

Public Abstract

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Title:Imagining and Improvising with Theory and Practice: A Narrative Inquiry With First Grade Students During Reading Workshop

This paper illuminates the possibilities of thinking with poststructural theory when storying an emerging process of engaging in research with young children. The purpose of this paper is to describe processes, tensions, and imaginings while infusing poststructural theories into conversations with data (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Lenz Taguchi, 2010; Olsson, 2009). Currently much of early childhood literacy research (Park, 2011; Scull, Nolan & Raban, 2013; Vera, 2011) reports outcome-based findings and implications. While this research is informative, the emphasis is often on children as subjects and/or products/performances resulting from the research. In our narrative inquiry, we (first grade students, teacher, myself) worked together to explore ways students participated in a narrative inquiry about reading during reading workshop. While researching we experienced the ebb and flow—shifts and changes, tensions and challenges, joys and imaginings—of what it meant to participate in research.

Thinking rhizomatically with our stories illuminated ways these shifts were initiated by lines of flight—departures from the norm (Deleuze & Guattari, 1987; Kuby, 2013; Leander & Rowe, 2006). Lines of flight created new trajectories for our research including new ways of participating as we worked toward non-hierarchical relationships with young students. The improvisational nature of participation prompted an imaginative storying of our research through a jazz metaphor. This metaphor revealed relational improvisation with people and with materials as productive for students, teacher, and researcher as we produced our research. Ultimately our research invites practitioners and researchers to embrace teaching as an art, and learning as aesthetic experience.