

## **Teaching as Acting: Considering Acting as Epistemology and Its Use in Teaching and Teacher Preparation**

**By Tom Griggs**

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*Tom Griggs is an assistant professor in the School for the Study of Teaching and Teacher Education of the College of Education at the University of Northern Colorado, Greeley, Colorado. He thanks his brother, Michael Griggs, theater director and artistic director of the Portland International Performance Festival in Portland, Oregon, for his comments and suggestions related to the technical explanation of theatrical and acting training processes, purposes, and relationships.*

The heart of improvisation is transformation.

— Viola Spolin (1983, as cited by Wolf, 1996)

All education is—or should be—about transformation, whether for teachers or learners: transformation in conceptual understanding, in the range and nature of strategies available for completion of tasks, and in personal perspective related to the way challenges are met. Transformation is a central concept in all that I will address in this work, but this work focuses primarily on its manifestation within teachers' "personal practical knowledge" (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988), on certain of the term's uses within the particular professional field of dramatic art, and on the conceptual and practical links between the two.

The purpose of this article is to identify mutual conceptual and theoretical frameworks from the fields of acting and teaching (and in a more limited way, from theater and education more generally), and then to link these to a set of practices in teacher preparation



and development which might exploit the potential benefits and practical applications associated with these mutual conceptions and definitions.

### **A Very Brief History of the Use of Drama Techniques for Teachers' Professional Development**

Seymour Sarason (1999) has made a compelling case for the systematic identification of teacher candidates who have the interpersonal skills that are often associated with actors and other “live performers.” In the process, Sarason asserts that teacher education programs ought to consider mandating that teacher candidates have or develop such capabilities as an integral part of their broader repertoire of professional skills. He decries the fact that there is no “audition” or screening process through which candidates to professional teacher education programs are asked to demonstrate their abilities to work effectively with students; further, he urges that a pilot study be conducted to determine whether there is a connection between teaching effectiveness and this interpersonal skill set, and if so, how it might inform teacher candidate selection and professional preparation in the future.

Sarason’s proposal—and his dismay—seem to be justified. As of now, there have been volumes written about the role and importance of drama in education (e.g., O’Neill, 1995; Courtney, 1988, 1980; Heathcote, 1984; Wagner, 1976). It has widely been seen by those who promote its use in the classroom as an extremely useful tool in efforts to get learners to appreciate, internalize, and synthesize the thoughts, ideas, and feelings underlying great works of art and literature, as well as to begin developing an appreciation for the value in undertaking to accomplish such things. Surprisingly, though (with the notable exception of O’Neill, 1995), there is still little documentation of the principles underlying such approaches being used in any comprehensive way as a means of fostering teachers’ appreciation, internalization, and/or synthesis of the art of teaching.

Theater techniques have been used and theatrical allegories drawn intermittently and sporadically in the preparation of teachers, such as the occasional role play and perhaps visualization, metaphors defined in ways similar to how they are understood in dramatic art (such as the concept of improvisation), and even the characterization of the role of the teacher as that of performer (with the attendant description of the teacher’s performance and its component parts). But again, this has apparently never happened in any systematic way that has been widely publicized or documented. Even for teachers of drama education itself, the focus seems to have been primarily on *how to use drama and acting techniques on/for/with learners in pre-university level school settings*, rather than on how prospective and in-service teachers might utilize such techniques to increase their own self-knowledge, their awareness of their classroom environments, and their sensitivity to their learners’ lives and needs—or the roles they play in seeing them realized.

It is here, at the interface between teachers’ personal and professional knowl-



edge, that what I am proposing is most closely linked to narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1988, 1990; Diamond, 1991; Witherell & Noddings, 1991) as a form of teacher development. Narrative inquiry is a method of teacher research and especially teacher self-research which, to quote Elliot Eisner in the introduction of Connelly and Clandinin (1988), “provides us with a reminder that it is more important to understand what people *experience* than to focus on simply what they *do*.” To quote Connelly and Clandinin directly:

Narrative is the study of how humans make meaning of experience by endlessly telling and retelling stories about themselves that both refigure the past and create purpose in the future. Thus, to study narrative...in trying to understand the personal, one needs to ask questions not only about the past, or the present, or the future, but about all three. For any one teacher, therefore, clues to the personal are obtained from one's history, from how one thinks and feels, and from how one acts. These clues may be obtained in a variety of ways, both personally and in research....One's educational history may, for example, be brought forward for inspection by interview and self-reflection; the same is true for one's present thinking style and concepts. How a teacher lives out the future may be inspected by observation and participant observation of classroom work. (1988, pp. 24-25)

Similarly, Diamond (1994) says “Narrative offers a self-conscious way of extending what we experience and know.... If the subject matter of self-narrative is experience, its aim is the growth of understanding and the transformation of teaching.” In this article, I will describe and argue for the use of acting training techniques which can also achieve this aim.

### **Educational and Theatrical Conceptions of Transformation Compared**

In addition to the previously referenced book-length case Sarason (1999) has made for why and how teachers would benefit from having the skills of an actor, several other scholars in the field of education have alluded to this fact. This section of my article is intended to cobble several of these quotes and assertions—along with others from the literature of the field of dramatic art—together into a compelling whole.

One such figure, Jim Cummins (1997), wrote that “human relationships are at the heart of education.” Similarly, Richard Courtney (1988) argued: “It is people who, objectively, most affect the student.” In almost *any* classroom, the focus, intent, and success of the learning activity are dependent on strong and vital connections (of various kinds) between learners and teacher, as well as among learners themselves. A potentially productive metaphor for these relationships is that of an electrical circuit. It might be argued that one of the teacher's central functions is to foster and promote the vitality and strength of these connections—to keep the circuit closed—so that the electricity between and among “the terminals” can continue to flow. Another analogy for this phenomenon is the



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childhood game played with a balloon in which the object is to keep the balloon from touching the ground, while it is batted in the air from participant to participant. If the balloon is allowed to reach the ground and come to rest, the game is lost (or at least temporarily interrupted).

While neither precise nor comprehensive, these metaphors for the importance and vitality of educational interaction are nonetheless valuable ways to conceive of instruction, and they have their parallels in theater. Once the play has been rehearsed and the playwright, designers, and director have done their jobs, for example, the actual performances and their dramatic potency are almost exclusively dependent on the actions and connections among the actors in the drama, between the actors and the audience, and on the actors' ability to sustain their and the audience's engagement by keeping the circuit buzzing, the balloon afloat.

Richard Schechner (1988) talks about theatrical and other forms of ritual performance as having a basic structure which consists of "gathering, performing, and dispersing":

Th[is] basic performance structure . . . underlies and literally contains the dramatic structure . . . The bottom line is solidarity, not conflict. Conflict is supportable (in the theater, and perhaps in society, too) only inside a nest built from the agreement to gather at a specific time and place, to perform — to do something agreed on — and to disperse once the performance is over. The extreme forms of violence that characterize drama can be played out only inside this nest. When people "go to the theater" they are acknowledging that theater takes place at special times in special places. Surrounding a show there are special observances, practices, and rituals, that lead into it and away from it. Not only getting to the theater district, but entering the building itself involves ceremony; ticket-taking, passing through the gates, performing rituals, finding a place from which to watch: all this — and the procedures vary from culture to culture, event to event — frames and defines the performance. (pp. 168-169)

As Schechner's comments suggest, the specific formats vary widely from culture to culture within this basic frame. We appear to have in North American society a broadly-based common acceptance of the idea that "an education" (in the formal sense) is important for our offspring, but beyond this "basic structure" (as Schechner describes the foundational level of the framework of performance/ritual), it is difficult to define what we agree to. I argue, therefore, for a reconsideration of which sorts of "performance" (i.e., the means by which education is realized) are considered appropriate for teachers and teacher educators to be involved in.

It is noteworthy that Schechner identifies transformation as the major event which occurs in performance, and locates this "essential drama" in three different places—in the story, in the performers, and "in the audience where changes may be either temporary (entertainment) or permanent (ritual)" (1988, p. 170). As Schechner suggests, theater and learning are both significantly defined by these types of roles, relationships, interactions and expectations. While the audience is an additional distinct factor in dramatic and ritual performance, in the classroom the participants



alternately and interchangeably play all the parts being enacted in this particular theater: performer, audience, and, of course, critic.

Courtney (1988) argues, in a similar vein, but at a more personal level:

We also understand the social world in terms of roles. Our self-presentation is as “the costumed player,” an externalized Self that is conceptually distinct from the interior self: a role of “me” distinct from the inner “I.” (p. 128)

I agree with Courtney, and quoting him further, assert that:

Learning is the result of such processes. It occurs when there is a qualitative change in a person’s understanding of experience in a two-fold way: first through apprehension—an innate or tacit grasping; and second through comprehension, which is a cognitive understanding.... [I]t...is grounded by transformation, identification, and impersonation. (p. 127)

Elliot Eisner (1968), too, has drawn some of the parallels I see between acting, teaching, and learning quite well. His description initially focuses on some of the superficial factors (e.g., “the symbolic meaning of his language,...the rhythm, tempo, pace, and timing of his speech and actions” p. 362). He then discusses in greater detail some of the characteristics I see as even more profoundly requisite to the possibility of effective teaching:

Teachers, like actors, attempt to communicate to groups of people in an audience-like situation, and while the ends of comedy and instruction differ markedly, both the actor and the teacher employ qualities to enhance communication; both must come through to the people with whom they work.... What I am suggesting is that the acts of teaching and acting have important and significant parallels and that teaching, while concerned with some ends that are not relevant to acting, is concerned with many other ends that are. Intelligent control of qualitative elements necessary in acting is also necessary in teaching insofar as teaching is partly a task of acting and achieving communication between teacher and individual and group. The qualitative controls that teachers employ can enhance teaching and can be instrumental to theoretical ends embodied in certain subjects and can also be used to achieve qualitative ends incorporated in other subjects. Teachers who are able to control qualities intelligently are probably better able to produce the kind of classroom atmosphere that will facilitate the type of learning that they value. (pp. 362-363)

Based on these similarities, then, what are the possibilities for integrating these conceptions in teacher education contexts, especially for effecting what Patrick Diamond (1991) calls “perspective transformation in teacher education (PTTE)”?

Diamond, in elaborating on this conceptualization of teacher development as “perspective transformation,” uses yet another very similar theatrical allegory to describe an alternative view of human interactions and expectations:

[One] philosophical view insists that there is “one way” and defers to a master plan for mankind, with people comprising a conforming theatrical group with their roles preordained according to some shadowy, pre-existing script. However, it may be that



people are not involved with a predetermined script on a preset stage but are part of a constant improvisation in which each member of the troupe must be a spontaneous actor, playwright, member of the audience, and critic. The parts are neither prescribed nor assigned. Forgotten lines, miscues, late entries, and hasty exits are inevitable, yet an infinite number of combinations await the players. (p. 59)

For me, then, acting, teaching, and learning are inextricably linked broadly through the nature and conditions of the work and specifically through the central concepts of ritual, performance, improvisation, and transformation. As is obvious from all that has gone before in the current work, I share Diamond's view that there is more than one way to consider the world and our roles in it, and this is particularly true for classroom interaction and teacher education. What is proposed here is curriculum change centered around Connelly and Clandinin's (1988) conception of curriculum as "the interactions between and experiences of teachers and their students in the classroom."

### **"Putting Oneself in the Shoes of Another" as a Form of Transformation**

In order to understand the connection between the worlds of theater and education (and the epistemologies integral to these worlds) asserted here, it is necessary to reflect once again on Viola Spolin's quote at the opening of this essay, regarding the centrality of transformation to the ability to improvise, and on the many forms of ritual performance (as Schechner states it) which take place in our own classrooms. Spolin makes the simplest and most direct connection between the transformative power of improvisation and of the teaching and learning processes. But as a professional educator and actor, I understand this connection in an even more useful way and more profoundly when I rearrange her sentence so that it reads: "The heart of transformation is improvisation." If we wish to engage teachers-in-development in "perspective transformation" of the type Diamond (1991) envisions, wouldn't it be appropriate for teacher educators to improvise new means by which to assist them in this process?

According to Wolf, Edmiston, and Enciso (1997), Dorothy Heathcote (1984) believes that the transformation which Spolin refers to in the quote which opens this article "is often personal, suggesting that improvisation means putting yourself in other people's shoes, and [that] by using personal experience to help you understand their point of view, you may discover more than you know when you started." It is, in fact, the kind of transformation *enabled by* improvisation (e.g., through theater games such as Spolin's, 1983, and other acting training techniques) that raises the issue of the efficacy of such techniques in teacher preparation and other educational contexts.

Courtney (1988) takes this particular notion of transformation in perspective yet a step further when he argues that "When we 'put ourselves in someone else's



shoes' we understand the Other through the Self and the Self through the Other—and the resulting meaning is greater than either" (p. 125). He adds, "When we represent ourselves, there is a Knowing ABOUT," but that through this process (i. e., of "putting ourselves in someone else's shoes"), too, "in the now of presentation there is a Knowing IN—a tacit, often unconscious, way of knowing within the living event. Then, as Polanyi puts it, 'We know more than we can tell'" (p.126).

At this point, it becomes necessary to define more specifically the kinds of knowledge which "putting oneself in the shoes of another" enables us to acquire. In so doing, it is necessary to elaborate on Gallas's (1994) notion of the "arts as epistemology."

### **Acting as Epistemology**

As a teacher educator, it is my goal to explore my own ways of knowing and experiencing the world, and the ways they contribute to making me a more effective teacher and researcher. I attribute some of these ways of knowing to what I call the "epistemology of acting," which I define essentially as the visceral, multi-sensory means through which actors come to know and experience life, a type of knowing which incorporates and integrates affective, psychomotor, and cognitive domains and perceptions of their worlds. I advocate the use of approaches, exercises, and understandings rooted in this epistemology to help prospective teachers achieve these aims, as well. Contemporary actor training theory and practice can thereby move beyond conceptual to specifically practical linkages to teacher development.

How do actors develop the ability to maintain the "electricity" referred to earlier which characterizes live theater, to keep their audiences engaged and interested? They use a variety of techniques, ranging from "sense memory," "emotional recall," "object memory," and "beat analysis" exercises conceived by Stanislavski (1972) and developed by Lee Strasberg, Herbert Berghof, and later by Uta Hagen (1973) into what has become known as "the Method" approach to acting, to guided visualization and theater games (again Spolin, 1983), as well as other approaches which are more familiar to teachers and other educators, such as improvisation, role plays, simulations, and other enactments of various kinds.

For the actor, the reason for stretching and strengthening these particular groups of "conceptual muscles" is to increase the range of mobility, and the flexibility with which one might be able to slip into or between a range of characters that on their surface may seem at first glance impenetrable and impossible to play. In other words, it is the actor's job to be able to "put her/himself in the shoes" of any character s/he may be called on to portray, however different from her/himself that character may seem, at first glance. Is this not also an important capacity for a teacher to have with respect to her/his students?

The objective in doing so is clear and can be appreciated: in the absence of sufficient experiential "common ground" (i.e., between a teacher and her/his



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students) there is a lack of common language and, to borrow Wells's (1986) term, the "construction zone" in which the teacher and learner can work productively in meeting educational objectives is difficult to *identify*, let alone assess. The kinds of knowledge, sensitivity, and awareness development (of both oneself and the "other") that are common objectives of most actor preparation programs would therefore appear to be crucial elements in the teacher's repertoire of skills, as well.

Theater, like its cousins in the arts—music, dance, the visual arts—provides us with a means of exploration and learning, with another mode of expression, another language, and therefore with another way of hearing as well, for—from a professional actor's perspective—her/his work is even more to *evoke* than it is to *emote*. For children/teenagers/adults who have lost their voices because—for whatever the reason—they do not share the *lingua franca* of the classroom setting (variously called the dominant language, mainstream language, Standard English, and so forth, depending on the ideological, disciplinary, and cultural/geographical stance of the speaker), a teacher still has various options for making connections with students. But all of them require the effort and the ability to establish communication in at least one of these "languages." As actors do, teachers must evoke, too; otherwise, unnecessary limits on the exchange of ideas, thoughts, or feelings are set, and productive educational interaction can be stifled.

### **Transfer of Techniques from Actor Preparation to Teacher Preparation**

In the broadest sense, the focus of the Method approach is to develop self-awareness for the purpose of broadening one's self-identity, one's capacity to play a range of characters credibly. When an actor learns how to "build a character" using this naturalistic approach to acting (advocated by Stanislavski, 1972, and described above) by putting her/himself in the shoes of a fictional or historical character she/he will portray on stage, for example, the raw material from which she/he works is her/his own life. This is the purpose of the sense memory, emotional recall, object recall, beat analysis, and other exercises which distinguish this approach: to transcend the superficial impressions of who someone (including oneself) is, as a way of getting at the "emotional truth" of a life to be portrayed by making personal connections to the reality of that life. For those who practice this Method approach to acting, as well as for those who witness it, the extent to which an actor is able to do so is the chief determinant of the viability and believability of her/his performance.<sup>1</sup> Caricatures are antithetical to this approach, just as stereotyping learners is anathema to effective teaching; in both cases, knowledge "from the inside out" is the objective if the intent of the performance is to have the most profoundly transformative effect possible, in all three of Schechner's (1988) areas—the story, the performers, and the audience.

Particularly in crosscultural classrooms, characterization work from naturalis-



tic approaches to acting like Stanislavski's would be valuable, at least for teacher candidates who come from and who are being prepared for careers in and for the context of traditionally Western European or North American conceptions of schooling and learning. This is because, in exploring how a human being "is put together" in this way, the artificial barriers that separate us from those who are superficially different from us begin to crumble and we begin to integrate identities with them, at first in our imaginations and then—at least potentially—in our everyday realities. Under such circumstances, we increase the likelihood that we will cease problematizing a child's understanding of the world or her way of looking at it, subjectifying them, or thinking of her as less than a "whole person" (i.e., stereotypically, or in terms of deficits/shortcomings we ascribe to her), whoever she or we may be.

While some rewording is required to make the precise fit, I have already indicated a parallel to the Method in teacher development literature and among teacher researchers. Proponents of narrative inquiry (Connelly & Clandinin, 1990; Diamond, 1991; Witherell & Noddings, 1991) characterize their approach as a germane and fruitful way of looking at teachers' practice; they argue that this type of research is relevant to teacher development in essentially the same way that proponents of the Method argue for the efficacy of their approach in the discovery of a target character's motivation, and of the achievement of emotional truth in acting.

### **Specific Techniques (and More Metaphors)**

#### **Which Transfer from Acting to Teaching**

One activity which was a routine part of my own work as an actor—which traces its evolution back to a more experimental notion of what acting is about than the Method was—is the "mirror exercise," in which two people face each other, one is designated the leader and the other the reflection, and the latter attempts to reflect the facial expression, physical posture, and visual appearance of the former. Initially, the leader begins moving and her/his movements are duplicated by the partner as precisely as possible. Because the eyes of the person "reflecting" the initiator are not supposed to watch the movement of the latter unless the initiator himself/herself happens to be doing so at the moment, the follower is required to develop a peripheral awareness of the leader's movement without (necessarily) directly witnessing it (i.e., exactly as would one's actual reflection in the mirror).

At the same time, the leader is supposed to move in such a way that s/he doesn't "lose" her/his reflection, so that the exercise is not simply a matter of one person leading and another one following the movement; successful involvement in it requires attentiveness between one and the other participant, and a willingness to take both "direction" and initiative while alternating fluidly between the two. Usually, there is a pause between attempts at the exercise, during which the roles are reversed so that the initiator in the first "pass" at the mirror exercise becomes the reflection, and vice versa. Often, as the exercise progresses, the distinction in roles



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between the leader and the follower dissolves, so that the participants become aware of and/or “lose themselves” in a seamless synchronicity of movement, of which there is no discernible initiator even to the participants themselves. For me, mirroring of this kind (and all it implies, as summarized in the above description) is one potentially valuable metaphor for teaching.

Pinar and Grumet (1976) describe a similar kind of theater exercise:

We discovered within a particular series of movement and gesture called transformational exercises, archetypes of classroom interactions. Because words are banished from the communicated content of the exercises, there is no place for the hidden curriculum to hide. It is more difficult to disassociate gesture from its emotional, intentional content than it is to sever words from our thought and feeling: false gestures are patent when false words escape detection.

Transformational exercises require that one person receive a gesture and/or sound from another, that he mirror it or respond to it and then that he extend the gesture and transform it into a gesture of his own that he then brings to another. The exercise requires concentration and receptivity to the gestures and intention of another and then acknowledges the participant’s specificity as he allows the gesture to grow to size and makes it his own. As the exercise proceeds students participate in actions that closely parallel the dynamics of the teacher student relationship and dialogue that evolves in the classroom. As participants mirror a gesture, they imitate the actions of another, immerse themselves in another’s perspective, metaphor, structure. As they extend a gesture or transfer it to a recipient, they amplify its essential character and intensify the intention that directs it. As they transform the gesture, they identify their own intentions, accept their own inclinations. If the transformation occurs as the gesture is passed to another, the transformation reflects that particular relationship of the initiator and the recipient and the intention of the initiator may be instantaneously transformed at the moment of confrontation. Within these exercises reside the dialectics of both theatre and education: one and many, activity and passivity, leading and following, freedom and contingency, abstraction and particularization, self and others, giving and taking, assimilation and accommodation. (p. 82)

While in an acting class these kinds of exercises might sometimes go unmentioned upon (since, particularly at more advanced levels, the visceral experience itself is the reason for the exercise, and since “mirroring” as explained above is one highly viable and valued metaphor for the interactions between performers on a stage), as a teacher educator I would rarely pass up the opportunity to comment and reflect upon the discoveries, difficulties, and other sorts of reactions that developing teachers might have in response to these sorts of exercises. The mirror exercise and (as Pinar and Grumet suggest in the excerpt above) the transformation exercise are both examples of activities whose intent is help to develop participants’ awareness of their physical environment, the other people in it, and their relationship to these, providing a valuable focal counterpoint to the more intrapsychological exercises described earlier which are based on the Method.

One drama activity that has proven useful in teacher preparation settings is what



O'Neill (1995) calls "process drama." Process drama has its roots in Spolin's (1983) improvisational theater games, as well as in the work of Dorothy Heathcote (1984, 1976). In this technique, the instigator/"director" of the drama (the teacher educator, in this case) lays out a scenario for a kind of role play — not directly, but by assuming a character who has a particular conflict with which s/he needs assistance. This character describes her/his situation in terms of a decision or action which needs to be made by the other participants (i.e., the teachers in the course). Very few details are made explicit by the instigator; there are no role definitions assigned, the location of the action is only suggested, and the course of the action to be taken by the "performers" is left almost entirely to their own discretion.

In effect, then, process drama provides a format for problem solving which requires group participation; it is a very purely collaborative form of drama, in which no predetermined outcome is to be reached, in which participants must balance originality/imagination/creativity and a concern for sustaining a "dramatic tension" with—and a connection among—the collaborators, in an effort to come to some sort of satisfactory resolution (i.e., "denouement") of the dramatic conflict introduced by the leader.

Once again, this description suggests profound parallels to the interrelationships between theater teaching and learning, and the potential usefulness of this technique for teacher preparation is clear. It has a virtually unlimited applicability to a wide range of issues/problems in the classroom, and since teachers' interactions with their students—and with the dramas of their lives—often constitute true "high drama," process drama can be useful precisely because it gives us a chance to stop, rewrite, rework, reconsider, and otherwise reflect upon more ideal resolutions to these dramatic conflicts than the undesirable ones which sometimes result.

Mask work/play is yet another approach to self-discovery and identification of one's personal practical knowledge; it can provide teachers and teacher candidates opportunities for exploration of conceptions and preconceptions about what teaching is and what teachers are or might ideally be. This is particularly true if teachers develop their own masks over the longer course of their training, and have to give thought to the masks they might wish to utilize or to discard in their teaching as their sense of this evolves.

In my own training as a performer studying *commedia dell'arte* in clown school, we spent many hours exploring the way masks we donned defined, extended, and in some ways limited our psychic and physical self-portrayal, as well as the freedom a mask could give us to explore and express parts of ourselves which we might otherwise feel inhibited about displaying in public. In inspecting and responding to the masks, we considered how the appearance of the masks might affect how people perceived us while we wore them, and how we could exploit the switching from mask to mask to present different qualities and attitudes we wanted to explore.

I have been using a mask assignment in my own teacher education classes for the last three years, and the response from students has been overwhelmingly



positive; I expect to publish some of my findings regarding the utility and effectiveness of this activity in the near future. Thus far, however, little information exists in the literature, to my knowledge, about the rich potential of mask work to help those preparing for the teaching profession to make connections between their internal and external selves.

These are but a few of the ways in which specific actor preparation techniques might be put to use in preparing teachers.

## **Conclusion**

In the profession of teaching, where the identity one projects is such a critical element of both the teacher's intent and her/his accessibility to and communication with students, these sorts of explorations would undoubtedly be extremely valuable. Without exposing teachers and prospective teachers to their own belief systems, to how they construct and view their worlds, and to how these constructs (Diamond, 1991) guide their teaching practices, there may be severe constraints on the extent to which teachers are able to develop (i.e., refine those practices and constructs they like and want to retain in their work, and more substantively alter, modify, or omit their practices, or omit those which they feel undermine their teaching objectives). Both narrative inquiry and Method acting training require an openness to continued intrapersonal — and thereby interpersonal — growth, as well as consideration of alternative courses of action to those which normally delimit one's identity, and which stultify or preclude the potential for behaving in ways which at first glance seem unfathomable or "impossible."

When viewed in this way, the potential is considerable for transfer to the realm of teacher preparation of techniques normally thought of as useful only in the preparation of actors, either in complementarity with more explicitly narrative approaches (such as keeping response journals or generating reflective discussion about professional experiences or professional development episodes which incorporate them), or simply as uncommented upon "collective reflections" on the complex realities of the teaching profession. I believe that it is through such understandings (i.e., of how we are "put together," and also by implication of how our students are "put together," of what our/their lives are like, and of how these circumstances influence lives within the context of the classroom) that we can identify and provide more meaningful, worthwhile, and socially productive educational experiences directly for teachers and indirectly for their learners in our schools.

At the core of this commonality discussed earlier between narrative inquiry and some of the cited acting approaches is a focus on profound self-knowledge, and on the conviction that if we can experience first hand what makes both ourselves and our students "tick," we can help them keep their "learning clocks" wound; an acting-based preparation for teachers is one useful strategy for achieving this. I would argue that, in my own case, the fact that I have had such a preparation as an actor has played



an instrumental role in enabling me both to reflect on my own personal and professional development using a narrative inquiry approach, and to experience much of the success I have had to date in my teaching career.

My education and experiences as an actor (like many other parts of my personal and professional background) have been broad and eclectic. As I define my identity in my work as a teacher educator, I am uncertain to what extent it will be possible to explore the abovementioned theater games and activities (as well as others) and/or to integrate them into my work in teacher preparation environments, although I definitely intend to pursue this area of educational psychology and curriculum change. My intention here has been to suggest the depth and range of possibilities which are available in doing so, to identify the many forms “acting as epistemology” might take in contributing to the field of teacher education and development, and to propose their exploration.

### Note

1. It seems worth pointing out that this goal (i.e., to achieve some degree of “emotional truth”) is hardly unique to the Method. Many other training approaches and schools of thought in acting rooted in various cultures both see this as one of their central goals and have techniques for getting at it. It also needs to be made clear that not all approach “emotional truth” from such an intrapsychological perspective (hence the reference in the subsequent paragraph of the text above to “traditionally Western European or North American conceptions of schooling and learning”). It is just that the Method—with which I, as an American-trained actor, have been inculcated—specifically sets this out as an objective, and is one of the most familiar among American actors for being able to produce “true” results on a wide and systematic basis.

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