making/drawing/writing
- Physical actions/gesture/body language
 - Modeling/manipulating objects

Figure 8. 1. Children's Representation

(Anning & Ring, 2004, p. 7)

How children represent themselves and how they choose to relate to their experiences plays an important role in narrative production. The objective of this study is to come to a thoughtful understanding of children's self-construction and their ability to make meaning of their world through production. This investigation attempts to come to a better understanding about how children construct meaning in representation of self and relationship with surroundings through oral and visual contexts. This socio-cultural perspective involves taking a wide look at any phenomenon crossing contexts and relating to one another.

In order to investigate this phenomenon, I endeavored to describe how children look upon their own play activities and artworks in order to identify and describe the content and communicative aspects.

What I found was that children's narrative is able to be analyzed by what occurs naturally in play and artwork. The analysis described in the previous chapters is based on what children fabricate and expand through oral and visual narrative. In the narrative, I was able to see

interacting aspects, which may contribute to the construction of self through children's unique cultural practices and interpretations. Children not only create interpersonal events purportedly experienced by the self, but they also create stories of vicarious experience by borrowing from the people with whom they are associated. They associated story images with familiar events and places in their own lives; furthermore, children made empathic connections to story characters.

Sometimes, children's narrative allows an opportunity for controlling their understanding

I am in the middle of evaluating children's discourse, by which we read through children what they produce. How much effort did I devote to make children's thinking visible?

through comparison, or negotiation, or real and fantasy worlds. Children's personalities, their positions in society, and their ability to access the culture are open to interpretation. Each story fits into a multifaceted and integrated pattern that reveals children's social and cultural understanding. In sum, although surface ideologies of appropriate ways of displaying social and cultural behavior prove themselves to be diverse, the underlying ideologies are more similar among children. Children express themselves, relationships with others, and experiences by reflection. They construct ethical or moral order, social order, and cultural order by taking a role in the play. What I learned from my research questions is that children learn the world as they present their understandings which are sometimes very direct, but sometimes, more underlying. Children have a potential to develop their perspectives toward making sense of their culture. Storytelling helps children learn their roles in society and how to interact with each other. While the children's story play does sometimes lead to stereotyped roles, it also allows for experimentation and exploration. Storytelling is an adjunct of play; it follows existing play and introduces new ideas for the future.

Framed within the perspectives of emergent narrative in play and art, socio-cultural constructivism (Vygotsky, 1978), and the theory of social positioning (Ferne, Davies, Kantor & McMurray, 1993) this study attempts to gain a deeper understanding of children's endeavors to create and develop identity. Moreover, it is important to seek consistent ways to include the experiences that influence children and then use children's perspectives to inform and improve educational practice. Therefore, in this chapter, I would like to go back to the world of children's

narrative in order to re-examine and re-evaluate the role and meaning of narrative in young children's re-creation and development of the concept of "self." These three sections relate to the three major theme groupings in the previous chapters.

When I think back on the time I spent with children, one activity comes to mind. Running. Running has played a significant role in my research study, and has taught me life lessons. I need to be adaptive to all unpredictable occurrences and to keep in mind that every race is different. Similarly, each child has a unique character and personal perspective. Moreover, everyone is different. I dwell in between spaces of knowing and not knowing. I reside with and remain open to the unknown in order to understand the creation of the meaning-making process.

8.1. An Artful Tool of “Meaning-Making”

Narrative not only provides a blueprint for making sense of the world; it also guides action within that world. In other words, while narrative is a mode of representation, it is, at the same time, a mode of action. We use narrative to guide and shape the way we experience our daily lives, to communicate with other people, and to develop relationships with them. This is particularly true for young children as a means to experience and re-experience self in relation to other. Once children are able to narrate their experiences, a qualitative transformation occurs in the self-constructive process, with revision and reconstruction. Narrative exchanges permit children to examine and organize their experiences, and offer them the chance to hear and respond, to negotiate and extend. This study provides an example of how young children represent themselves in oral and visual contexts, as a means of building a concept of ‘becoming,’ and as an expression of their knowledge about the world. Capturing the meaning from children’s voices, children’s play, and art texts involves interpreting the convergence of their experience, culture, and crossing over into their world of identity construction. Exploration of children’s narrative in play and visual arts presents understanding their social and cultural knowledge and their way of representation.

Sharing stories and reflecting on what these stories mean and how they have affected and continue to affect us, opens the possibilities for a much greater understanding. Narrative is especially well-suited to representing self-continuity (Ricoeur,1984). A few researchers (Miller,

*Children’s
narratives are:
The
representations
of individual
productions*

*The
representations
of peer-group
productions*

*The
representations
of inter-group
productions*

1994; Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra & Mintz, 1990) have stressed the affinity between narrative and self-concept. Children's own personal narrative serves a similar function to adults' narrative about children by being implicated in self-construction. For example, Wolf (1990) suggests that the different roles that children take during play are informative of children's understanding of the multiplicity of the self. Conversations also change how each child views his or her own understanding and learning. As Bakhtin (1981) says:

Life by its very nature is dialogic. To live means to participate in dialogue: to ask questions, to heed, to respond, to agree, and so forth. In this dialogue a person participates wholly... with his eyes, lips, hands, soul, spirit, with his whole body and deeds. He invites his entire self in discourse, and this discourse enters in the dialogic fabric of human life, into the world symposium (1981, p.293).

Children's play narratives suggest that the understanding of texts as multi-voiced emerges early enough to be considered a fundamental aspect of what young children learn about discourses. During the early years, children become fluent and inventive users of symbols, including gestures, pictures, spoken words, and written ones.

The term of 'meaning-making' (Bruner, 1996; Wells, 1986) is used extensively considering the child as a learner from a socio-cultural perspective. I regard meaning-making as an aspect of the wider concept of learning. As an adult observer in the world of children's play and art, I

Kerby (1991) argues: "the narration of events is not a simple description of 'facts' but an interpretive activity... Prior to some degree of narration, the meaning of human events for us is obscure or simply absent" (1991, p. 48).

gained insights into how children practice personal narrative and the implications of narrative for learning about the world, constructing children's concept of 'becoming' and their creating identity (Polkinghorne, 1988). Apparently, narrative is an explicit factor common to all intellectual activity.

In relation to these issues, researchers have been interested in narrative as a conversational making activity (Bamberg, 1996; Bruner, 1990; Polkinghorne, 1988). Children use narrative as a

verbal tactic to manage power, conflict, and social ranking within their peer groups.

Dyson (1994) has shown that children as authors and as storytellers play with both the boundary between the real and the imagined, while they are also playing with social and cultural lines that are influenced by age, sex, class, race, and ethnicity. Children's narrative reveals how they perform in the world (Nicolopoulou, Scales, & Weintraub, 1994). Children's narrative is the process at the heart of self-construction.

The world of children's narrative is a place jammed with theory and practice. Sometimes, I doubt theory ; in practice, though, the children answered all my questions.

I was surprised and amazed by the stories children told. Narrative is the arena encompassing children's social and cultural meaning-making.

We are just onlookers observing a stream of children's (re)creating, (re)constructing, and (re)configuring.

For children, meaning-making processes are dynamic and contain negotiations concerning status, identity, and power relations. Selves are not so much preserved in narrative as they are created; rather, self-concept is reworked, and revised through participation in narrative practices that are embedded in, and responsive to, shifting interpersonal conditions. What children reveal in their narratives is their search for an ideological position through heterogeneous relationships. Van Lagenhove and Harre (1999) point out that conversations “have story lines and the positions people take in a conversation will be linked to these story lines” (p. 17). They go on to claim that “whenever there are story lines, there are positionings” (p. 30). Furthermore, they explain: “Positioning is the discursive process whereby people are located in conversations

as observably and subjectively coherent participants in jointly produced story lines” (Davies & Harre, 1999, p. 37). Positioning refers to possible ways of being and to each person's experience of the possibilities made available through specific discourse and contexts. Children are multiple authors and they hear a multiplicity of voices. This position can and does change. Fluid positioning is a child's way of coping with everyday situations. One can position oneself or be positioned as powerful or powerless, dominant or submissive, authorized or unauthorized, and so on. Children are showing how they fit into their social community through the shifting position

assumed in their narratives, such as provoker in Matthew's narrative ('First Kid has the First' and 'Everybody Needs to Clean up'), or as a conductor revealed on Holly's and James' narrative ('Holly's Fake Story series,' 'Let's Play a Teacher,' 'Making a Gondola'). Conversely, Edward shows his position as follower in his narrative. He does not reveal himself clearly; rather he tends to hide himself in the storyline. In the meantime, Kathy portrays herself as a negotiator who is interchangeably communicating depending on situations, for instance, as a doctor, ('Baby is Coming Out') or as a being who has an economical sense ('Becoming a Seller'). Jessica is an observer, reflecting through metaphor, on her position in the social strata. Positioning also depends upon who gets to be the first narrator in the context of the story. Through such experiences, children go through the process of deciding their contested and negotiated status. In terms of this issue, Fernie, Davies, Kantor & McMurray (1993) illustrate how young children use social positioning in peer interactions. Children's peer culture (Corsaro, 1985) is not explicit. On the contrary, social positions are embedded in the social context; they are part of an implicit communication. In Corsaro's (1985) study, children have a great knowledge about status positions and roles. Higher status positions enable them to give more directives in play than lower status positions.

In terms of building a position by telling one's own story in the context of narrative, the teller reveals what is happening and who they are. In addition, different gender positions are inferred ('Gender as Performance') in the usage and construction of narrative in the peer group.

According to Vygotsky's (1978) theory, emphasizing the importance of the social framework

and the social context, particular interactions among human beings form a central axis upon which development of thought revolves. The direction of development originates from the exterior; that is, it arises from society as a force working inward on the individual, toward independent thought process:

Knowledge is not only the shadow of sign, but also dwells in the shadows between signs, dwells in and between and beyond the signifying chains that can only always and forever represent it in its partiality (Brown & Dobrin 2004, p. 301).

Inherent in the understanding of narrative is the assumption that we construct and portray our understanding of self through narrative. Bruner (1990) has argued that while we may learn about the physical world through logical rules and abstract principles, we learn about the social world through narrative. As children take in the stories they hear all around them, they also take in a particular interpretation of events and experiences. In turn, through stories, aspects of their culture shape the way they think about and remember experiences. Children not only tell stories of actual experiences to build a sense of self, they also invent stories about things that might happen that could not possibly happen, that they wish would happen, or that they hope fervently will never happen. In other words, children use stories to understand their world or to invent their world. What children represent through their stories in a way articulates who they are, and how they see themselves as constructive human beings. Further, stories illuminate the process of self-construction and the relational basis of personal experiences.

When I put myself in the middle of the children's world, what children say reveals a universe to me. One day, in group story time, the children had a chance to talk about the meaning of "responsible." From their perspective, "responsible" means taking care of toys, being nice to friends, putting things in the right place, treating books carefully, and not fighting with friends. Narrative in ordinary life reveals how young children engender, re-configure and reconstruct their position in society by revealing who and where they are.

8.2. Pedagogical Attentiveness: A Window of Configuration/ Construction

Bruner (1986) stresses the significance of the “landscape of consciousness” as the definitive characteristic of narrative. The act of listening/reading and interpreting children’s narratives is as complex and conflicted as its telling. The narrated self is constructed with, and responsive to, other people; consequently, children’s narratives reveal varying degrees of their sense of autonomy and connectedness. Their oral and visual narratives may help them respond to and connect with those around them, and confirm the recognition of self in the world. Children’s experiences are subject to selection,

While I sit attentively in the classroom, I observe each child’s construction, deconstruction, and reconstruction of self, their relationships, and the influence of the environment.

Whenever I listen to or watch children’s narratives, I try to get rid of all my prejudices, preconceptions, and biases. My own interpretations are inaccurate adult assumptions, which silence or misrepresent the voices of the children.

interpretation, challenge, and elaboration by others (Miller et al., 1990; Snow, 1990). Children infuse the world with personal meaning and assume an increasing awareness of self as intentional, valuable, and connected to personal events in their environment.

What children present through narrative gives us access to their thoughts and aspirations. Through inner logic, children utilize narrative as a means of affirming their experiences and their selves. What children reveal in narrative is the journey they take in the process of forming a self-identity. They are experiencing three different stages continuously: being aware of the self, elaborating the self with interconnection, and establishing self by reorganization.

Children share their experiences, anxieties, conflicts, possibilities, and probabilities with each other. Also they use their peers to make sense of the human and physical world. Moreover, children engage in interpersonal negotiations around goals and needs, and they support each other when emotionally aroused. This is a construction zone similar to the concept of Vygotsky's Zone of Proximal Development⁴ (ZPD). Within this safe zone, children begin to define and interpret themselves. By sharing experiences, children constantly affirm their underlying identity and their emerging sense of self.

What I realize about children's narrative is that the use of cultural themes to construct meaning is an important way for children to come to understand themselves as social beings. Boys, especially, demonstrate their strength and act out physically and verbally what it is like to be big and strong; such wish fulfillment can be inferred from James' narrative, such as "I am the boss" and "I am the teacher, teacher can do whatever." The boss has the authority to rule his subordinates who have to be nice and obedient. Children also comply with the norms and rules imposed by adults in authority by turning them upside-down. This behavior is related to theories about power and resistance (Foucault, 1972). Power structures or building hierarchies among children are assumed to be hidden but children are already aware of them. They construct meaning about authority in their daily lives. Constructing how to deal with authorities is not a wish to be big *per se*. It is simply a desire to take part in the benefits of being grown-up, a state

⁴ Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD) is the distance between the actual development level as determined by independent problem solving and the level of potential development as determined through problem solving under adult guidance or in collaboration with more capable peers (1978, p. 86).

of being that is significantly important in the peer culture. I have learned that children use cultural themes in play to construct meaning and this is an important way to make sense of their situations. It is the cornerstone to conceptualizing themselves as social beings. Gaining power and putting one's self in the appropriate ranked position is the means by which a social being is reconfigured.

In terms of building a concept of social identity, Tajfel (1974) defines social identity as "the part of an individual's self-concept which derives from his knowledge of his membership of a social group (or groups) together with the emotional significance attached to that membership" (p. 69). According to Tajfel, an individual's social identity is not fixed; instead, it is developed, maintained, and transformed through the awareness of his/her relative status compared to the in-group and the out-group that he/she comes in contact with. Although the creation of children's social identity is not wholly settled from experiences of an interpersonal and intrapersonal nature, children start to come to terms with themselves as social beings, they begin reinterpreting and reconfiguring themselves from different and emerging perspectives. Stories people tell about remembered experiences from their own lives provide an important, indeed privileged, site for the social construction of self (Miller, Potts, Fung, Hoogstra & Mintz, 1990).

Many theorists emphasize the importance of narrative in creating a moral order (Bamberg, 1996), in transmitting moral values (Bruner, 1990), and in positioning the self as a moral agent (Bamberg, 1996; Kerby, 1991; Polkinghorne, 1988). Morality may be defined as how we conduct our personal lives as we live with others. Children position themselves with respect to

social norms and values. To a greater or lesser extent, children's narrative reflects and inculcates values, standards, and ways of behaving. From a child's point of view, narrative necessarily involves a moral stance, as the child chooses a particular view of events and their possibilities. Narratives that draw the most attention to the moral nature of daily life are those in which the children are presented with a dilemma in which the children's character must choose between two conflicting demands represented by important figures in a child's life, such as parents, siblings, or friends. As we can see in Matthew's narrative (Narrative 1 and 2, in chapter 5), he constructs his own moral code by acting as a character who demonstrates an underlying ethical norm in society.

Children, themselves, recognize and solve problems based on the concept of what is good and what is bad through their personal knowledge and experience. They are beings who construct their world based on internal and external moral/ ethical norms. Mostly, these moral identifications arise from natural tendencies to imitate the parent or another role model, a desire to conform to the normative expectations, or a perception of similarity to the parent (intensified by imitation), a perception of the greater competence or higher status, and an idealization of the parents' competence or virtue.

Observing narrative convinces me that children's explicit/implicit ideologies relate to the provision of basic knowledge in the development of self. Similarly, children's narrative invites me to examine emotional socialization in exploration of cultural development. This exploration is influenced and furthered by gender differences as well. The abstract concepts of good and evil,

power and vulnerability, love and hate, death and destruction are embedded in one's culture. In other words, boys focus on imagery based on fast-moving objects, action involving conflict and its resolution, and physical exuberance. Girls focus on imagery based on human relationships, love, and physical beauty. Throughout the girls' narratives, I could see references to the importance of lovability. These references are tied up with status and ranking in the group, as described in Jessica's invitation of girls to her home. In the girls' group discussion, these references are related to personal experiences. The desire to be loved and acknowledged by others suggests an acceptable development of self. Another prevalent theme is trouble and its avoidance. Trouble-sharing is an important tool for establishing solidarity among children. Girls use trouble-sharing to negotiate their social alignments; it also identifies them as being concerned with moral issues, giving them social ownership. Similarly, in the boys' play, strategies used for power, such as the flouting of the teacher's authority (James' defying the authority of teacher), could also be a source of trouble.

The activity of children's creation of narrative, along with the content of the narrative told, has an impact on children's interpersonal relationships, empathy, and interest. Narratives stimulate sympathetic response, as well, and cause children to think more deeply about their social, moral, and gender world. Furthermore, the creation of narrative provides an educative environment that helps children develop individual perspectives. Therefore, children's narrative needs to be understood as a way of knowing, and making sense of things, and consequently, we need to recognize it for the valuable educative tool that it is. Children make connections to their

own lives as well as relating empathetically with others. Storytelling is an opportunity to connect and explore relationships in both interpersonal and intrapersonal realms. Individuals actively and continuously construct and reconstruct their identity (ies) of sense(s) of self, but they do so within discursive repertoires. These discursive repertoires facilitate a shift or adjustment from independence to transition/ transformation.

In order to truly hear a child, we might need to suspend preconceived notions about that child's experience. Pedagogical action may be determined by what we know of the larger context in which children live. I am reminded of Gadamer's notion of "fusion of horizons" to describe how children's lives are understood as a dialectical interplay. With a little understanding, we can see how a person may emerge from the inchoate experiences of childhood.

For the last several months, I have been attached, both emotionally and spiritually, with children.

I regard myself, as the children do, as a part of their world.

I listen, again and again, to their stories. To find out what they want to express, I question myself constantly.

It is an endless journey. Their stories are still echoing...

8.3. Composing Intertextual Links

Vygotsky (1995) argues that children's creativity in its original form is syncretistic creativity, which means that the individual arts have yet to be separated and specialized. Children do not differentiate between poetry and prose, narration and drama. Children draw pictures and tell a story at the same time; they act a role and create their lines as they go along. Children rarely spend a long time completing each creation, but produce something in an instant, focusing all their emotions on what they are doing at that moment in time (Lindqvist, 2001, p.8).

Narrative is a portrait drawn by children interweaving many functions and attitudes and incorporating a number of voices. As observers, we such as adults fail to be open-minded about narrative expressed in the modes of play, artwork, and symbolic representation, in spite of evidence pointing to the significance of story as a rich, universal, and cultural resource used to make sense of the world and our experiences within it (Egan, 1989). It is a dynamic meeting space between the children's inner lives (emotions and thoughts) and their external world, as these two spheres converge to reflect reality. In constructing stories by making an oral or visual connection, children "draw on images and other elements that are presented to them by their cultural environment and that shape their imagination and sensibility in profound and subtle ways" (Nicolopoulou, Scales, & Weintraub, 1994, p. 119). Since I regard narrative as a mediatory means, it is important to study children's communication in the context of role, action, and environment. In terms of action, children determine their own with phrases such as "I'm diving", and then transform them, saying "I am dying." Phrases become directive when they exhort each other to do something. Sometimes, these actually resemble stage directions, as if they are directors in a play.

What I have observed in play narrative is that children define the props or scenery (saying such things as “this is a bed”), then add the fine detail that transform the bed into “a doggy’s bed.” These refinements are heteroglossic, simultaneously put together when children establish their imaginary world. What children say attempts to justify what is presently happening or has already happened to them. In this way, they define their environment and interweave their actions into what we call reality discourse; daily actions and objects are defined and transformed through fantasy discourse. This phenomenon is apparent in art narrative, as well as in play.

Narrative in art is a powerful way for young children to express complex ideas. Drawing gives them an opportunity to represent intricate personal narrative and to communicate it with the other significant people in their lives. Jessica’s picture storybook and Matthew’s friendship book, for example. As Malchiodi (1998) argues, drawing offers a window into children’s preoccupations, passions, problems, and possibilities.

Children express themselves not only on oral or visual ways but also by non-verbal acts, body gesture, movement, and sound; sometimes this is the most powerful way of all.

Through drawing, children can re-present action, emotion, ideas or experiences, and tell complex stories (Dyson, 1990; Gallas, 1994; Malchiodi, 1998). It is a reflection of their understandings and interpretations from children’s perspectives.

The arts invite learners to see and express their world in a uniquely individual fashion; thus, diverse individuals and groups can share personal and cultural stories and myths, and find an expressive voice for problems, concerns, emotions, and anxieties about social and political conflict, racism, acceptance, and difference (Gardner, 1991).

Children's artworks offer important alternatives to the traditional learning paradigms; they lend themselves to valid and possible interpretations, giving children a way to show their thoughts and concepts. They give the young artist an enriched and expanded sense of identity and self-worth. What becomes evident, after listening to children's explanation of their artwork, is that children define, create, and (re) construct concepts or thoughts through negotiating between their own imaginations and the real image. Sometimes, children's artwork seems to be an improvisation but it is full of spiritual meaning of children. From their innocent eyes and souls, I learn another aspect of their world view and how they make meaning of their lives. John Dewey (1934/1980) emphasized:

Any idea that ignores the necessary role of intelligence in production of works of art is based on identification of thinking with use of one special kind of material, verbal signs and words. To think effectively in terms of relations of qualities is as severe a demand upon thought as to think in terms of symbols, verbal and mathematical. Indeed since words are easily manipulated in mechanical ways, the production of a work of genuine art probably demands more intelligence than does most of the so-called thinking that goes on among those who pride themselves on being "intellectuals" (p. 46).

Children, by using symbols, join with others who share the same "imaginative universe" or "worlds of possibility" (Dyson, 1993, p.23). Dyson explains the way drawing is helped by the

critical role of talk and gesture to become “a mediator, a way of giving a graphic voice to an intention” (Dyson, 1993, p.24).

Malchiodi (1998) gives drawing a dual role as a narrative form, enabling children to express their individual stories through a developmentally appropriate form of communication and providing a medium for their feeling. Artworks show young children’s understanding of the world around them, and their coming to terms with their own personal role/identities within the cultures in which they are growing up. Children use artwork both as a way of telling others what it is that matters to them, and as a way of exploring new ideas, concepts, and emotions for themselves. As Gallas (1994) explains, the narratives children create in drawings are paralleled by their oral storying and role-play. Children move fluently from one mode of representation to another, often using artwork and storytelling simultaneously as the vehicle to represent and re-represent what they know. This is clearly demonstrated in the narrative that accompanies Jessica’s and Holly’s process of drawing and the process of boys’ Gondola construction. Through different uses of narrative, children organize their thoughts all the while learning how to reflect on and pick up symbols that help them arrange and articulate their inner thoughts. These narratives provide an essential step in literacy development, and give children a route to enhance their understanding of ‘becoming.’ Innumerable interpretations breathe life into the text and give it a multifarious richness and depth that far transcends what even the most thorough discursive examination can extract from it. Children establish their own identities while they are

creating and developing their interconnected narratives according to their unique understanding of issues.

Children create layers of narrative as they represent and re-represent versions of stories in their play and art works. They have more opportunities to utilize fluidity in their meaning-making, where they transform objects freely from one function to another. They explore the gap between “me” and “not me” using what they make as transactional objects. Since childhood is seen as socially constructed and contextualized, there is no natural or universal child, but many childhoods and many children. Children are not passive receptors of generated knowledge, but an active participants, able to construct knowledge and interpret themselves based on their experiences and interactions with others. Even when I noticed a general theme emerging in their play, I reminded myself that there might be other themes more urgent to other children in other situations. Finally, children’s narrative provided an educative environment that helped children develop individual perspectives. Children created transactional experiences that increased their knowledge of self and others by reflecting on images and linking them to cultural concepts and paradigms. Children became to link not only interpersonal but also intrapersonal realms. Consequently, narratives are a foundation to the learning and development of children.

Early childhood education today is very much related to communication and interaction; children’s narratives and opportunities to tell their stories are regarded as significant. As educators, our perceptive abilities are critical to the opening up of new worlds for all children. Even within classrooms, where the opportunity to draw and tell a story is often freely available,

there is usually an adult focus upon 'mark making leading to writing' rather than communication and creativity. In this vein, the present study draws attention to the need for educators to reaffirm or reconsider the place and value of drawing and telling a story within the curriculum, particularly the relationship between oral/visual narrative as communication and as art. There is a need for educators not only to 'tune into' and thus give value to children's oral and visual narrative as re-presentations of their interests and pre-occupations, but also to use re-presentations as starting points which will motivate children's thinking and support learning.

In light of this issue, educators must show sensitivity to young children's narratives, on a personal, family, or community level, providing both encouragement and support for the further development of the children's abilities to tell their stories. At the same time, educators must provide young children with exposure to narratives that are beyond the parameters of their immediate world of here and now. This is done in order to enrich their ability to structure meaning and understanding of significant things beyond the realities of their own lives, beyond their own egos, and beyond the narrower parameters of the groups to which they belong.

There has to be openness and opportunities in order for the children to make choices. The teacher has to be competent in listening, supporting, and challenging the child. The classroom also has to seethe with collective reflecting and sharing of ideas and meaning making. Finally, there has to be serious respect for the child's world. We have to be aware of how a child's way of expressing him or herself is only a small fragment of the total experience or knowledge of the child.

My reflective understanding, gleaned from the experience of listening to and observing young children's narratives, is as follows: 1) the narrative that children invent is intertwined with the reader and 2) how the reader constructs the meaning is dependent on his or her interpretations.

Your concept of the story will guide what you learn about young children's narrative activity.

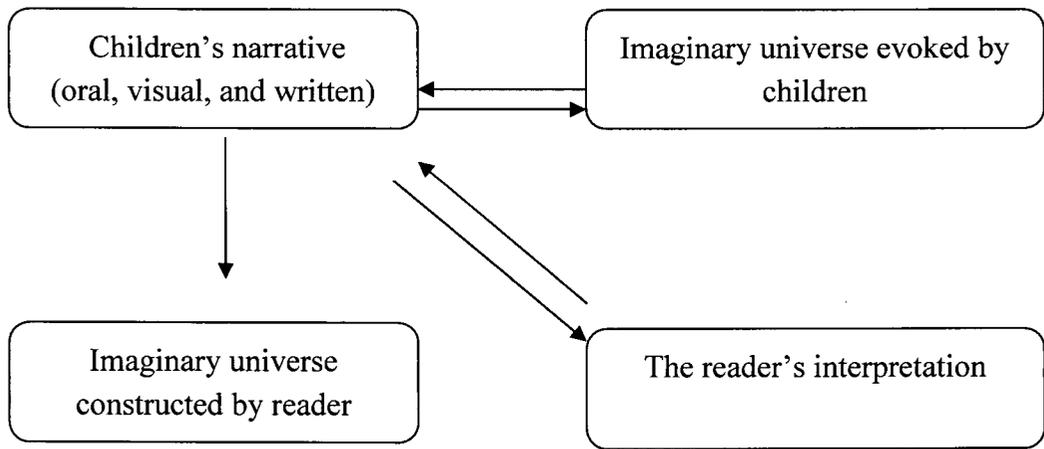


Figure 8. 2. Reflective Understanding

The themes emerging in children's play are familiar to our culture. Through the creative performance, new meanings occur, and these are unique to the specific situation and the peer culture. Children's creative performances suggest that the themes emerging in narrative are not just reproductions of others' constructions; these are children's participations in the construction of knowledge and culture. Overlapping narrative themes are interpreted as an expression of the

nuances in children's lives. Well (1986) argues that learning takes place through a process of inquiry within a social group, with the inquiry involving the pursuit of authentic questions, and learning involving the construction of meaning that comes through exploration. The notion of learning as a process of inquiry is an extension of Vygotsky's (1978) view that meaning is constructed through the process of articulating ideas. This articulation includes both the transformation of inner speech to explicit speech, and the uses of outer speech in exploratory ways, as learners tentatively propose and reflect on ideas.

It is common in qualitative inquiry to consider the researcher as the most important research instrument. I endorse this notion. As a researcher who examines issues related to children's understanding from a socio-cultural perspective, I employ interpretive analysis procedures to understand the meanings of narratives in children's lives. Representative narrative is the practice of re-presenting social community and culture, and re-inventing literacy practices. It affords a generative place, "the third space"⁵ where interaction with representation and understanding occurs. In summarizing this current study, my findings delineate the relationship between children's narrative and learning in diverse contexts. Moreover, from a pedagogical perspective, children's narrative could be used as the basis for the understanding of children's 'becoming.' For further elaboration, we need to re-affirm the centrality of creativity in children's thinking and learning through diverse languages. We should recognize children's preferred ways of representing and communicating their growing understanding of the world. Furthermore, we

⁵ It is a productive space of enabling other positions to emerge.

need to radically revise the curriculum for young children and argue for the importance of listening to children's oral and visual narratives. Consequently, we will have a society that can listen to children and recognize that their narratives, in their diverse ways, may tell us much more about childhood than we ever imagined.

CHAPTER 9

CONCLUDING REMARKS: MY PILGRIMAGE TO THE CHILDREN'S INVITATION

My plan has not been to construct a simple record of research, but rather to share what this research means to me and what I have come to learn from children's illustrations through narrative. The intention of this study is to be "evocative rather than didactic" (Lather, 1991). As I look back on it now, I see that the initial energy behind my expedition with the children and through their world was triggered by my yearning to learn and the enthusiasm that I bring to that task. To satisfy my curiosity, I traveled, as a navigator or an explorer, looking for emerging narratives created by children in their oral and visual texts. What was ultimately important for me was to gain knowledge of the inquiry process and to be with children inside their world.

After living/ re-living and performing with children's narratives, I have confidence saying that the procedure of narrative inquiry is an illuminating experience. It has provided me with the opportunity to reflect on my childhood and to take a closer look at what is happening in children's lives. This journey was astonishing since it allowed me to have a dialogue with my inner self. This narrative inquiry has revealed children's activities and their inner world in their own words and gestures. These revelations would not have been possible through a conventional experimental study or a survey research study.

My pursuit began in the early morning, walking on the university campus, eager to reach my destination. On my arrival, the children would say hello while offering me a smile. Gradually, the children got closer to me and their simple gestures helped make my day. Living with them as an observer, my role involved watching, listening, conversing, recording, and interpreting. Acting as a witness, only, disengaged personally from any social activities linked with children, I documented the children's narratives during their play, group activities and individual art activities, including drawings, paintings, clay, and building. In the meantime, I listened to the murmur of voices in an internal dialogue during my inquiring journey.

Before I started this research, I assumed briefly that children generalize their understandings in a simple way. However, during my research, sometimes, I was confused by what they wanted to say and how much young children embrace diverse understandings about the world and their experiences. Then, slowly I could find the underlying ideologies of their worlds. Their conversation and story making in natural contexts provided a good way for me to understand them. Children's narratives contribute to not only representing their perspectives but also developing self-confidence. During the process of this study, I went through "interstanding" by children. There were "A-ha" moments between the layers of the children's world and my world. What I realized from experiences of being with children is that children already formulate their identity in aspects such as social, moral, cultural, and gendered. Then continuously, they create and recreate themselves through representation of who they are and where they are. At the

beginning stage, I was only a message carrier but in the process of diverse experiences, I became a transformative interpreter of children's culture. I found that all places around us are learning spaces and performing spaces. Our awareness in every moment plays a crucial role in finding/creating meanings.

Throughout the course of my inquiry, my vision has expanded. The rich body of narrative provided me with an invaluable window into the minds of young children. Children are familiar—either as actors or as audience—with the scripts that shape the dramas of everyday life, which includes anxiety, sorrow, conflict, forgiveness, compromise, and joy. Through their accompanying internal or spoken narrative, children reenact these scenes with more or less verisimilitude in autobiographical or fictionalized versions in their plays or artworks. During my work on this thesis, it became more obvious to me that the cultural and social dimensions of narratives are connected to the process of children's meaning-making. When children inhabit environments rich in personal storytelling, they repeatedly encounter such moments of personal extension. That is a way of communicating and making sense of the world that includes awareness of others, conceptualizing thinking, awareness of self, and transition of self. It is not surprising that they come to make narrative mediated identifications. That they do so explicitly—claiming someone else's experience and their own—is a puzzle whose unraveling promises to illuminate further the process of self-construction and the relational basis of personal experience. In addition, creating situations in which children are encouraged to explore their interests in the form of art, we create the possibility of seeing children differently, as individuals

engaged in the production and interpretation of the world/spirit in which they live. We can promote children's natural desire to express themselves by incorporating elements of storytelling into the everyday life of the children we grow with. Giving children avenues to express themselves not only acknowledges the values of their opinions, but also supports the belief that their sense of self-worth is of utmost importance.

Given that, this research has reconsidered and reevaluated young children's understanding of their worlds and how they interpret their relationships with others and their environments via their practices of narrative in the context of play and in natural conversational contexts. The results of this study indicate that narrative practices in young childhood are social, moral, and cultural practices. I learned that young children's narrative construction in the kindergarten context embraces a fabricated complexity as well as inner tensions.

My research is meaningful since it explains what is created and recreated in children's cultures through narrative during the time they spend in kindergarten. This research study is also momentous in that it opens the window to explore young children's emerging identities through the manner in which they unveil their selves in imaginary play and drawings. Children represent themselves through diverse forms that give us a route to understand and interpret them. The themes the children produce exist in our culture but their creative performance imbues new meaning which is unique to specific situations and cultures. This research employed a qualitative interpretive approach with a socio-cultural perspective by connecting theoretical concepts from narrative inquiry (Bruner, 1986, 1990; Coles, 1989; Connelly & Clandinin, 1990, 2000; Ricoeur,

1984; 1992; Witherell & Noddings, 1991) to the experiences of children and how they narrate their experiences. In the respect that this research has been devoted to the children's own oral voices and visual representations, it differs significantly from previous studies conducted regarding investigation of young children's narratives and their understanding of the world. This study will contribute to a better understanding of how young children's oral and visual narrative is significant in interpreting their perception of the world. Children's narrative plays a vital role in constructing the self through representing the inner/outer self. In this sense, this study will serve to create educational programs that facilitate generative possibilities in addressing the importance of complex narrative in early childhood education through child-centred integrative learning.

For educators and teachers, such information is also crucial in understanding the recovery and re-appreciation of the role that storytelling and narrative can play in education. Play within and through art as a process of continual identity negotiation is an important starting point for curriculum that emerges from children's ideas, interests, and values. An examination of positionality, discourse, and subjectivity constructs a new representation of our understanding of young children. The realization of knowledge and its representations are under continual construction/ reconstruction. This is always a partial shifting of fleeting and indistinct realities. In early childhood education, storytelling is recommended as a tool to foster and cultivate children's minds which might come in all shapes including life experience, tales, home stories,

etc. Visual narrative should be reaffirmed and reconsidered and has a place and value within the curriculum. Children's art motivates children's thinking and supports learning.

A narrative approach to early childhood education provides children with the opportunity to tell their own stories, and thus to express and enhance their own authenticity and responsibility through the process of authoring. This narrative method promises to advance understanding of young children's perceptions of social relationships. What is demanded, therefore, is a hermeneutic or interpretive methodology which is sensitive to the subtle nuances of voice, language, perspective, and possibility so that the same text can be read in a number of different ways. Thus, in practice, a teacher can exhibit concern for and involvement with his or her children by taking great care to attend to how children interpret and understand the stories they are told. This means that teachers must neither automatically assume they know what a children's story means, nor be too quick to judge a particular story. Teachers must cultivate openness to and a tolerance of the stories they hear, and they must be willing to work with their children so that both come to understand and appreciate the lessons inherent in these stories. It envisions a narrative-centred curriculum that has recently led educators to recognize the potential of contextualizing all learning within narrative.

Constructing stories in the mind—or storying, as it has been called—is one of the most fundamental means of making meaning; as such it is an activity the pervades all aspects of learning... Through the exchange of stories, teachers and students can share their understandings of a topic and bring their mental models of the world into closer alignment. In this sense, stories, and storytelling are relevant in all areas of the curriculum (Wells, 1986, p. 194).

As stated earlier, this research was presented to try to tease out the effects of early formation of self and the world on subsequent narrative. This research study is significant in addressing children's narrative in different contexts and revealing what children tell and how they formulate the concept of self and world. Furthermore, this study shows children's narratives created by themselves in natural settings. Through narrative, the meaning of experience is reorganized and reconstructed, both for an individual child and in relationship to other children. By encouraging the telling of their stories, we encourage reflection on experience, and refraction of significant parts so that it can be better understood, remembered and shared. The stories we tell are who we are and what we will become.

This study includes several implications for research practice and further educational practice. In terms of research practice, this study has utilized children's play and drawings, partly on the basis that children often choose to draw and seem to enjoy the act of drawing, and it ensures that the interpretation of data, such as drawing, is based on the children's perceptions. In the aspect of educational practice, understanding children's perceptions of themselves and celebrating their feelings are important ways that adults can concentrate on the importance of the here and now for children, rather than constantly trying to prepare children for the future. In the last comments, if follow-up research might be conducted for an even longer period and over broader contexts of children's lives, it could become another valuable inquiry. This research study is a sort of snapshot of children's whole development reflecting on their narrative within a small group. It is a glimpse that serves to present one aspect of children's transformation of self and their

construction of worlds. Future research needs to look more closely at what children contribute to the narrative and how children's contributions influence their way of constructing the world. I hope that this study will become a starting point to explore how adults use and perceive children's narrative; moreover, it could lead to more research on how teachers use children's narrative or how they incorporate children's narrative into the classroom. Children's narrative provides stories of their actual experiences. Their narrative tells us about their ways of seeing and thinking, and the bridge of representation in transaction and re-configuration of children's own cultures or worlds. Therefore, narrative analysis is one way to find out about children's world creation and recreation.

Interpreting the narratives gives us a clue into what matters in children's lives, and how they choose to express themselves through their narrative. It is necessary for research to treat children as active agents whose narratives are informed by symbolic, social-relational, and even aesthetic means that we ought to take seriously. As adults, such as parents, teachers, or educators, we all live in the play of inner voices as we watch and listen to our children.

Learning through exploration

As I stand inside the kindergarten classroom
With rupturing around me
I ask myself
Am I really in children's worlds?

It is my conviction that I cannot stand in the same line
Unless I open my hearts and eyes

I spend time with children
Want to get to the children's thinking
What they are puzzled about,
What they do and do not know,
What conflicts them

What they represent
What they tell
Another itinerary going into children's paradise

Listening⁶ attentively when children are at play, their conversations as they talk to their friends reflect who they are.

Remarkably, each child's narrative and conversation in the play is a unique event which neither I nor anyone else has heard before. Not only do we learn about each child's state of mind, but we also get ideas for new ways to meet the interests and the concerns of the child.

⁶ We are constantly engaged in searching for meaning by developing ideas and thoughts that are provisional and re-worked in relation with others and through processes of reflection and further thought. Listening is an active relationship that is dialogic and interpretive.

EPILOGUE

Beginning at the End

Pedagogical theory is ultimately a practical affair. Whatever pedagogical knowledge we acquire, whatever insights into teaching, parenting, or child care we achieve, this knowledge must have consequences for our daily living with children.

(van Manen, 1991, p. 190)

I have lived within children's worlds since I started this research. While I was conducting my research, my soul and spirit were always with the children. Whenever I reconsider and rearrange my thoughts, each child breathes in my world. With my inner world, my unconsciousness also plays a silent role in my research. It leads to contemplation.

My way of being with children was memorable—they were teachers for me as a learner, scholar, and human being.

At first, I thought I was not so naïve as to presume certain facts about children's lives. Because I went through my own childhood, I thought I was at least knowledgeable about the world of children as a researcher who studied children's worlds. When I started my journey discovering children's representation and understanding through personal narratives, I wanted to understand what their intentions and connotations were in diverse contexts. Now that I am at the end of this inquiry process, it has become clearer than ever to me that children's narratives possess diverse aspects in understanding their world as it relates to morality, ethics, confirmations, conflicts, complexities, tensions, and contradictions.

I have learned about the creative nature of spontaneity, the exuberance and awe of confronting a complex and ambivalent world, and the sheer joy of sharing our lives with others. To understand children's worlds, we must see, hear, and appreciate the details of their everyday life. I have come to realize that I cannot say what ought to be, what I do not understand, what children want, and what they are. Who I am, as Taylor (1989) points out, is something constructed and created within the context of relations. Furthermore, I would add who I am is always a continuous piece of work, constructed in relationship to others, and in conversations with others in all possible worlds.

Each child presented a new world of potential for building self and new possibilities for constructing powerful messages. As a researcher, a learner, and an interpreter of the narrated self, I was able to see myself as a multifaceted being, interacting with children in a particular intellectual context. This was the process of collaboration, multi-vocality, and self reflexivity. van Manen (1991) states that "to believe in a child is to strengthen that child" (p. 167). By getting to know children and believing in them, we will be able to modify and refine the learning environment so that it opens doors for all children's learning. The children's performance helped me realize that I was not just "reading" the text. Rather, my individual and collective imagination realized new opportunities being creatively redefined, vocalized, and reconceptualized. My inner and outer selves were aligned with the children.

Children translated and transformed their world through the transaction between their world and their selves via narratives. Those inter-textualities permit interstanding that will open the

door to living with children. My interrogative journey with children has not ended and will be continued. It is a gift. Children are my teachers and they will be with me forever. This emancipatory work is an ongoing understanding process. This is another beginning to a new journey.

*I allow myself a whirl of meanings
yielding to a direction of meaning
running
like a stream
 you can find
in my endless adventure*

*In the atmosphere of certain uncertainty
Seeking
Becoming aware of
how the (con) text of experience interweaves with
the texture of human life as a whole*

*I have reached no conclusion, have created no boundaries
shutting out and shutting in, separating inside
 from outside, outside from inside
 I have drawn no line*

I am circulating...

Be (com) ing a Transformative Narrative Inquirer

Being a narrative inquirer was a big challenge and an adventure full of trepidation for me. When I started to do this research study, I doubted my qualifications as a narrative inquirer. I wondered how much I am able to interpret children's understanding of their world as expressed in their narratives.

While I was in the middle of understanding children's narratives, I realized that I was living with them. I made an effort to keep in mind what it really meant and I tried to think from the children's perspectives as well. Their stories were not only their own but also my stories and our stories. Once I had opened my ears to the power and pervasiveness of narratives in the lives and language of young children, I could see how remarkably compelling these narratives are, both as phenomena to be explored in their own right and as a way of profoundly understanding how young children comprehend and construct themselves and the world around them. Young children's stories revealed ambivalent and complex world constructions. From my own reinterpreting and reconfiguring, I could enhance my understanding of children's worlds via the fusion of horizons between my understanding and the children's representation. This allowed me to arrive at an "A-Ha" moment. Through throwing away my own personal preconceptions or prejudices, I reevaluated and reassembled the meanings surrounding what children want to say, how they want to represent their inner world, and how they construct, (re)create and (re)construct their own world.

Hermeneutics and the practice of interpretation play a role in a narrative approach to education. Hermeneutic pause, hermeneutic moment and hermeneutic return—these made it possible to live and breathe with children in the same space. As a narrative inquirer, I could allow myself to engage with the children by crossing the border between the adult conceptual world and the children's world. It made me go through a process of re-configuration in meaning-making. The renewed emphasis on how I think allowed me to take a fresh look at children's experiences, at what children say. Living, researching and learning as a narrative inquirer has been an attractive job. Now that I am rid of the uncertain burdens of 'being a narrative inquirer,' I see myself as a transformative human being. Recalling the words of Maxine Greene, "passion" will always be with me.

Our sense of our selves is a labor of the imagination, a fiction, a particular story that makes sense. We imagine ourselves to be whole, to be complete, to have a full identity and certainly not to be opened or fragmented; we imagine ourselves to be the author of the narratives that constitute our lives.

Stories constitute a way to organize experiences and construct meaning. Creating a narrative means creating meaning. Narratives mediate both experience and knowledge into a new form which gives shape, meaning, and understanding to both. Engaging in children's narratives leads to a complex but illuminating field of inquiry. It allows us to unveil hidden stories with a closer view and contribute to what we know about research theory and practice.

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Child Name (please print)

Parent Signature

Date

Parent Name (please print)

Phone Number

Child Name (please print)

Parent Signature

Date

Parent Name (please print)

Phone Number

APPENDIX D

Sample of Interview Questions

** For parents*

- Q1. What do you think about children's storytelling?
- Q2. Do you think children's storytelling is worthwhile to understanding children? (if so, how?)
- Q3. In general, what kinds of way does your child represent his/ her thoughts, feelings or ideas?
- Q4. How does your child express himself/ herself through their narratives? (Are there many creative ways?)
- Q5. What do you think about the role of parents in developing children's diverse narratives such as oral, written and visual works? (What do you do in your case?/ How do you support them?)
- Q6. How do you provide for your child to develop their narratives in constructing their sense of identity?

** For children*

- Q1. Questions depending on children's works (emerging questions)
- Q2. Do you like to tell a story? (Why?)
- Q3. Do you like to go to school? (Why?)
- Q4. What did you do in the school today?
- Q5. What is the most exciting thing in the school? (will be added depending on situations)
- Q6. Do you have many friends? Can you tell me about your friends?
- Q7. How many members do you have in your family? Can you tell me about your family?
- Q8. Can you tell me who you are?
- Q9. Questions emerging in diverse situations (including in the process of interviewing)

Child Name (please print)

Parent Signature

Date

Parent Name (please print)

Phone Number

Teacher Signature

Date

Teacher Name (please print)

Phone Number

APPENDIX H

Sample of Interview Questions

** For Children*

A. Personal background

- Q1. What is your favorite color?
- Q2. What is your favorite food?
- Q3. What is your most exciting thing?
- Q4. What is the most interesting thing in the school?

B. In the middle of activities

- Q1. Questions depending on children's artworks (emerging questions).
- Q2. Questions emerging in diverse situations