Fracturing and Re-Membering: Exploring Educational Crisis through Performative Mapping

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Abstract

"Fracturing and Re-Membering" is a performative mapping combining critical autoethnography and verbatim theatre that re-presents the entanglement of the fragmented and fractured work of teaching, professional development, and research. It draws on data from professional development sessions of a critical literacy and creative drama program that partners U.S. elementary school classrooms with Teaching Artists from a nonprofit theatre company. While the performative mapping can stand alone, I first explain professional development experiences I facilitated for these Teaching Artists on Kumashiro's (2009) conception of crisis in relation to learning; I then outline the research process that led to the performative mapping. Following the performative mapping, I reflect on how using creative drama as

pedagogy in professional development and as research facilitated re-membering ourselves both individually and collectively as we worked through crises forcing us to confront troubling knowledge. The performative mapping invites audiences/participants to do so as well.

For Hannah (1976-2017) and plays onstage, playing offstage

For many years, I have been a collaborator and researcher with the Neighborhood Bridges critical literacy and creative drama program. A partnership between urban public schools with large concentrations of students from low-income families and Teaching Artists (TAs) from a nonprofit theatre company in the Midwestern United States, the weekly program uses critical and embodied literacies to question written, oral, and performed stories, encouraging students to transform the self through storytelling. This article is based on the TAs' regular professional development (PD) sessions, which I attended and sometimes facilitated. The heart of this article is "Fracturing and Re-Membering," a performative mapping combining critical autoethnography and verbatim theatre to re-present the entanglement of teaching and research, with a focus on the ever-present crisis of learning. While the performative mapping can stand alone, to provide background, I explain Kumashiro's (2009) conception of crisis related to learning and the communal PD experiences I facilitated around it and then describe the research process that led to the performative mapping. Following the performative mapping, I reflect on the use of research as professional development to collectively re-member.

Professional Development Exploring Crisis

Throughout all its work (curriculum planning, classroom experiences, and of course, performances), the Neighborhood Bridges program emphasizes learning and experimenting together, in community, creating a program that is "a living, dynamic collaboration." Each voice and body is important in both what is created together ("products," whether performances, stories, or curriculum) and the process of creating. An emphasis on process means attending to emotions and caring for each other are foundational to learning together—and to actually addressing challenges we face as we teach and learn.

Teaching Artists learn in ongoing professional development (monthly-plus meetings) to which are also invited researchers, evaluators, practitioners, and academics. I facilitated several of these PD sessions and helped to plan others; as a facilitator, I thought deeply about how the community could nurture each other's processing of classroom negotiations. One concept I brought to the learning community was Kumashiro's (2009) thinking on crisis: crisis as a state of emotional discomfort and disorientation that calls on students and teachers to change and

that provokes powerful learning. This is probably not the way we have learned to think about classrooms: "That learning might be an uncomfortable process is perhaps a counterintuitive and even disturbing thought, especially if we believe that for learning to occur our schools need to be safe and supportive environments" (Kumashiro, 2009, p. 29). Kumashiro carefully pointed out that crisis is not the learning, but rather the place where we "confront troubling knowledge" (p. 30), where we push up against our comfort zones and what we think we know and "escape the uncritical, complacent repetition of [our] prior knowledge and actions" (p. 32). The learning emerging from this space "is not a process that can be standardized" (p. 31); it has no one right answer or correct wording.

Kumashiro wrote about students experiencing crisis. Teachers experience crisis too. All the time. Spending extended time in one Neighborhood Bridges classroom, visiting at least a dozen other Bridges classrooms, and hearing stories of teaching prompted me to think about how often in our teaching we face disorienting and uncomfortable crises. Students may be put into crisis by what we ask them to experience and consider; students and teachers bring the crises of their lives into the classroom. In the United States, public education is itself in crisis (see, e.g., Watkins, 2012). How we as teachers work with these crises is, in my experience, a common topic of conversation. We—I—may not know how to respond meaningfully, challengingly, and generously to these daily, interwoven crises and what they ask us to consider about identity, relationships, and oppression.

As a researcher and facilitator, I wanted the PD work that I did with the TAs to be meaningful. I decided to do what the program does: use stories and embodiment. Two of the PD sessions in the 2013-14 schoolyear thus focused on the idea of crisis. In October, after reading Kumashiro's (2009) chapter on crisis, I asked TAs to send me examples of crises they'd experienced in the classroom. I compiled five different scenarios from these stories: a student sharing something personal that calls out for a response, controversial content in a story, "behavior" challenges, students' choices around violence, and the idea that "adult intervention = success." In groups, TAs discussed the scenarios I had compiled. They then used Boal's (1985) image theatre to share their discussion and crises with the entire group. In image theatre, actors create three still images or sculptures: an actual, a transitional, and an ideal. As they were working on their images, I distributed pieces of Bridges' teaching and learning philosophy and asked the TAs to reflect on these in conjunction with their embodiments. Their embodied images distilled the essence of the crisis and imagined ways of transforming or addressing it. As a group, collectively viewing and reflecting on these images provided multiple perspectives on both the crises and potential ways of and resources for addressing them. The discussion ran long; we laughed hard and sighed a lot.

In April, we returned again to these ideas, this time working with crises directly related to rehearsals for upcoming performances. (In May, Bridges' students perform the plays they have created on a professional theatre stage in front of an audience of hundreds of students, families, and community members.) Again, I created five composite crisis vignettes from stories the TAs sent me: tensions between students, outside forces (standardized testing and realities of students' lives) affecting rehearsal time, desires for endless improvisation, directly replicating a play the students had seen, and struggles of students who were English Learners. This time, after discussing their scenario, groups of TAs (none of whom were in a group enacting their own classroom crisis) created three still images: beginning, middle, and "end" (because these were unresolved). The still images provided a snapshot of the characters and situation. Then, the TAs created a scene with both movement and words. This time, we used a modified version of Boal's (1985) forum theatre. After seeing the scene once, the actors replayed the scene and any audience member could yell "freeze!" to stop the scene and either take the place of or provide directions for a character. When the scene restarted, actors would improvise new reactions.

Research Notes: Data Uncovering Us through Performance, Writing, and Performance

Performance as research methodology allows for integration of theory, epistemology, and method (see, e.g., Leavy, 2009)—or perhaps more precisely, insists that these are of necessity always intertwined with and for the researcher. My aim throughout this work was to use performance "as a pedagogical tool, empowerment tool, a means of personal growth, [and] a healing tool" (Leavy, 2009, p. 261). I approached PD sessions I facilitated as critical-activist research practices (Rolling, 2013). I collected the stories TAs sent me and my session notes, audiorecorded PD sessions, and took still photos and video of the TAs' multivoiced and multi-bodied re-enactments. I wrote ethnographic fieldnotes and analytic memos for each PD session over the course of two years. Performance was used to generate data (both in using drama as a data generation practice with the TAs and in thinking about teaching as a performance), to interpret (or, more accurately, to "mediate" data [Norris, 2009]), and to present data.

I approached the production of the following text with an openness to intuitions (see, e.g., Cole & Knowles, 2008; Stake, 1995). I listened to audiorecordings and read transcripts, fieldnotes, and analytic memos. I tried multiple structures for writing, none of which fit into the neat bundle of findings expected in much academic research. Because the data-generation method was performance, I initially tried a more linear performance format with plot, characters, etc., such as ethnodrama (e.g., Saldaña, 2003) or playbuilding (e.g., Norris, 2009). Yet as I worked with the stories, these formats did not capture our work and somehow felt disrespectful, particularly to the emotion of our collective work: the laughter, the sighs, the anger, the confusion.

For years, I have been fascinated by the "power of the fragment" (Thom Swiss, personal communication, May 16, 2012). I decided to engage this power. While what resulted has structure, it is deliberately not the structure of a traditional or canonical story or play (particularly in Western, white traditions), with a setting, a problem, a climax or turning point, and a resolution. Classrooms are almost never that neat. Neither is research, even if common formats frequently ask us to flatten in this way.

Considering similar research conundrums (such as "How can performance and re-presentation be hybridized across the context of time and space" (Daspit & McDermott, 2002, p. 179)), Daspit and McDermott (2002) called their performances/translations of visual art into aural collage and then written text "performative mapping," noting that most interesting were "the meanings created through juxtapositions" in "living collages" that collaboratively map experiences (p. 179). Here, the performance text "Fracturing and Re-Membering" intertwines verbatim theatre (text drawn verbatim from data and then re-arranged; see, e.g., Goldstein, 2017) with critical autoethnography. To describe it, I borrowed the term performative mapping, what Leavy (2009) describes as a collage-style performance in dialogue and what for Daspit and McDermott (2002) is "the in-between 'space' of performance and re-presentation [that] creates an experiential, aesthetic heuristic" (p. 179). Performative mapping is fluid; while the scripted version is more fixed, its performance—the different voices, bodies, emotions, and inflections embodying it—make it something different each time, creating new meanings that fracture and refract the old, mapping new stories onto those already-told.

This echoes what de Certeau (1984) asserted: that "what the map cuts up, the story cuts across" (p. 129). This statement, as Conquergood (2002) noted, is about "transgressive travel between two different domains of knowledge: one official, objective, and abstract—'the map'; the other one practical, embodied, and popular—'the story'" (p. 145). The multiple ways of knowing "grounded in active, intimate, hands-on participation and personal connection" (p. 146) on which performance draws "open the space between analysis and action" (p. 145), erasing the false boundary between theory and practice. In performance, knowledges are expressed through the body, requiring us to get close and to experience: "Proximity, not objectivity, becomes an epistemological point of departure and return" (p. 149). While based in text, the performative mapping here is also about bodies and the breath used to speak the words into being; it maps a story that is still being told because it is lived through the everyday interactions of teachers and students, as well as through participatory research such as that this story documents.

Combining fragments, this performance text (e.g., Denzin, 1997) is experimental. (For an example that draws on authoethnography, popular culture, and history, see Denzin [2005].) Framing pieces (critical authoethnography) describe my own situatedness as a researcher; Scenes One through Four are composed of rearranged conversations from PD sessions (verbatim theatre). For these scenes, I printed transcripts of audiorecordings of PD sessions and cut them apart, physically re-arranging them and labeling groupings with themes (see Figure 1) that I then used to create the scenes. In this fracturing process—cutting apart, rearranging—I found *a* story (out of innumerable stories) in this data.

Figure 1. Re-organizing Data Fragments.

This performative mapping also echoes the philosophy of the program itself. Neighborhood Bridges attempts to teach through the power of story, to help elementary students work at being narrators of their own lives and to interrogate the stories that they see, hear, and read. Stories can be changed and transformed, and students are encouraged to do so in writing and in acting, both individually and collectively. Bridges works to "multiply the capacity for fracturing narrative closure" (Sonia Kuftinec, personal communication, October 1, 2012).

As of this writing, this text has been performed five times: twice with Bridges' Teaching Artists, at a conference, in a study group with other professors, and in a qualitative research class that I teach. A discussion followed each performance. These discussions have been the most important and the real reason for its existence (see, e.g., Goldstein, Gray, Salisbury, & Snell, 2014). They are pedagogical, creating space for reflection on the practices of teaching, learning, and drama as well as "a way of enacting a politics of possibility" (Denzin, 2017, p. 14), a challenge to the crises and oppressions we face in the classroom. I incorporated feedback from each of these sessions into the performative mapping. The conversations have

served as ongoing analysis, with particular attention to my responsibilities to Bridges' TAs as both research participants and audience members and to their feedback (Goldstein et al., 2014). I too conceptualize this research as "an act of ongoing 'production' rather than static 'representation' of knowledge" (Frimberger, 2017, p. 228), or, as Niccolini (2012) wrote, "Data do not lie in wait—waiting for their meaning to be uncovered. Data uncover us" (p. 20). In performance, they do so collectively. As a researcher and writer, I am trusting the audience to do this intellectual work along with the text, for the data to uncover us, for new spaces to be opened rather than conclusions summarized (e.g., Daspit & McDermott, 2002).

Questions of how to evaluate arts-based research abound (see, e.g., Barone & Eisner, 2012; Goldstein et al., 2014). For me, the test has been the dialogue following its performance. Denzin (2017) asked the following: does the performance event bear witness to injustice, nurture critical consciousness, subvert official oppressive ideologies, and/or give language for confronting oppression? In our conversations, performers/participants have referenced these ideas, insinuating that this piece can help to "heal, empower, respect, [and] create community solidarity" (Denzin, 2017, p. 14). Multiple readings of the text seem important for this process, either by having participants read the text alone first or reading it through multiple times (and switching characters for different insights). The performative mapping follows.

Performing *Fracturing and Re-Membering*

Staging and Performance Notes

This script is meant to be experienced—performed—by educators. Its meaning, which is also an ongoing analysis of research data, is collaborative and conversational—both in the experience of collectively reading the text and in the dialogue that follows, during which the audience participates in the intellectual work of meaning-making. While I believe that teaching is a performance (as are our daily lives), my experience has been that most educators (myself included!) are profoundly uncomfortable with being put in the role of a theatre actor. (Despite our protestations to the contrary, we are also often uncomfortable with collaboration: close the classroom door and do your thing, as the saying goes. This challenges that as well.) This approximately 20-minute text can be performed with or without the staging directions.

This piece is inspired by my work with the Neighborhood Bridges critical literacy and creative drama program. This weekly program in elementary schools pairs a Teaching Artist (TA) with a U.S. elementary classroom for a year. Together, they listen to, write, and perform stories from multiple genres, while working to interrogate both the texts and their own lives. As part of my work with Bridges, I facilitated professional development for its TAs. One year, we focused several sessions around Kumashiro's (2009) idea of learning with/in/through crisis. I used these experiences both as teaching/learning and as research.

As I worked with the ideas, emotions, laughter, words, and movements of these sessions, I recognized two interwoven stories: my own crises as a researcher and U.S.-based Teaching Artists' experiences of teaching through and with crises. The narrative of myself as researcher throughout my time with Bridges is presented in the interstices and begins with the prologue to set the stage. The TAs' stories are presented in Scenes One through Four as verbatim theatre/found theatre (transcribed data rearranged). Scenes also draw on Bridges' literacy tools. These practices are questioning of stories and ourselves (as evidenced in Scene Two, composed of TA's words and questions from PD sessions), "retakes"(re-enacting a performed scene, following suggestions and questions for enhancing it), and a writing prompt (7 sentences). Thus, Scene One is composed, with very few modifications and a few splices (special thanks to Jay Scoggin for "The Sound of a Closing Door"), of a scene TAs improvised in professional development; Scene Three is a retake of Scene One, using ideas from Scene Two.

Questions for Post-Performance Discussion

After performing Fracturing and Re-Membering, *I encourage the audience to engage in dialogue, thus continuing collective meaning-making regarding the crises we experience as teachers and researchers and examining how data (words, ideas, bodies) uncover us. Following are potential questions to consider as discussion starters:*

- *What image or words most resonated with you, disturbed you, stuck with you? Why?*
- *To whom do you find yourself listening (most) in the text and why? In other words, whose voices mattered to you? Why?*
- *Where does authority rest in this text?*
- *In what ways did the text and the bodies performing it engage in a dialogue (Dominque Hill, personal conversation, November 4, 2017)?*
- *What was missing for you in this performance/text and what does this absence mean? What does that suggest for you as a learner, a teacher, a researcher, an artist, a performer?*
- *What is the relationship between Scene 1 and Scene 3? How does Scene 2 mediate this relationship? What changes would you suggest for characters?*
- *How can you support others through negotiating the crises inherent in learning?*
- *In what ways does community fracture us? Re-member us?*
- *This text asks us to read together, to breathe together, to pause together. What meanings does this have for you? As a teacher? As a researcher?*
- *When is crisis productive and when is it destructive?*

Scenes

Prologue/A Story: A Monologue that is Actually a Dialogue

Cast
Classroom Teacher; Researcher; Students 1-4; Teaching Artist; Teaching Artists 2-4; Voice

Prologue. A Story. A Monologue that is Actually a Dialogue.

Laughter sounds throughout the space.

Projected: "In our schools there is too little laughter, if I may generalize. The idea that the education of the mind must be a dismal affair is among the most difficult things to overcome" (Rodari, 1973, p. 14).

Laughter and projection fade out. Researcher is at the back of the room, alone.

Projected: School bus, Jardine quotations, as they are spoken.

RESEARCHER: Once (okay, probably more than once, but that is usually a good start to a story), early in the morning, my mother couldn't find my youngest brother Kieran, who was two or three years old. At first she wasn't worried, because he liked to play hide and seek. His first full sentence had been "one-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten-ready-or-not-here-I-come." This sentence had burst out only after she had taken him to a doctor, concerned that he wasn't speaking and wondering if it was because of his chronic ear infections and subsequent hearing challenges. That morning, when she couldn't find him, she went outside to discover that he'd gotten on the school bus with his siblings, Ryan and me. Although Kieran was as tall as many elementary school students, the bus driver knew that he wasn't supposed to be there and so was waiting for my mother to fetch him.

Kieran wanted desperately to learn. I have multiple memories—maybe actual, maybe not, for childhood memory is notoriously unreliable—of Ryan and me trying to teach Kieran what we knew: how to do jumping jacks or how to pronounce "towel."

I also remember trying to teach him to read silently. We grew up in a house of many books, supplemented by frequent trips to the public library. Our parents read to us nightly, so we knew the relationship between words on a page and stories. But when Ryan and I tried to teach Kieran that you could read silently, he couldn't figure it out. How do you "say words in your head" rather than voicing them out loud, without moving your mouth and emitting sounds? It didn't make sense to him. His eyes saw the words and his mouth formed the sounds.

Kieran was on to something. Just as stories such as written, canonical fairy tales began their lives as orally told folk tales, so too reading was not always a silent, individual act. In Europe, silent reading began around the 11th century; before then, silent reading

> made no sense, since, without the voice's mutterings, without transport on the breath, without the spirit performing the text, the text remained dead and useless and meaningless. To read required that the text be inhabited by the breath of the one reading. (Jardine, 2008, p. 12)

With silent reading, the individual, the I, the self became "increasingly more singular, purged, less haunted by the ghostly voices of others. Knowledge became 'out there' as I became 'in here'" (Jardine, 2008, p. 12). With silent reading, knowledge absorption could be a solitary matter, rather than one of community and relationship. The relationship between words printed, spoken, and otherly voiced changed, although people also gained other avenues for fulfilling their desires for learning.

Perhaps, without knowing it, I have been inhabiting these ancient fears over singularity and meaninglessness in my research, teaching, and writing. My longest-standing research is with a learning experience that centers performing texts and that recognizes that *reading* a story (by oneself) is not the same as *telling* a story: storytelling and theatre are collective endeavors. I also believe that teaching and learning are fundamentally about relationships, about the conspiracies—from "con" and "spire," meaning to breathe together—of the classroom. And texts—whether written by students, canonical or counter tales, or performed stories—are "inhabited by the breath" of many people. As I write about these classrooms, I frequently read the words aloud. As I sit alone in a room, my brother Kieran, my dog, and my partner have all checked on me: who are you talking to? Perhaps I should respond: I am attempting to assuage ancient fears, to use my voice to keep the words—and the

people who breathed them—not "dead and useless and meaningless" but alive in my mouth and in my being.

Interstice. Fear and Remembrance.

Projected, big and bold: I am afraid.
Researcher moves to the middle of the room.

RESEARCHER: I am afraid.
> I am afraid of this research endeavor, begun as a graduate student. No special letters behind my name. And stronger for me than the demands of research methodology are Thomas King's (2008) words: "you have to be careful with the stories you tell. And you have to watch out for the stories that you are told" (p. 10). Does it matter how sophisticated your regression analyses are when you are writing about people's lives?
>
> I am afraid.
>
> Actually, I am terrified. Terrified of theatre, too. I am self-conscious and shy enough that most moments—except maybe when I'm teaching—when I am with other people, it is hard enough just to be myself. And theatre asks me not only to be myself, but to be myself being someone else. If I am not good enough, how can my embodiment of someone else ever be good enough? If who I am and what I believe are at some level not good enough, can I be someone else?
>
> But, declares Thomas King, "The truth about stories is that that's all we are." And John Dewey shouts across the decades: education is not preparation for life; it is life.
>
> Do I remember? Do we remember?

Scene One. Crisis as Failure.

CLASSROOM TEACHER and TEACHING ARTIST are at the front of the room, standing. STUDENTS are scattered throughout, sitting. Recording of student crying throughout whole scene.

CLASSROOM TEACHER: Alright, tomorrow is testing. And, ah, remember that you will need to. . .
TEACHING ARTIST: Hi, all! It's Tuesday, so here I am!
CLASSROOM TEACHER *(distractedly)*: Wait, we have Bridges today?
The next lines are spoken very quickly, nearly one on top of each other.
STUDENT 1: Oooo! Oooo ooo ooo! Are we going to make our props today?

STUDENT 2 *(at same time)*: I *thought* we were going to do "The Pied Piper."

STUDENT 3 *(to Student 2)*: What does pie have to do with it?

CLASSROOM TEACHER *(distractedly)*: I don't think so; we've got to prepare for the test.

TEACHING ARTIST *(to Student 1)*: Can you restate your question? We're going to rehearse today!

CLASSROOM TEACHER *(to Teaching Artist)*: Oh, you're here today? It's Bridges day? We need to do some math practice for the test tomorrow.

STUDENT 1: I have an idea!

STUDENT 2: She's always crying! Why is she always crying?

STUDENT 1: I have an idea!

STUDENT 3: Shut up!

STUDENT 4: Crazy banana fart rockets.

STUDENT 1: I have an idea!

STUDENT 2: If she just keeps crying, I'll say all the lines!

CLASSROOM TEACHER *(to crying student)*: You have one more chance!

TEACHING ARTIST: Okay, okay, okay. One voice at a time! Come gather over here on the rug. We'll do a shortened session so you can do test prep. M, I know that you are upset that she is crying. Does everybody remember your places from last week?

STUDENT 2: We didn't do that last week.

TEACHING ARTIST: Remember when the crazy banana fart rockets were rats crawling around from stage left? And we asked P to say one sentence so that we in the audience knew what was happening?

STUDENT 3: He's not going to say anything.

TEACHING ARTIST: And so then we thought of a way he could say that with his body?

STUDENTS 1, 2, & 3: Oh, yeah.

STUDENT 4: Don't look at me that way!

TEACHING ARTIST: Okay, good. Ms. D, can you take her to the drinking fountain? Thanks. Alright, actors. 3-2-1. Action.

Loudspeaker: "Attention. This is a code red. Repeat, this is a code red. Please immediately turn off your lights and move to your retreat corner. No talking. This is a code red."

Click. Pause. CLASSROOM TEACHER and TEACHING ARTIST sit.

Two bangs, sharp and quick.

CLASSROOM TEACHER *(whispered)*: That has to be a door closing.

Projected: Freeze!

Interstice. Writing and Research.

Researcher sits between the CLASSROOM TEACHER and TEACHING ARTIST.

RESEARCHER: This is not my story.

But the stories/histories/herstories have become part of me. My skin has absorbed their words. My body lives on this same land; its water sustains me. I grow vegetables and flowers in this dirt.

Code red. I am haunted by the ghostly voices. Screams echo in my dreams; tears pursue me. What *is* the sound of a door closing?

I listen again to recordings of our PD sessions. I laugh out loud as I read their words.

And this is my story.

Projected: Blumenfeld-Jones's (2017, p. 12) words.

VOICE: "This is, in my estimation, what all researchers do: they do research in order to know what they think that they did not know they were thinking because there was no evidence for it until they did research which refined what they thought they knew or confirmed it but, in any event, brought to light something of which they had an inkling it was there although they did not know it. I write this run-on-sentence because I want to give you the experience of that process of uncovering." (Blumenfeld-Jones & Carlson, 2017, p. 12)

RESEARCHER: Artists don't get asked their methodology. Oil on canvas. Collected materials. That suffices. Yet how well trained we are at fitting things into boxes.

Overlapping voices (on nouns):

RESEARCHER:	What happens to	art	when	artists	follow someone else's rules?
VOICE:		research		researchers	
CLASSROOM TEACHER:		teaching		teachers	
STUDENTS 1-4:		us		you	

RESEARCHER: I am terrified. . . . I am excited.

Scene Two. Questioning Crisis.

Laughter.

TEACHING ARTIST: I'm stuck in this scene.

TEACHING ARTIST 3: What did that tell us about our classrooms? I don't think we can even begin to address it until we know what we are seeing, or at least the beginning of what we are seeing.

TEACHING ARTIST 2: It makes me want to cry.

TEACHING ARTIST 3: Why did you laugh? I didn't know what else to do.

TEACHING ARTIST 2: Sometimes laughter signals discomfort.

TEACHING ARTIST 4: That was so eye-opening for me. Like whoa. What just happened? Animating our crises: you can see the complexity. It's never just the one problem.

TEACHING ARTIST 3: Do you know Salman Rushdie's *Haroun and the Sea of Stories*? It's so much about what happens when storytelling ability has been squashed.

TEACHING ARTIST: Those kids are in my classroom.

TEACHING ARTIST 4: This is 500 years of oppression playing out on kids.

TEACHING ARTIST: What is the danger if we don't address it? What's being reinforced?

TEACHING ARTIST 4: What's happening on a micro level is connected to the structural. These forces are telling us to be afraid all the time. That impacts what is happening in the lives of students and in the lives of teachers.

TEACHING ARTIST 2: Who do we empathize with, and who is not worthy? Who is deserving?

TEACHING ARTIST: All kids feel different. Should it be pushed aside and isolated or celebrated and used?

TEACHING ARTIST 4: I always feel like it's my own personal failure when there's a crisis in the classroom. It's hard to share these moments without a lot of self-consciousness because my job means a lot to me. And the students mean a lot to me. And those moments always accompany thoughts that I walked into a room not fully prepared to serve the students who were there in the best way.

TEACHING ARTISTS 2 & 3: *Sigh.*

TEACHING ARTIST 3: What do we do when we feel like we are bad teachers?

TEACHING ARTISTS 2 & 4: *Sigh.*

TEACHING ARTIST 4: It's easy to say: "oh, you should do it this way." But when put in the situation, a lot of people panic.

TEACHING ARTIST 2: You are overwhelmed by all this chaos. But it's easier for someone else to see. We can get locked into problem-solving from our own experiences, one way.

TEACHING ARTIST 4: Sometimes it's about when to step in and when not to step in.

TEACHING ARTIST: There is an infinity of things to learn from people around this circle.

TEACHING ARTIST 2: I have a third grader who cries every time we start Bridges. So what I've done is go ahead of time. And I'm there. And I talk with her about where we were at the end of last session, what went well, what things she remembers. So that when she walks into the classroom, she's losing that anxiety about this new thing and holding on to some of the past successes and memories.

TEACHING ARTIST 4: Personal safety is connected to collective safety; fear gets digested by society. Then our work as Teaching Artists is dangerous.

TEACHING ARTIST: Code red. Pretending everything is normal when I am wanting to cry out in anger and rage and tell these kids and their parents what is going on at this school. Watching students act on their own versions of this impulse by refusing to engage, shutting down, crushing their spirits. Wanting desperately to set them up for success, feeling like the system is against that goal at every time. Code red.

TEACHING ARTIST 4: Last year I asked students, "what do you hate about school?" They asked me about my dog.

TEACHING ARTIST 2: Why do we allow others to turn teaching and learning into such misery?

TEACHING ARTIST 3: How do we know what we know to be true? How do we learn from others' truths?

TEACHING ARTIST 4: How do we give kids possibilities? How do we honor them?

TEACHING ARTIST: Is it doing more harm to single that student out?

TEACHING ARTIST 3: What is our responsibility to create spaces in which everyone feels comfortable to explore?

TEACHING ARTIST 2: Do we need to learn to listen differently?

TEACHING ARTIST 3: How do we initiate the beautiful questioning?

TEACHING ARTIST: What is it that your class needs?

TEACHING ARTIST 2: What is necessary for the students to feel success?

RESEARCHER: Are we talking about individual success or collective success?

TEACHING ARTIST 4: What are we asking school to be?

TEACHING ARTIST: Raging at the expectation that theatre always performs miracles. Hoping beyond hope that it will again.

Pause.

TEACHING ARTIST: I'm me. I'm bringing *my*self to this.

Interstice. Imagination.

Projected: Moraga's words.

RESEARCHER: I weep as I read Cherríe Moraga's (2005) words: "Sometimes I believe the best I've done as a writer is just to want. Just to keep wanting stories that bring us to our knees, return us to God, humble us into full recognition of our dependence on one another and a flourishing planet" (p. 94).

On my best days, I imagine I am a writer.

Scene Three. Retake of Crisis.

CLASSROOM TEACHER and TEACHING ARTIST sit with students. Recording of student crying through most of scene.

CLASSROOM TEACHER: Alright, tomorrow is testing. And, ah, remember that you will need to. . .

TEACHING ARTIST: Hi, all! It's Tuesday, so here I am!

CLASSROOM TEACHER *(distractedly)*: Wait, we have Bridges today?

The next lines are spoken very quickly, nearly one on top of each other.

STUDENT 1: Oooo! Oooo ooo ooo! Are we going to make our props today?

STUDENT 2 *(at same time)*: I *thought* we were going to do "The Pied Piper."

STUDENT 3 *(to Student 2)*: What does pie have to do with it?

TEACHING ARTIST *(goes to sit next to crying student, touches her arm)*: Breathe. Just breathe. Remember how much fun you had last time?

TEACHING ARTIST: We're going to rehearse today! It's a gift to see how wild and great your imaginations are!

CLASSROOM TEACHER *(to Teaching Artist)*: Oh, you're here today? It's Bridges day? We need to do some math practice for the test tomorrow. But I've been thinking about why Bridges is so fun for me. And it's because we laugh all the time. They come up with the funniest stuff.

TEACHING ARTIST: Somehow, we have fun every week, which is why it feels like such a success. It's very humbling.

STUDENT 1: I have an idea!

STUDENT 2: She's always crying!

TEACHING ARTIST: But in theatre, we *need* to experience all the emotions.

STUDENT 1: I have an idea!

STUDENT 4: Crazy banana fart rockets.

CLASSROOM TEACHER: They come up with the funniest stuff.

TEACHING ARTIST: Okay, okay, okay. One voice at a time! Come gather over here on the rug. Does everybody remember where your places are that we did last week?

STUDENT 2: We didn't do that last week.

TEACHING ARTIST: Remember when the crazy banana fart rockets were rats crawling around from stage left? And we thought of ways to share what is going on through using our bodies? Alright, actors. 3-2-1. Action.

Loudspeaker: "Attention. This is a code red. Repeat, this is a code red. Please immediately turn off your lights and move to your retreat corner. No talking. This is a code red."

Click. Pause.

Two bangs, sharp and quick.

CLASSROOM TEACHER *(whispered)*: That has to be a door closing.

CLASSROOM TEACHER & TEACHING ARTIST: We're both just as lost as we need to be in this process.

TEACHING ARTIST: We can't get stuck in the stumbling, either. We can feel that heartbreak, but we have to act, too. There are a lot of different ways to act. So what happens after the crisis is always very hard to negotiate. One thing that I appreciated about this scenario is that it was sort of unsolved.

TEACHING ARTISTS: Ohhhh!

Interstice. Communities' 7-Sentence Writing Prompt.

RESEARCHER moves further back, but still in the midst of STUDENTS and TEACHING ARTISTS.

Projected: Each prompt of Bridges' 7-Sentence Writing Prompt as RESEARCHER *speaks a line.*
1. *Once upon a time*
2. *And every day*
3. *Until one day*
4.
5. *And because of this*
6. *And because of this*
7. *And ever since that day*

RESEARCHER: Writing is hard. I know this; so do students. Bridges provides tools for struggling writers. I've used these when stuck—or more often, when I didn't know where to start. One is the seven-sentence writing prompt. It starts, of course, with "once upon a time."

Pause. Breath.

RESEARCHER: 1. **Once upon a time** there was a new researcher, collecting

VOICE: —no, wait, generating—

RESEARCHER: data for her dissertation.

2. **And every day** when she went to her dissertation site, she was excited, baffled, and encouraged.
3. **Until one day** she finally started writing. Really writing. It was exciting, baffling, and encouraging.
4. She told people at her university about it; she submitted some pieces for publication. Rejection followed rejection. "What about methodology?" they cried.
5. **And because of this** she got that diploma and put the writing away, put the memory away, put the emotions of that dissertation site away. They moldered. But on occasion she remembered that excitement, bafflement, and encouragement. She remembered a Teaching Artist saying, "no creativity can exist without some kind of structure."
6. **And because of this** this story exists.
7. **And ever since that day** she keeps Donald Blumenfeld-Jones's (2017) on a post-it on the wall: let go of what you think it should be.

Projected: Letting go of what you think it should be (Blumenfeld-Jones & Carlson, 2017, p. 17).

Scene Four. Performance. An Invitation to Transformation.

Words projected, read by all performers, including additional audience members.

ALL: We are here now, reading this. Feeling the words in our mouths and on our shared breath. We con-spire. "Meaning and resistance are embodied in the act of performance itself. The performative is political, the site of resistance" (Denzin, 2003, p. 245).

TEACHING ARTIST: That idea of taking a breath together.

TEACHING ARTIST 4: Reality isn't fixed.

TEACHING ARTIST: You have the power to change it.

Afterward/Afterwords. Fracturing to Re-Member.

ALL TEACHING ARTISTS AND RESEARCHER: We laugh.

TEACHING ARTIST: Tentative, spurting.

TEACHING ARTIST 2: Loud, raucous, at-the-verge-of-tears laughter.

RESEARCHER: Maybe we are actually crying. How could we not cry?

> Does our laughter contain our tears? Does it attempt to hold the tears (from our eyes) and the tears (the ruptures of our hearts and souls, "tares," \ 'ters \) of our always ruptured and fragmented lives? Of the lives of students who enter classrooms willingly, unwillingly, bravely, reluctantly, distractedly, crying, huddled in the corner, shouting out? Of those moments that we can't escape, that haunt us? That have no right answers?
>
> We resist laughter—muffle it, hide behind our hands. It spurts out the sides of our mouths in ridiculous bursts.
>
> We resist crying—furtive swipes at the eyes, averted glances, bloodshot eyes.

ALL TEACHING ARTISTS, CLASSROOM TEACHER, & RESEARCHER: Code red.

TEACHING ARTISTS 2 & 3: What is the sound of a door closing?

TEACHING ARTISTS 1 & 4: What is the sound of a door opening?

Overlapping voices on the final word of this question.

CLASSROOM TEACHER: What are we doing to our   teachers?

RESEARCHER: researchers?

STUDENT 1:   students?

STUDENT 2:   learners?

STUDENT 3:   bodies?

TEACHING ARTIST: selves?

RESEARCHER: I am afraid.

TEACHING ARTIST: It says here in the introduction to the Bridges curriculum: "The final
        product is never final, but reflects the process through which the students

CLASSROOM TEACHER: teachers

RESEARCHER & VOICE: researchers

TEACHING ARTIST: express themselves and
                                                                                      demonstrate their talents."

RESEARCHER & TEACHING ARTIST: We read together.

A<small>LL</small> T<small>EACHING</small> A<small>RTISTS</small>: We play together.

C<small>LASSROOM</small> T<small>EACHER</small>: We think about all the learning that happens outside our classrooms—
we know there are Kierans trying to get on school buses all around us.

T<small>EACHING</small> A<small>RTIST</small>: We imagine the ways in which students are desperate to learn, to
understand the relationship of words, stories, and lives.

R<small>ESEARCHER</small>: And we laugh. Loud, raucous, at-the-verge-of-tears laughter. We re-member.
We are not alone, even when we are by ourselves.

T<small>EACHING</small> A<small>RTIST</small> & C<small>LASSROOM</small> T<small>EACHER</small>: We remember why we love our work.

A<small>LL</small> T<small>EACHING</small> A<small>RTISTS</small> & C<small>LASSROOM</small> T<small>EACHER</small>: We go back to the classroom.

R<small>ESEARCHER</small>: One-two-three-four-five-six-seven-eight-nine-ten-ready-or-not-here-I-come.

A<small>LL</small>:   WE

Project: WE.

Reflection: Drawing on Intertwining Crises to Re-Member Us

Performance is meant to be evocative, to leave us unsettled. This echoes my beliefs about pedagogy as well; as Kumashiro (2009) wrote, "maybe we need to start feeling very uncomfortable about the processes of teaching and learning" (p. 32). In either space, this discomfort can be pedagogical—a performative text can, as Lester and Gabriel (2016) wrote, "enlarge understanding and potentially serve as a democratic, pedagogical tool" (p. 127). After several titles attempting to describe this performative mapping, I landed (at least temporarily—there is no closure anywhere here) on "Fracturing and Re-Membering." Each time the piece is performed, meanings rearrange; we create new maps through our stories. This reflects the processes of teaching and learning (and the realities of schooling today), of our PD work together, and of my experiences of research.

In arts-based research, a performance text can stand alone, and I repeatedly questioned whether to have anything follow the performative mapping, as the most important meaning-making happens in performance and dialogue and is always in process. Instead of conclusions, this last section thus offers further reflection on the intertwining of the many crises of this research project and its participants, arguing that collaborative processing through research as professional development enabled re-membering of what is fragmented. This re-membering begins again each time the text is performed; with performative mapping, the re-assembling of the collage of voices and experiences is meant to create a "fluid framework" in which "alternate possibilities and meanings can emerge" (Daspit & McDermott, 2002, p. 181). In community, teacher/learner/researchers can collectively nurture, map, and negotiate their ongoing crises.

This fluidity also reflects the reality that most of the stories of classroom crises TAs sent me as part of our collaborative PD work remain unresolved. They stand in contrast to dominant

neoliberal ideologies of schooling in the United States (and beyond) in which answers can be found in marking the correct bubble, in formula-driven accountability, or in reform proposals focusing on narrow solutions to address intricate complexities. Yet a classroom—not to mention schools, districts, or systems—is a cacophony of voices, stories, and perspectives. Many times, these multiplicities precipitate crisis. They fracture both our goals for teaching and learning and our selves; they negate our attempts to find a single solution or check just one box.

Yet there is power in reflecting together—in community—on this fracturing cacophony and the crises it comes from as well as creates. As a facilitator, my goal in using performance as both method and analysis was to provide a tool for mapping these crises and their negotiations as well as nurturing each other in this learning process. In our professional development, remembering through body-based movements what happened in our classrooms also re-membered both our individual selves and us as a community of teacher-learner-artists, in the present as well as for the future. In laughter, frustration to the point of tears, and shared breathing, we approached our fear, our loss of control, our confusion over whether a noise was a gunshot or a door slamming, our ongoing negotiations with ourselves and with students, our struggles with the oppressive structures in which we work and our own roles and responsibilities within them. The story—the text—became a container (a map) to push against, to ask questions of, to give suggestions for. These stories pushed against narrow understandings or one-size-fits-all responses as well as honored our attempts to teach and learn as best we could, despite the challenges and uncertainties. As a teacher education colleague said in the conversation following our performance, "we work so hard and then are undone by what happens." Our "code reds" become normalized, as one Teaching Artist said, an apt commentary on the systems in which we work and live. In these moments, we may forget that we have the power of retake, at least partially. The power of retake may even lie in the "narrowness of the change," as TAs suggested: changing everything is too overwhelming, so start small (as in the shift from Scene One to Scene Three). Push against teaching and learning that do not honor the lives of all of us as students and teachers. Honor the cacophony. Embody and retake the stories collectively.

The fragmentary nature of this mapping echoes for me, then, the actual work: we are pieced together as humans, the classroom is built of many fragments, teaching is fragmented, the work and philosophy of Bridges are constructed from many pieces. We are always both entering and exiting in the middle of many stories. As audience members or performers with this piece, we participate in an exchange in which "meaning is imparted, negotiated, and multiplied" (Leavy, 2009, p. 261); "*A performance is simultaneously a text and an interpretive process*" (Denzin, 1997, p. 183, italics in original).

Lastly, of course, this work is bound up with my identity (crisis) as a researcher. I have been stuck on the question of what happens when my research is secondary to what we are learning and living and being together. This was (is) nearly always true for me, whether in the Bridges classroom, when assisting backstage when students performed their plays, or participating in TA PD sessions. I threw out research questions and thoughts of research texts in favor of the work TAs did in processing feelings of personal failure, fostering community through shared struggle, and drawing on community resources to problem solve. The methods, intended as research practices, instead were embodied as practical tools of professional development in efforts to work toward just and democratic classrooms. In the moment, my research became secondary to our collective teaching and learning as we reimagined and attempted to enact (public school) classrooms as sites of inquiry and transformation. My role was bringing these tools—performance and the stories of crisis they mapped—to our community; as a writer who is sharing this performance text, my role is sharing this process of collective meaning-making across and with multiple communities, providing a map through which to share stories.

And yet scholarship makes demands. And research texts inevitably center the voice of the researcher (writer). I thus wrote myself into this performance as a character both circling or removed and intimately intertwined with the TAs' crises. Mine is one voice—and a very present one. Yet I also attempted to mimic what our work with these crises did: to "elevate the number of perspectives in the room in the crisis" (Teaching Artist, April 21, 2014). Multiple voices and bodies call attention to identities and power struggles. In performance, this text asks readers/hearers to interact as their bodies and voices are in the same room, to experience each other's truths, partial and limited as they may be, and to embrace compassion for ourselves and each other. These fragments encourage multiple readings and experiences. This is for me critical-activist-inquiry:

> research that seeks not to prove or disprove, but rather to create movement, to displace, to pull apart and allow for resettlement; it is research that seeks what is possible and made manifest when our taken-for-taxonomic certainties are intentionally shaken. (Rolling, 2011, p. 99)

For me, then, in this work, distinctions between teaching, research, curriculum, and activism blur and blend beyond separation or distinction. The production and re-production, presentation and re-presentation of these words embodies (as physical bodies produced the words and physical bodies re-produce them) the entanglement that is research, pedagogy, and thinking and the ongoing tensions between them (McManimon, 2019). There are no fixed or final meanings, only attempts to individually and collectively understand stories of our and our students' lives. And, of course, this mapping has and continues to change me, enabling me to map my story as a researcher in its mess and complexity. In this messiness, the fractured

and fragmented learning, we can build relationships and re-member ourselves individually and collectively as we work through crises that force us to confront troubling knowledge. A truism about teaching (and often, research) is isolation: facing these crises alone is a struggle and, further, teachers and students are often discouraged from being whole, full humans (rather than disembodied selves). Embodied storytelling, as in Bridges classrooms, the PD sessions on which this text draws, and this text itself, has power—and practicality—as a pedagogical and research method. Embodied storytelling invites us to re-member our whole selves (bodies, emotions, knowledges) and to re-member ourselves as a community that can *act* together to solve problems, that can laugh through pain, confusion, and chaos, and that can enact critical and emancipatory aims.

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Should readers wish to have a printer friendly version of the performance text or a copy of the PowerPoint with projections, please contact the author at mcmanims@newpaltz.edu.