



CRAFTING CRITICAL STORIES

Toward Pedagogies and Methodologies of Collaboration, Inclusion, and Voice

Edited by Judith Flores Carmona and Kristen V. Luschen

Critical storytelling, a rich form of culturally relevant, critical pedagogy, has gained great urgency in a world of standardization. *Crafting Critical Stories* asks how social justice scholars and educators narrate, craft, and explore critical stories as a tool for culturally relevant, critical pedagogy. From the elementary to college classroom, this anthology explores how different genres of critical storytelling—oral history, digital storytelling, *testimonio*, and critical family history—have been used to examine structures of oppression and to illuminate counter-narratives written with and by members of marginalized communities. The book highlights the complexity of culturally relevant, social justice education as pedagogues across the fields of education, sociology, communications, ethnic studies, and history grapple with the complexities of representation, methodology, and the meaning/impact of employing critical storytelling tools in the classroom and community.

"*Crafting Critical Stories* brings together interdisciplinary scholarship that highlights both the exciting possibilities and the challenges that are present when we incorporate personal, familial, or communal stories to teach, learn, and transform our sociopolitical world."—DOLORES DELGADO BERNAL, PROFESSOR OF EDUCATION AND ETHNIC STUDIES, UNIVERSITY OF UTAH

"*Crafting Critical Stories* is a powerful story itself of how the art of storymaking, storytelling, and story-listening is critical to education, and educational research and policy. Together, the chapters take readers into many different communities and spaces where critical stories are crafted in the practices of teaching, learning, and research."—SOFIA VILLENAS, ASSOCIATE PROFESSOR OF ANTHROPOLOGY AND EDUCATION, CORNELL UNIVERSITY

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Advance Praise for
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"Crafting Critical Stories brings together interdisciplinary scholarship that highlights both the exciting possibilities and the challenges that are present when we incorporate personal, familial, or communal stories to teach, learn, and transform our sociopolitical world. Indeed, this volume demonstrates that critical storytelling comes in many forms and is an essential pedagogical and methodological tool across numerous informal and formal educational contexts. Collectively, the authors demonstrate the ways in which stories can allow us to draw upon knowledge that is often marginalized while simultaneously disrupting normative ways of thinking, teaching, and being. Thank you, Judith Flores Carmona and Kristen V. Luschen, for putting together an amazing must-read book that makes a significant contribution to how we understand the methods and practice of storytelling for social justice!"

*Dolores Delgado Bernal, Professor of Education
and Ethnic Studies, University of Utah*

"Crafting Critical Stories: Toward Pedagogies and Methodologies of Collaboration, Inclusion, and Voice, edited by Judith Flores Carmona and Kristen V. Luschen, is a powerful story itself of how the art of storymaking, storytelling, and story-listening is critical to education and educational research and policy. Together, the chapters take readers into many different communities and spaces where critical stories are crafted in the practices of teaching, learning, and research. We hear powerful voices in diverse K–12 and university classrooms, in research sites, in oral histories, digital stories, and testimonios. We hear stories of race, class, gender, language, sexuality, citizenship, ethnicity, and place. We learn about diverse ways of knowing and being. This edited collection brilliantly demonstrates how stories are simultaneously method and pedagogy, theory and praxis. Educators and researchers who pick up this book will no doubt be touched by the depth and breadth of its critical stories and their necessity for creating a more just world. I could not put this book down as each chapter drew me into the power of story as the foundation of education."

*Sofia Villenas, Associate Professor of Anthropology
and Education, Cornell University*

CRAFTING CRITICAL STORIES



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Shirley R. Steinberg
General Editor

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FOREWORD

Teaching through storytelling is a transformative practice, particularly in multicultural classrooms. Story can situate us as tellers of our own truths, as witnesses to the experiences of others, and as compassionate allies to each other. Time after time, I have had the privilege of witnessing this alchemy in the life storytelling classroom. Students of diverse backgrounds and experiences open their ears and their hearts to others' histories in new ways. Every personal story contains larger communal, social, and political meanings, often challenging preconceived stereotypes and prejudices. To repeat the oft-cited phrase from Chicana writer Cherrie Moraga, telling one's story enables a "theorizing from the flesh," transforming emotional memory into situated knowledge. Story has the potential, then, to enable everyone to become teachers and learners, of and from each other. The storytelling act itself creates a safe space for disclosure. As students read and listen to each other's accounts, they recognize their own experiences in them and begin to share. The "I can really relate to that because something similar happened to me" phrase begins the process of telling, affirming, and reflecting. Story begins to work its magic.

If story has huge power to move the listener and/or witness to new realizations, it is also huge for the teller, in what our own storytelling can reveal to our selves about our selves. While telling stories clarifies different realities for others, they are self-clarifying and self-empowering. Not only in the therapeutic act of telling, but also in our ability to see our own experience in a new light, socially and culturally contextualized. This is the dual action of "theorizing from the flesh." When classrooms become safe spaces for sharing, disclosure, and analysis, they also become empowering spaces for each storyteller.

The transforming force of life stories and their centrality to critical pedagogy is at the core of this volume. Anchored in Freirian thought and practice, these essays speak to the power and importance of critical hi/storytelling in an era marked by standardized curricula, significant shifts in national demographics, growing economic disparity across the social strata, increasingly fragile life chances of students from marginalized communities, and renewed nativism and xenophobia. This volume is a vibrant response to the stranglehold that performance-based educational

policies have had on the standardized K–12 curriculum in recent decades, endangering, if not completely erasing, experiential pedagogies from the curricular map. In today’s classrooms, there seems to be little space for hi/storytelling, despite its extraordinary capacity to empower students, foster engaged pedagogies, and bring schools, teachers, parents, and cultural communities together in common purpose. Building on a rich literature in liberatory education, the essays in this volume offer diverse pedagogical strategies of storytelling—life stories, oral histories, family histories, testimonies, and other forms of narrative—grounded in personal, family, community, and cultural knowledge. Their purpose is to place story at the pedagogical center, to explore new ways to bring marginalized, erased, suppressed voices and histories into focus, and to recenter knowledge construction to benefit all students, teachers, and communities.

In contrast to public schooling, higher education has been trending toward storytelling. Scholars in a wide range of academic disciplines and fields validate personal narratives as a way to gain deeper insight into the lived realities of peoples and communities in the 21st century. In addition to the fields in which story is central—literature, creative writing, theater, history, anthropology, and clinical psychology—storytelling also has commanded the attention of scholars in education, ethnic and cultural studies, legal studies, and even environmental studies. As a result, today we see an explosion of genres, modalities, and practices of storytelling with specialized names—narrative, biography, autobiography, oral history, life story, family history, fiction, creative nonfiction, *testimonio*, eyewitness accounts, counterstory, pedagogies of home, critical story, and so on. I have often thought that universities should offer an interdisciplinary major simply called “Storytelling,” where students can explore the centrality and power of this age-old practice across many fields. Academic interest suggests that narratives of lived experience are recognized for their potential to ground scholarly theory and practice, offering new ideas for research, teaching, and learning. Thus, young teachers often come out of their training with some knowledge of experiential pedagogies, and creative teaching and learning strategies. For those who have not, this volume offers a rich range of ideas and practices for classroom exploration.

One of these practices is digital storytelling. Digital multimedia technologies offer a unique opportunity in today’s multicultural classroom. Multimedia storytelling can be tremendously empowering, as students of all ages learn how to narrate, craft, share, and explore the power of their own stories and knowledge assets. Students not only tell their stories verbally, but make them as well. In this way, they become “authors” of stories, not just

listeners. Making stories engages multiple creative skills in writing, performance, visual imagery, and sound. Today, even the youngest students can make digital stories. My college students make stories that they hope will move their audiences. If sharing stories in the classroom breaks down social and cultural barriers, seeing stories on the big screen multiplies their power tenfold. These intensely personal stories, narrated in the first person voice, bring historical and emotional depth to learning. Each member of the classroom begins to acquire fuller dimension, as an individual situated in a family, a cultural community, and a larger history. Digital technologies are not simply tools; they can be strategies for building communication and understanding.

All communities value storytelling in some fashion, but for marginalized communities storytelling can be a necessity, a strategy for emotional, historical, and cultural survival. Story becomes an integral part of family and community life, a didactic tool for navigating through hostile environments, and a form of cultural affirmation. However, the separation between home culture and school is often stark. Students from vibrant storytelling cultures fall silent at school, as school is identified with the hegemonic culture. However, when school becomes a place where home cultures, strategies, hi/stories, and assets are embraced, everyone wins. This volume offers a rich array of possibilities for integrating and creating new forms of knowledge in the classroom. The authors make a vital contribution to our understanding of the power of critical storytelling as a central feature of liberatory teaching and learning. As the coeditors of this volume argue, critical storytelling is an imperative, a fundamental pedagogy for a more just and humane future.

Rina Benmayor
California State University Monterey Bay
September 16, 2012

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We dedicate this book to Gabi Do Amaral, a brilliant student and beautiful human being, gone too soon. Judith dedicates this book to her grandmother, Carmen Romero Pérez, one of her first teachers—a wise storyteller.

INTRODUCTION

Weaving Together Pedagogies and Methodologies of Collaboration, Inclusion, and Voice

Judith Flores Carmona and Kristen V. Luschen

For many of us who would describe ourselves as teaching for social change, storytelling has been at the heart of our pedagogy. In the context of social change storytelling refers to an opposition to established knowledge, to Foucault's suppressed knowledge, to the experience of the world that is not admitted into dominant knowledge paradigms. Storytelling is central to strategies for social change...(in) education. (Razack, 1998, p. 36)

As critical pedagogues teaching for social change, we believe in the power of stories to engage, transform, and catalyze social action. As teachers and qualitative researchers, we are immersed in stories—our own and those of others—and the productive interplay between the two. As pedagogues whose work focuses on addressing sociological issues in education, we believe that our work in the classroom and in the community is to engage students in critical reflection on their own (hi)stories in order to gain richer, more complex perspectives on the inequities in educational opportunities for historically marginalized populations. Similarly, as qualitative researchers, we experience the ethical tensions and artistry involved in re-presenting the lives of individuals and communities in ways that are authentic and acknowledge the situated nature in which stories are imparted.

This book spans the borders between teaching and research, to explore a practice common to both within social justice education, crafting *critical* stories. Critical stories are those stories that speak to the constitution of experiences within a sociopolitical context (Barone, 1992); that acknowledge their development within historically situated conditions; and that recognize the gaps and silences in dominant ways of knowing, and seek to illuminate

counternarratives. Stories remind us that we cannot depend on statistical data to illuminate experience and compel change, but rather, it is also in the crafting of narratives and sharing stories that social transformation happens.

In his book, *The Politics of Storytelling*, Michael Jackson (2002) drew on Arendt to argue that

storytelling is a strategy for transforming private into public meanings...; the second is existential, seeing storytelling as a human strategy for sustaining a sense of agency in the face of disempowering circumstances. To reconstitute those events in a story is no longer to live those events in passivity, but to actively rework them, both in dialogue with others and within one's own imagination. (p. 15)

In this way, storytelling is an empowering and transformative process. As collective counterstories emerge through dialogue and discussion, as the chapters in this book suggest, they prompt critical transformations in the knowledges of our students, ourselves, and our disciplines.

This book emerged from our powerful experience of imagining and co-teaching the course, *Family and Oral History Pedagogies*. The course drew on various forms of critical (hi)storytelling and methodologies to illuminate knowledges that have been rendered invisible or have been suppressed in schools, communities, and in academia. We also asked students to engage in critical family history (Sleeter, 2008); to explore and excavate family knowledges; to understand in embodied ways how historical narratives are constituted through crucial absences and silences that privilege some and marginalize others. The course meaningfully compelled participants, teachers, and students to reimagine our personal and collective histories and our positionality within relations of oppression and privilege. However, when we prepared the syllabus, while there were many superb resources with which to construct the course, we found that none bridged the projects of teaching and research, or incorporated knowledges developed across disciplines. We found none that probed the intersections between traditions of orality and new digital mediums, engaging both as tools for social change, while concerned with experiences of teachers from all grade levels.

There is a wealth of scholarship on storytelling in the arts, but less so in the social sciences. In his book, *Transforming Tales: How Stories Can Change People*, Rob Parkinson (2009) argued that in education, stories are often considered within the context of language development. They inspire imagination and support creative thinking. This is to say, little work on storytelling in education links to the production of stories as personal and constructed narratives. Personal story sharing is an important aspect of culturally relevant pedagogy and social justice education. Dyson and

Genishi's (1994), *The Need for Story*, addressed how stories are rooted in our experiences as cultural beings (p. 4), and their collection of essays broadly spoke to how connecting with and across children's culturally diverse, personal stories can support building and navigating classroom communities.

Lee Anne Bell's (2010) book, *Storytelling for Social Justice*, offered an excellent framework for the power of stories to facilitate critical teaching and learning about the social and political world. The book centered on how to examine the stories of race that we tell ourselves and each other from a social justice and arts-based approach. She also engaged with the idea of counterstorytelling as a resistant and critical practice to disrupt oppressive constructions of race. The book explored the "Storytelling Project Model" she initiated, and each chapter addressed a different type of story (e.g., stock, concealed, resistance), and offered examples of how various artistic mediums help to document, explore, and analyze these stories in the interest of antiracist pedagogy.

Solinger, Fox, and Irani (2008) offered an engaging contribution to the scholarship on storytelling and social change. While not rooted in educational practice like Bell's (2010) and Dyson and Genishi's (1994) texts, *Telling Stories to Change the World* is a collection of essays about projects and organizations employing stories and storytelling to make social justice claims. The beauty of this book—similar to *Telling to Live: Latina Feminist Testimonios* (The Latina Feminist Group, 2001) and others in the genre of Latina *testimonio*—is the contention that the generation and sharing of knowledges and suppressed stories are acts of political urgency and political action.

With several texts exploring the linkages between storytelling and social change, we searched for texts that examined the methodological and pedagogical complexities of story production. The Oral History Association has developed significant resources for educators in oral history, with regard to methodologies and pedagogies particularly helpful for practitioners interested in learning how to use oral history with their students or in communities. They are solid resources appropriate for learning the nuts and bolts of how to conduct oral history projects. Similarly, *Digital Storytelling in the Classroom* (Ohler, 2008) provided foundational knowledge for teachers to support students' creation of digital stories, and the possibilities for using this tool for teaching and learning. Lanman and Wendling's (2006) *Preparing the Next Generation of Oral Historians* is also a resource for educators seeking to enliven history for students at all levels. The anthology opens with chapters on the fundamentals of oral history and its place in the classroom, but its heart lies in nearly two dozen essays by educators who

have successfully incorporated oral history into their teaching. The chapters include step-by-step descriptions of the projects, and practical suggestions on creating curricula, engaging students, gathering community support, and meeting educational standards. However, this volume does not reach beyond oral history as a storytelling methodology, nor does it emphasize critical history as a critical social justice approach.

Despite the existing body of scholarship, the curious absence of interdisciplinary texts from a social justice perspective that acknowledge the intersections across pedagogies and methodologies of knowing and representation motivated us to draw together scholars and educators in the fields of Communications, Education, Sociology, History, and Ethnic Studies. *Crafting Critical Stories* explores the challenges and possibilities for critical (hi)storytelling as a form of culturally relevant, critical pedagogy. As a body of work, the scholarship in the following pages addresses the intersections and distinctions across disciplines, and between the work of educators utilizing different forms of critical storytelling methods and teaching practices. It engages in the discussion of the connections of critical storytelling pedagogy to culturally relevant teaching and social justice education. By bringing together critical pedagogues in conversation around issues of representation, methodology, meaning, and impact, *Crafting Critical Stories* invites educators to see how power dynamics across multiple people and/or borders can be mediated in the classroom and in the community. The volume highlights various critical storytelling approaches (critical family, digital, *testimonio*, and oral history) across disciplines, and brings them into conversation with one another.

More Possibilities of Inclusion

This book aims to highlight different ways in which oral history, digital storytelling, *testimonio*, and critical family history have been used in the classroom; and have been used in, used with, or written by marginalized communities. As pedagogues who practice these “signature pedagogies” (Benmayor, 2012) we include chapters that speak to each of the genres, so as to explore the overlapping and/or intersecting tenets across them. Rather than being a “how to” or methodology book, *Crafting Critical Stories* examines the tensions related to the production and representation of critical stories, and capitalizes on their specific use in K–higher education classrooms and in communities. The contributors to this volume answer some of the following questions: How are teachers drawing from cultural and familial sources of knowledge? What are the struggles of integrating children’s community and/or family histories into schools? Does the integration of pedagogies of

the home and family histories necessarily disrupt educators' pedagogical practices? What does the process of integrating one's silenced, ignored, and/or excluded history into school mean for underrepresented, marginalized, silenced students? How do we shift our disciplinary knowledges by seeking out silenced (hi)stories? Through self-reflexivity, the contributors explore how they were shaped by, and influenced, critical stories.

While this book explores the possibilities of critical (hi)story pedagogies and methodologies, the significance of new technologies and access to digital archives have been influential in their increased use. New media have created more opportunities for exploring, creating, and sharing our critical (hi)stories and experiences across various social and geographic borders. Hence, within this collection, there are examples of critical (hi)story pedagogies rooted in the use of digital media that cultivate bridges between home and school, between White students and students of color, between adults and children, and across language divides and community cultures.

The book is organized in three sections. The first section, "Striving for Critical Consciousness: Excavating (Hi)stories of Privilege and Oppression," explores questions, methodologies, and tensions experienced by educators who have complicated, or facilitated practices by which students examine and address their legacies of oppression and privilege through critical storytelling. In Chapter 1, Christine Sleeter illustrates how racist roots of contemporary unequal relations can be made visible through critical family history research. After describing her methodology, she excavates and explores the implications of the "footholds" and "cushions" that she, as a White person, inherited. In Chapter 2, Ellen Correa explores her performance or "positioning" (Davies & Harré, 1990) as a White Puerto Rican teacher in the classroom. She looks at how her affective performance of identity, particularly the oppressive influence of shame, impacts her teaching. She proposes that self-reflexivity and the examination of teacher performance of racial and/or ethnic identity can help improve teaching and learning in the classroom. In Chapter 3, Jane Van Galen analyzes the genre of digital storytelling as a tool for exploring and complicating education students' understanding of social class, social mobility, and education. Next, Barbara Kessel and Kim Hackford-Peer focus on the use of critical education history in the context of an Introduction to Gender Studies course. Through the use of what they call, "critical education history," they examine their experiences facilitating students' reflexivity about their education experiences, and the schooling conditions of women and LGBTQ students. In the last chapter of section one, Judith Flores Carmona and Aymee Malena Luciano share self-reflexivity as an essential practice in critical

pedagogy, and particularly in a *testimonios* course. The authors propose *testimonio* pedagogy to move us toward an understanding of suffering, not as an individual experience, but as a communal process of teaching and learning, and as a way for people to read, connect and engage with, draw upon, and become inspired to share *testimonios* in education.

Part two of the book, “Bridging Diverse Community Knowledges Through Critical Storytelling” includes chapters that speak to the complexities of bridging community knowledge(s) through research, teaching, and community-engaged learning. In Chapter 6, Sherick Hughes and Kate Willink examine coreflexive critical dialogues as a significant, collaborative methodology for critical (hi)storytelling across gendered, raced, classed, and cultured lines. The coauthors explore two crucial moments in field research through critical dialogues, and speak to how this methodology enriched their lived experiences of culturally relevant, critical pedagogy and qualitative fieldwork. DeeDee Mower’s chapter argues for the significance of integrating oral histories within Social Studies curricula. She illustrates how community members’ stories help students grasp multiple and conflicting perspectives on historical events, and formulate critical questions about their representation. Mower’s analysis of how ideologies of childhood serve to maintain silences and support dominant and narrow perspectives on historical events will be particularly relevant to those working with young people. In the final chapter of part two, Kristen Luschen writes about the Educational Histories/Education Hopes digital storytelling project designed within a course-based collaboration between middle school and undergraduate students. Luschen explores the complexities and possibilities of facilitating critical consciousness and transformative co-learning relationships across communities of difference through personal storytelling.

The third section of the book, “Knowledge(s) of Resistance,” builds from understanding that the histories and lives of students of color, immigrant students, and marginalized communities have not been well represented in educational research and curriculum. This section explores the significance of these knowledge(s) of resistance, and emphasizes an assets-based, bottom-up approach to teaching, researching, and engaging with historically marginalized communities. In Chapter 9, Sundy Watanabe interrogates interactional tensions in rhetorics of presence and performance occurring between selected Native and non-Native persons within a large, research-intensive university context. Interactional tensions arise, she argues, because these participants hold discrepant beliefs concerning the role national, tribal, and rhetorical sovereignty should and/or does play in community and self-determination. She posits that if American Indians are to be more successful in completing

higher education degrees, university personnel and programs must address these tensions and negotiate to more fully indigenize the academy. In Chapter 10, Hilton Kelly addresses the significance of oral history methodology for qualitative inquiry. Drawing upon his research with Black educators who taught in legally segregated schools in the South, the author illustrates how oral history in qualitative research can unearth subjugated knowledge as a critical intervention for progressive social change. Kelly's chapter offers readers a window into how he employed historical methodologies to revise a long-held, dominant story of the inferiority of Black schools in the South prior to school integration, making visible Black people's stories of struggle and perseverance. In Chapter 11, James H. Adams and Natalie G. Adams present oral histories as a way to illuminate how, long before Critical Race Theory (CRT) materialized in law schools as a critique of traditional civil rights discourse, Black teachers and principals developed their own collection of strategies and discourses to deal with the practical and everyday consequences of civil rights litigation. In the last chapter, J.Luis Loya Garcia argues that cultural linguistics is a potent tool for empowering Latina/o students in Spanish classes designed for Heritage Speakers. He uses "pedagogies of the home," oral histories, cultural linguistics, and the archeology of words, to illustrate the linguistic dislocation, in English and Spanish, that Latina/o students suffer due to their direct or indirect ties with indigenous, non-Western views of the world.

Among social justice educators, the call to narrate, craft, share, and explore critical stories—*testimonios*, pedagogies of the home (Delgado Bernal, 2001), oral history, and critical family history (Sleeter, 2008)—has gained urgency in recent years. As standardized curricula and assessments saturate the everyday lives of teachers and students, the spaces of learning with and from each other in culturally informed and critical ways are constrained or eliminated. There is urgent need to bridge the disconnection between schools and communities, between dominant epistemologies and those that have been ignored or suppressed. The genres of critical storytelling in this volume seek to illuminate counternarratives that disrupt claims of neutrality, objectivity, color blindness, and meritocracy in society and in classrooms. These genres also seek to preserve knowledge(s) that are not learned in schools, as a way of illuminating and preserving epistemic and pedagogical community tools and assets (Flores Carmona & Delgado Bernal, 2012).

Crafting Critical Stories: Toward Pedagogies and Methodologies of Collaboration, Inclusion, and Voice engages the meaning of innovative critical (hi)storytelling for critical pedagogy in the twenty-first century. Our

hope is that pedagogues, educators, students' consciousness, and practice will be impacted at multiple sites and in meaningful, transformative ways.

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PART I

Striving for Critical Consciousness: Excavating (Hi)stories of Privilege and Oppression