RECOLLECTIONS AND REPRESENTATIONS OF FOLK IN THE CLASSROOM:
Teacher Perspectives

Dyanis A. Popova, Dennis A. Conrad, Lisa M. Philip,
Deborah J. Conrad, and *Antonia Mohammed*

Using narrative analysis, critical pedagogy, and employing a phenomenological approach, this paper explores the experiences and perspectives of its co-researchers regarding their recollections of folktales and responses to a collection of Caribbean folk narratives. The paper also shares the voices of five educators regarding how similar folk narratives might be incorporated into the classroom. The results support the increased use of folk narratives in the classroom. The authors assert that the use of folk narratives offers a means of increasing student engagement, positive identity, and a sense of community, and enhancing learning among participating teachers and learners.

"Near here," she started, "there lives a man who knows more than anyone else. He knows how to cure bellyaches . . . how to put goat mouth on people just by saying their names, so then something bad happens to them. He even knows how to tell de river what to do. That man is de one we call Lagahoo."
(Excerpt taken and adapted from the book *A Wave In Her Pocket: Stories From Trinidad*, by Lynn Joseph, 1991).

The World Bank study, *Caribbean Youth Development: Issues and Policy Directions* (Cunningham & Correia, 2003), reported a challenge to the pervasive belief that many Caribbean communities enjoy good education, along with supportive families and communities. The report noted that this perception was overshadowed by youths demonstrating frustration, hopelessness, negativity, and a yearning to be heard. Generally, the report noted disenchantment related to conflicts generated by the disparity between their aspirations and the social and economic realities they experience. This is underscored, too, by male student underperformance and related disaffection. Youth participating in the survey shared particular concerns about the low relevance of education, which was perceived as being too academically focused and unresponsive to their cultural and personal needs and talents. Other concerns included what they saw as outdated curricula, insecurity related to gang cultures,

homosexuality, ineffective teachers, school stigmatization, and peer pressure.

The Inter-American Development Bank (IDB, 2014) identified at-risk youth as an urgent challenge facing Caribbean policymakers and educators. Catalysts include the lack of opportunities at, or a sense of community with, educational institutions; weak or absent relationships with adults; poverty; and negative cultural values. Evidence of these concerns is apparent in absenteeism, low academic performance, crime, delinquency, and violence in school or involving school-aged children. The IDB identified several promising responses to this situation, including basic approaches like a seamless early childhood/primary education system in Trinidad and Tobago; the Primary Education Support Project (PESP); and the Basic Education, Access, and Management Support (BEAMS) programmes in Jamaica and Guyana. With regard to at-risk youth, the report acknowledges the positive contributions of the Youth Development Programme and Citizen Security Programme in Jamaica and Trinidad, respectively.

Within this context of distracted, at-risk youth, culturally responsive teaching and critical pedagogy offer hope and a means of engaging students in the broader understanding of education as going beyond high-stakes assessment. Students need to be able to locate and express their voices through more student-centric, culturally responsive curricula, which incorporate accessible socially relevant local resources and allow multiple forms of engagement and expression (Accioly de Amorim, 2009; Conrad, Forteau-Jaikaransingh, & Popova, 2013; Freire, 1970).

Teachers are the main facilitators in engaging at-risk youth. Despite legitimate concerns for upgrading their professional preparation, worth, and benefits, there is a positive correlation between high-performing, engaged students with high-performing learning communities and professional highly effective teachers.

Conrad et al. (2013) propose the use of student-centred, culturally responsive pedagogy incorporating the folk traditions. As with other localized oral traditions like rapso, folklore, including folktales, can incorporate culturally and socially relevant curricula, accessible resources, multiple forms of engagement and expression, and performance, thus creating opportunities for enhanced relationships

In the report on Engaging Youth at Risk (Trinidad and Tobago. Committee on Young Males and Crime, 2013), popularly known as the *Ryan Report*, appeals were made to facilitate safe and smaller learning communities; more positive relationships among teachers, students, and families; empathetic and responsive teachers; and more personalized and engaging instruction through the arts.

The co-researchers of this study consider our experiences with, and the potential of using, folk narratives, lore, and tales of our folk. We ask ourselves "what does it mean for our teaching?" We share our experiences and the lessons learned, advocating for its relevance in the contemporary classroom. Further, through the *conversation* and stories shared, we anticipate an increased level of motivation for, and a commitment to, finding ways to integrate folklore through folk narratives in our pedagogy.

We assert that the use of folk narratives in our classrooms serves as an integral part of artistic expression and identity formation, which will improve teacher effectiveness and learner engagement and achievement. As a pedagogical tool, folk narratives should be used to foster a sense of cultural understanding and self-efficacy, promote social consciousness and justice, and explore power relationships and dynamics within our society.

Theoretical Framework

Folklore in the Caribbean Context

Folklore is a belief system that includes songs, bush medicine, prayers, and folktales, all critical elements of culture and identity (Besson, 2011a). Folklore has a long and rich history, sharing and sustaining cultural traditions from generation to generation; serving as "the intersection of the personal and the public" (Santino, 2004, p. 371). Gencarella (2009) asserts that "folklore is not something that a folk *does*; rather, it is something that, in . . . doing, constitutes . . . folk, as both an immediate audience and a political category. [It] bears the capacity for pivotal contributions to critiques of power and dominant or oppressive moralities" (p. 173).

Caribbean folklore is full of compelling elements. Characters have strange names. Mystery and magic are used to explore the unexplainable or to resolve conflicts. Time is in the distant past. In folklore, old traditions and practices capture the unique social structure of the islands. Despite being an important subject of Caribbean scholarship, folklore has been marginalized within the literary tradition as perpetuating low-culture values. It is perceived to be undervalued and underutilized as a pedagogical tool and literary art form in the majority of schools (Anatol, 2000). Many of these traditions are unfamiliar to today's generation.

Folklore and its related narratives began as an oral tradition that retained social norms and cultural expressions across vast oceans; often representing social contradiction and revolt against colonialism and neo-colonialism (Roldan-Santiago, 2005). Folklore, then, not only presents a record of local histories, but also has the potential to aid post-colonial

youth as they develop their perspectives and positionalities as Caribbean adults.

Laden with superstitions and faith-based beliefs, folklore is extremely important to Caribbean communities (Henry, 2006), which owe many traditions and tales to a rich history of mixed cultures. Folklore might be described as a stable, cohesive mechanism, where traditional, often anonymous, communication is evidenced, imitated, and transmitted within and between generational groups. Besson (2011a), Hill (2007), and Henry (2006), among others, emphasize the importance of folklore to Caribbean communities, Henry notes and celebrates the contributions of J. D. Elder, a Trinbagonian anthropologist, who relates folklore to identity formation.

Folk Narratives

A subsection of folklore involves its literary representations. These are referred to as folk- or prose-narratives (Bascom, 1965), and include folktales, literary renderings of folktales, and folk-referenced narratives.

About folktales. Within and emergent from the oral traditions are fictional tales about people and/or animals that describe how the main characters cope with the events of everyday life. Folktales are often used to teach a lesson or explain the less explicable. Folktales are characterized by simple language, supernatural powers, readily recognizable problems, and conflicts. Many folktales do not have happy endings (although some do) in which good or desirable human qualities are represented and rewarded. Folktales specifically draw upon the oral traditions and experiences of the Caribbean people, colouring daily life, and as creative endeavours (Hill, 2007).

James-Williams (2011) contends that these storytelling traditions initially blended with or adopted the local Amerindian folklore, then amassed the traditions of other voluntary and involuntary immigrants as time went by. James-Williams argues, for example, that the mythical characters *Papa Bois* and *Mama Glo* are evidenced in Trinidad and Tobago's and South American cultures. Early migratory patterns by Amerindian tribes into Trinidad, colonization of African and East Indian peoples, and bricolage facilitated the continued existence of these folkloric characters:

> Morphologically, the forest folklores of Trinidad and Tobago are close to those of South American native communities. Both sets of myths underscore the importance of the forest and water creatures, the presence of protector spirits (with similar features), and the presence of the hunter/fisherman as well as human/animal transformations. (James-Williams, p. 5)

Smith (2005) suggests that the folktale was a way for oppressed and colonized peoples, including slaves, to make sense of the experiences they endured. Maintaining their oral traditions helped to preserve cultural habits, norms, expectations, and other memories of the homelands; serving as acts of survival, resistance, and resilience. These *memories* were often ways that conquered or repressed peoples fought against their repressors; hiding messages and preserving cultural and social identity (Haynes, 2011).

For example, diverse manifestations of Anansi stories about the trickster spider and his animal friends, which originated on the African continent, have traversed the Americas and the Caribbean (Auld, 2007). The basic idea of the stories, their characters, and their lessons has stayed the same, with variations based on pertinent cultural aspects of the adopting community.

Literary renderings of folktales. These refer to attempts to represent folktales in literature. Often, the literary interpretation is a weakened reflection of the oral presentation, having had to suffer the efforts of translators and transcribers across languages over decades. Mbele (2000), referencing Knappert in Bertoncini (1989), asserts that much of what the African storyteller communicates to his audience cannot be caught and confined in a book. This is because all the characters of the drama are introduced with their own voices, which might be the snort of a wild pig or even the yawn of a lion. As such, many of the folktales we know are re-created stories. Still they are important representations of folktales.

Folklore referenced narratives. The efforts of Besson and Lovelace, where they refer and relate their key characters to elements of the folklore, reflect the second form of folk narratives addressed. These narratives provide opportunities for critical reflection and learning, connecting folklore with social mores, traditions, and the experiences of our diverse people.

Folk narratives, be these as folktales, folk renderings, or folk referenced, provide us with windows through which we can understand and explore our stories and identities.

About the Folk Narratives

As co-authors who were born and raised in Trinidad and Tobago, the co-researchers of this study have ready access to local stories and recollections. We acknowledge our folkloric tradition as including a wide array of mythical characters and creatures, reflecting the fact that the people came from many different cultures and from almost every

continent. Together, the narratives form a truly unique combination of tales (Joseph, 1994). Many of these stories are embedded in the combined animist beliefs of West Africa, South America, and India, creating stories of survival, death, and everyday life. These tales can range from entertaining tales of mischief to exploring the role(s) of children in society (Joseph, 1994), and the socialization of particular community and cultural groups (Anatol, 2000).

Both Anatol (2000) and Besson (2011a) share the idea of similarities between the folklore of Trinidad and Tobago and that of other cultures. Aside from entertainment, the most common themes across cultures are the teaching of morals and behavioural norms, the preservation of customs, fear of the supernatural, and the documentation of a history of oppression. Folklore plays a large role in society and in culture, and acts as a means to teach social norms, explain somewhat unexplainable occurrences, and preserve community memories. This study serves as a foundational investigation into the role of folk narratives in classrooms. We also invite consideration of its applicability to promote social understanding, consciousness, and development.

Multicultural Education and the Trinbagonian Context

Trinidad and Tobago (Trinbago) has been described as being among the most culturally diverse countries in the Caribbean (Descartes, 2012). This is the result of a complex hybrid of conquest, slavery, indentureship, colonialism, and immigration. Defining multicultural education, even in such a recognizably diverse society, can prove to be challenging. Three perspectives, as proposed by Banks (2006), Nieto (1992), and Sleeter and Grant (2006), stand out. Banks uses a broad definition of a fixed concept, with five specific dimensions: content integration, knowledge construction process, prejudice reduction, equity pedagogy, and empowering school culture/social structure. Nieto interprets multicultural education as more elastic, acknowledging the impact of learning and sociopolitical contexts. For her, multicultural education is a process characterized by key characteristics. These include material that it is antiracist; includes the basic; is important for all; pervades the entire learning environment—school climate, physical environment, curriculum, and relationships; aims at action for social justice; and includes critical pedagogy. Sleeter and Grant, extending the definition to include sociopolitical power, include the following five approaches: academic skills acquisition (teaching the different), developing and enhancing relationships (human relationships), single group studies, self-reflexivity, and reconstructionism.

While the contributions of the aforementioned authors all present

unique perspectives on multicultural education, they all deal with anti-racism, anti-oppression, and the readiness to challenge the privilege, policies, and practices that sustain unequal schooling conditions. The overall goal, then, is the creation of a more just society through education and through the provision of space to support and encourage the development of critically reflective and socially engaged students as they work toward high academic achievement. In spite of, or perhaps because of, its base in such a broad concept and range of ideas, there is no universal acceptance of multicultural education or how it might be addressed.

Critics of multicultural education perceive it as divisive, and excessively emphasizing race and ethnicity. Schlesinger (1998) is among critics arguing that teaching to a specific group only emphasizes self-esteem, rather than enhancing academic rigour. True multicultural education, however, neither teaches to nor about a specific group, nor does it emphasize academic achievement. Rather, it represents a willingness to embrace multiple cultural perspectives as a tool of social and academic learning that goes beyond the requirements of contemporary schooling.

Taylor (2012) contends that the ethnically diverse and cosmopolitan culture intrinsic to Trinidad has been gradually emerging beyond race and class. He posits that a focus on multiculturalism is not as valuable for the society as is being portrayed and used by the governing regime. We assert, however, that this has more to do with a misuse and misunderstanding of multicultural education than with the value of the field itself. Taylor suggests that acknowledging the value of cultural diversity as a resource is important in establishing a framework for, and building, national cultural identity.

Critical Consciousness and Folklore

Critical consciousness, as an aspect of critical pedagogy, evolved as a methodology to foster critical literacy among Brazilian peasants toward social change (Freire, 1970, 1974). Rather than condoning the idea of stepping back in observation and analysis to find solutions for social problems, Freire (1974) asserts his belief that social analysis should be participatory, essentially allowing the entire community to codify and co-construct reality into symbols for critical awareness. This facilitates creating a space in which relationships with society can be challenged and potentially altered. This *problematizing* of the natural, cultural, and historical realities in which people find themselves can be applied to working with marginalized or disenfranchised youth in numerous locales (Diemer & Li, 2011). Three recurring themes in Freire's definition of critical consciousness have been identified by Mustakova-Possardt

(1998): 1) a way of knowing involving the critical analysis of reality, 2) a sense of connectedness fostered by analysing as a participant rather than an observer, and 3) a process of collective dialogue. Freire's goals of raising consciousness and overcoming obstacles cannot be accomplished without first starting with the life situation of the learner, and the way in which the knowledge affects their daily experiences and interactions. This methodology encourages discussion and the sharing of potentially different interpretations and perspectives.

In the case of neo-colonial youth—those born into so called *third-world* or less resourced societies—this type of critical analysis and discussion can lead to an in-depth look at the historical circumstances that have led to society's contemporary social challenges, and help these youth to make sense of the world around them. Zamudio, Bridgeman, Russell, and Rios (2009) suggest that a major strategy for developing critical consciousness is uncovering one's position in the current social culture. Haynes (2011) explores this idea further:

> Forging a deeper understanding of self cannot be truly accomplished if we begin with a prejudiced concept of self. We have allowed history to take our legends as myth and to replace our stories with its concept and definition of us, thereby accepting history's myth of us, beginning with claiming ourselves as Caribbean people and striving for pride of place, while by that very definition, we accept history's primitive understanding of our Amerindian ancestors. (p. 62)

As folklore lends voice to both the past and the present (Dorson, 1963), both classic and contemporary forms offer a forum through which this type of social awareness can be fostered. Gencarella (2009) additionally identifies three stages of critical folklore studies: the analysis of folklore as a critical practice, the criticism of folklore practices, and the production of folklore and folklore studies as a critical act. These go beyond storytelling sessions toward a deeper understanding of self and community.

With its potential for community building, folk narratives are indispensable in any introspective of Caribbean history and society. However, these are underutilized in classrooms today. Increased classroom use of Caribbean folk narratives, along with the tools of critical pedagogy, will not only maintain the historical record but can also increase self-awareness, self-efficacy, and cultural confidence in Caribbean youth.

The Idakeda Group, a family-owned performance group based in Port of Spain, Trinidad, represents one way of engaging youths, including those considered at risk, with folk narratives and performance

(http://www.idakedagroup.com/services.php?contentid=1018). Through dramatic presentations, poetry readings, literature, and workshops, the group has been able to serve as a catalyst for empowering discussion on youth concerns and identity. While celebrating the efforts of groups like Idakeda, there is a need to consider the critical implementation of folklore, including the use of folktales in Caribbean classrooms.

About the Inquiry

Method

The focus of our inquiry was to consider the recollections and perspectives of five educators on reading a collection of folk stories. Our approach to this inquiry was phenomenological. This method involved creating and organizing self-developed narratives around the guiding questions, reviewing and forming initial codes, describing the sources of data and the phenomenon, identifying themes, illustrating how the phenomenon is experienced, and sharing the essence of the developed narratives (Creswell, 2013). For purposes of this study, we considered the experiences associated with, and use of, folk narratives as the central phenomenon.

We acknowledge that we are neither anthropologists nor folklorists. Instead, we conduct this study through the lens of educators with diverse backgrounds and experiences. As such, we have not attempted a formal structural, linguistic, or content analysis, but rather we explore our responses to the selected material and share our ideas for making better use of folktales and stories in the classroom and within our learning communities.

We, the five co-researchers, come from one common space, namely, Trinidad and Tobago, although our lived, teaching, and learning experiences are diverse. All but one of us self-identify as being multiracial, acknowledging our African, Carib, East Indian, *Spanish* [local term referring to Spanish-speaking ancestors], and European ethnicities.

In terms of professional identities, we are all educators—two primary school teachers [Lisa and Antonia]; one doctoral student [Dyanis]; and two college professors, [Deborah and Dennis]. Lisa recently resumed primary school teaching after completing her B.Ed. She has always had an interest in culture, even if mostly as an observer, and how it might be used to engage students in the classroom. Currently, she teaches Standard 5 students in a suburban school district in Trinidad. She is also continuing studies towards her master's degree in Adult Education. She is an avid reader, more recently in Caribbean literature.

Antonia has a B.Ed. in special education. She and her family are very much involved in cultural art forms. She has a particular interest in the spoken word traditions. She teaches 10-year-old boys in a suburban elementary school. She also lives in Trinidad.

Dyanis is a PhD candidate currently situated in southwestern Virginia in the United States. Her research interests focus on social justice, and curriculum and instruction, specifically Teaching English as a Second Language and Multicultural Education. As an international student and teaching assistant, she uses multicultural centric literature in her courses.

Deborah is an Associate Professor of Education in northern New York, where she teaches literacy courses to undergraduate and graduate teacher candidates. She has always been a lover of reading and poetry. She continues to infuse fiction, including those that are culturally centric, within her courses.

Dennis is also in higher education. He teaches courses in Inclusive and Special Education at a university in northern New York. As with Deborah and Dyanis, he uses integrated fiction in most of his courses.

The Readings

We began this project following a discussion Dennis had with Lisa and Antonia about the challenges facing teachers striving to engage students in Trinidad. It was proposed that teachers should use materials that were culturally relevant. Dennis questioned whether teachers even read books that were Caribbean centric. The conversation was extended to Dyanis and Deborah, who both agreed that culturally relevant literature had the potential to maximize opportunities for student engagement and learning, but should begin with the teacher's knowledge of literature that honoured the cultural heritage of their students. As an end result, we created a list of the books specific to Trinidad culture that addressed elements of folktales. Collaboratively, we ranked the books based on frequency and familiarity, and then developed a plan to ensure that we each read the 10 top-ranked books as read by group members. We planned to do so over a six-month period. During that period we added another five books and extended the time by another two months. These included the books written by Besson and Lovelace referred to as folklore referenced narratives, and the others, which comprised literary renderings of folktales. We refer to the collection of these 15 books as folk narratives. The following titles comprised the list:

- *A Wave in Her Pocket: Stories from Trinidad* (Joseph, 1991)

- *Caribbean Indian Folktales* (Mahabir, 2005)

- *Folklore and Legends of Trinidad and Tobago* (Besson, 2011)
- *Is Just a Movie* (Lovelace, 2012)
- *Lagahoo Poems* (Aboud, 2004)
- *Monkey Liver Soup and Other Tales From Trinidad* (Ashtine, 1973)
- *Monkey Polo Tricks Manicou* (Ramsawak, 2000)
- *Salt* (Lovelace, 2004)
- *Salt and Roti: Indian Folk Tales of the Caribbean* (Parmasad, 2000)
- *Sapotee Soil* (Haynes, 2010)
- *Spirit of the Times* (Narine, 2011)
- *The Mermaid's Twin Sister: More Stories From Trinidad* (Joseph, 1994)
- *The Lagahoo's Apprentice* (Maharaj, 2011)
- *The Voice in the Govi* (Besson, 2011)
- *West Indian Folk-Tales* (Sherlock, 1978)

While these books are primarily from Trinidad and Tobago, we contend that due to the general similarity of some folkloric characters throughout much of the Caribbean, our discussion on the use of such narratives can be applied to the region.

Guiding Questions

We read these books individually, then developed self-monologic narratives to the following guiding questions:

1. *What recollections of our folk came to mind on reading these stories?*
2. *What representations of historical or social realities can we identify?*
3. *How can folktales be utilized in classroom instruction?*

Analysis

We acknowledge that the recollections of how we experienced folktales during childhood evoked intense imagery and nostalgia. This no doubt fostered our interest in reading the folk narratives listed, and may have

biased our perspectives on the inclusion of such narratives in our pedagogy.

In analysing our developed responses as narratives to the key questions, we used an eclectic approach that respects folklore as a living, organic phenomenon (Abrahams, 1963; Bascom, 1965). Through our readings, we developed a deeper understanding of the folk narratives we reviewed; considering their historical context, intention, form and feeling, audience, and language use. This allowed us a rich appreciation of the perspectives of our co-researchers, and the memories and stories that evolved from our developed narratives and discussions.

Once our developed narratives were shared, we started the process of identifying common themes or unique stories related to the specific questions we were considering. We also considered how the folkloric narratives we read could be used in classrooms to encourage critical thinking and the development of local consciousness. Through the lens of contemporary narrative inquiry, we treated the folklore narratives as a distinct form of discourse and action, socially situated interactive experiences, being shaped and influenced by social realities (Chase, 2005).

The Journey through Folklore: Recollections and Representations

In compiling the responses to the guiding questions, it was evident how important folk narratives as folktales were to family values prior to this era of Twitter, tablets, and smartphones. Entertainment was a family affair, and it was common to hear stories of times long ago when grandparents, often community storytellers, would gather the children at their feet and tell them stories, myths, and legends intended to educate, entertain, and socialize. These stories not only brought families and communities together for entertainment, and turned otherwise dull moments into times for togetherness, but they also instilled respect, fear, and obedience (Anatol, 2000).

Recollections

We each have recollections that mirror this imagery, though from different eras. Deborah's memories emerge from the 1960s when few homes had televisions, and weekends meant that neighbours would often sit talking late into the night, often over a glass of Old Oak rum with ice and water:

> *Sometime into the night, someone will begin with "you know, long ago we use to …" and very soon, stories will be told of escapades in the night with phantoms and who in the neighbourhood was likely*

> *to be a soucouyant based on their unusual sleep patterns and shadowy existence. Left to amuse ourselves as the adults socialized, my siblings and I would eavesdrop on these adult conversations, mesmerized with an unfamiliar world that beckoned to us from the lips of our elders. Later when we were sent to bed, we huddled together to sleep on those nights, frightened by our own shadows and imagined night sounds.* [Deborah]

Dyanis has similar memories, though from the 1980s when life was a little more hectic, and when children spent a lot more time watching television:

> *My grandmother would often sit, surrounded by my cousins and I, regaling us with fanciful tales of the supernatural and of traditions that sounded far away to our young ears. We didn't have satellite television like some of my friends, so we only ever watched TV for Sesame Street or in passing while my grandparents were watching the news. The stories were often spontaneous, and intended to correct inappropriate behaviour. I learned to not speak to strangers, to not make my going and comings common knowledge, and to tell the truth through the unfortunate circumstances suffered by many in these tales. I spent many summers at the mouth of the Marianne River in Blanchisseuse, cautious not to offend Mama Dlo lest she drag me down to a watery grave.* [Dyanis]

Similar to Dyanis, Lisa spent her vacations with her grandmother who often shared stories of folklore:

> *On evenings while she was cooling her tea (pouring from cup to cup) she would tell us stories. I heard about the douens (and my cousin would tease me about it because I wasn't baptised as a baby). She also told us about Papa Bois, the obeah woman, the La Diablesse, and the soucouyant. My parents use to joke about the soucouyant and remind us that if there were any blue marks on our bodies it was because of it. I was so paranoid that on mornings I would look at myself in the mirror to make sure there were no blue marks. She also told us that she had a black statue of a small man that was stored in my uncle's room. Whenever we misbehaved she would threaten to take it out. The stories she told about the statue are now forgotten but I do remember being afraid of it. While reading "The Mermaid Twin Sister" I recalled that memory and another about why we should not go to the beach on Easter Sunday.* [Lisa]

Antonia, who experienced a distinctly rural lifestyle, associates her earliest recollections with her mother:

> *My mother loved to tell stories, particularly scary ones when we were being bad. So we've heard about douens and how they lure children away. One day when I was about 5 years old I came from school with my little brother. Mom wasn't home so we thought she went by the river to wash and decided to go to that wooded area to find her. She wasn't there but all along the way we kept an eye out for douens and Papa Bois and when we reached the river we looked out for mermaids. Many nights we'd be looking out for all the characters to come out, especially the soucouyants.* [Antonia]

For Dennis, he points out that folklore goes beyond folktales for him. It also incorporates all that is reflective of what is Trinidad, from stick fighting to chutney. Dennis, also from a rural background, associates his earliest recollection of folktales with his paternal grandmother. Often when she visited from central Trinidad, she would share stories. These mostly centred on the Immortelle Tree and La Diablesses:

> *The scariest part for me wasn't the stories but afterwards. Whenever she was ready to retire to bed, as the eldest I would be expected to escort her back to my uncle's house with either a flambeaux or later on a small flashlight. Walking with her was okay since it was only a five-minute walk. Walking back to my home wasn't. I recall once my cousin draped in a white sheet jumped out of the bushes at me. It almost became a serious incident as I tossed the flambeaux at him in fear.*
>
> *On the other hand, fear of these encounters prompted me to learn the Psalms, recite the 'Lord's Prayer,' or the 'Rosary,' or keep some salt or rice in my pockets. These were key tools for fending off these characters.* [Dennis]

Representations of the Folk Experience

Reading and re-reading some folk narratives through the books for the first time as adults also provided many childhood flashbacks and the recognition that Caribbean folk narratives are still represented via the oral tradition. Most times, such stories are passed from generation to generation, grandmother to granddaughter, or aunt to niece. The stories are all passed from old to young. Though from different eras, such recollections and stories share many similarities and purposes. For example, these tales were often used to entertain young girls during a lengthy hair braiding process, while using the opportunity to instil the virtues of being kind, respectful, courageous, charitable, or honourable.

For Deborah and Dyanis, it was also about how you treat others. Deborah recalls how strongly the message of being kindhearted to the elderly resonated with her even as a child. She still holds the view that good things follow you when you show kindness to the elderly; that respecting your authority figures advances your personal goals; and that unexpected yet pleasant rewards were usually disguised as hard work. For Dyanis, the lessons also tended to be about resilience and inner harmony.

Lisa made special mention of Besson's *The Voice in the Govi*:

> *[That] even though there were persons with different beliefs about folklore or religion, the community found a way to navigate, even harmonize what might appear to be divergent concepts. Both beliefs, the folkloric and the Catholicism were respected and co-existed beautifully among community members.* [Lisa]

Antonia noted how the authors used humour, illustrations, and tried to balance the use of local idioms:

> *The writers try to keep the original language of the story including dialect, phrase, etc. in hopes of passing on these stories as accurately as possible or with the hope of giving the readers an authentic folklore/folktale experience, including the moral.* [Antonia]

Representations of the folk experience for Dennis centred on issues of cultural oppression, including the use of religion, and the resilience of the resistance to this dominated classes. For him, the way that marginalized and minority groups protected their sense of identity through folktales and folklore is something to celebrate:

> *Are we as educators doing enough to recognize and celebrate Al Ramsawak, Freddy Kissoon, Enid Kirton, Philip Sherlock, Michael Anthony, and Eintou Springer and others like them in our midst who strive to keep the folk engaged and the stories not just told but revisited and considered?* [Dennis]

His concern is whether citizens and educators are conscious of the lessons to be learned from the folk:

> *Can we see how folklore might have shifted from an emphasis on survival and fear in our past lives as house slave, field slave, or indentured labourer? Indeed the fight for survival is still real. Can we see folklore now as a means of celebrating who we are as community, recognize our rich diversity, and sustain national identity? If we can see, then these stories serve as the glue for the nation.* [Dennis]

The co-authors all celebrate their love of folklore and their readiness to consider the lessons learned from folktales. Deborah and Antonia, for example, have been deliberately sharing these stories to yet another generation of their families, while other respondents apply these lessons to their extended family members and students.

Representations of Historical and Cultural Realities

Reminiscing on her very early readings of Al Ramsawak's folktales in the newspapers when she was growing up, Deborah found pleasure in re-reading the folktales. For her, the simple wisdom in the stories of Anansi or those that explained everyday mysteries, like "How the crab got a cracked back," can bring not just comedic relief but many teaching opportunities with students.

Dyanis and Dennis connected particularly with the historical elements. What stood out most for Dyanis was Besson's portrayal of east Port of Spain:

> *Picturing nineteenth century George Street, with which I am quite familiar, having family members from Laventille, was quite an experience. Besson gives a rich blend of history that reminds us of a country and city where African religions merged with Christianity; where multiple languages and accents punctured the atmosphere that included Venezuelan, African, European, Asian, and regional voices. As a language lover this was so memorable.* [Dyanis]

Dyanis also appreciated the rich source of material for understanding folktales and folklore from both Afro- and Indo-centric perspectives, and how these evolved to work like Haynes' (2010) that centred on the contemporary.

> *I really appreciated, too, the rich style of Paramasad's work, particularly "Rites of the Dead" and Mahabir's use of both the Trinidad Creole of the original dialect as well as Standard English.* [Dyanis]

Antonia shared that the cultural reality for her is how much of the material centred on the evil associated with the characters:

> *Of course you were not just helpless in the face of such evil. There are things that can be used to help you get rid of or ward off the evil. So having salt on your person provided a remedy for the soucouyant, usually found living by silk cotton trees. I also couldn't help but notice how fear was used as a tool to keep children safe*

> *from perceived danger as well as to manage children's misbehaviour.* [Antonia]

For Lisa, it seemed like folktales were used to explain any unusual occurrences as well as to pass on age-old advice by invoking fear or giving warnings. These are also ways of keeping religious beliefs, customs, and rituals of our ancestors alive. Lisa noted many cultural elements in the materials:

> *I can identify with the story of La Divina Pastora ("Catholic Hindus" who are devoted to her) and the story of the Pitch Lake in Haynes' "Sapotee Soil." The ritual of the dead in Besson's "The Voice in the Govi" reminded me of Catholic rituals and the Virgin Mary. I read about the Temple in the Sea and the story behind it and I have visited the temple on several occasions with my nieces and nephew.* [Lisa]

Lisa, who lives in central Trinidad, found that Haynes' story about "The Haunted Highway" resonated particularly well with her: "*Living in Couva and going to south I cannot help but remember that story.*" For Lisa, the story brought a richer appreciation of her community as she reflected on the era and the social dynamics addressed in the story: "*Often students do not have an understanding of their community's past. There are no village and municipal museums to go to.*"

Celebrating Folklore in the Classroom

The co-researchers, all teachers, determined that the experience of reading the folk narratives provided much evidence to vigorously utilize such narratives in the classroom. From their responses, four strands emerged that represent a rationale for using folklore. These include the role of folklore in:

- valuing community diversity through multicultural education
- connecting to our ancestral culture
- community building
- transformative potential of individuals and communities

Valuing All Through Multicultural Education

The multi-ethnic and multi-racial fabric of the Caribbean often faces many socio-cultural challenges. In relatively young nations like Trinidad and Tobago, racially and ethnically diverse groups often co-exist peacefully, while at the same time maintaining a *mutual suspicion* that can affect all

areas of society. These burgeoning societies must both carefully examine the country's historical sociology of race and foster space for community members to process views on race (Henry, 1994).

We, the co-researchers, advocate a broad view of understanding diversity that goes beyond race and ethnicity to include other macro and micro cultures, such as gender, ability, and religion; and assert that a critical multicultural education is essential both to the task of nation building and to the learning and development of the country's youth.

Folk narratives are tools that can be used within multicultural education to foster social and institutional reform, as it provides teachers and learners a space for active discourse and dialogue around historical and contemporary issues. In order to pursue these goals and avoid *othering* groups or trivializing experiences, we support the use of critical thinking and critical pedagogy in the classroom as the means by which we can explore this resource and approach the social action advocated in the highest level of Banks' (2004) model of infusing multicultural education into the curriculum. Caribbean countries are multicultural nations where critical pedagogy should embrace multiculturalism and focus on the subtle workings of racism, sexism, class bias, and cultural oppression (Hamer, 2000; Kincheloe, 2008).

Critical pedagogy asks how and why knowledge is constructed and legitimized by and within the dominant culture. It stands in direct contrast with banking education (Freire, 1970), in which the teacher is the source of all knowledge and the student little more than a receptacle in which this knowledge is placed. Instead, it embraces the concept of liberating education, consisting of acts of cognition, and the use of problem-posing education, which encourages dialogue and resists the dichotomization of classroom roles. As a tool of critical pedagogy, problem-posing education provides the space for teachers and students to critically observe and recognize "*the way they exist* in the world *with which* and *in which* they find themselves; [and] they come to see the world not as a static reality, but as a reality in process, in transformation" (Freire, 1970, p. 83, original emphasis).

In combination with folk narratives, critical pedagogical techniques can offer a unique view into a community's history and the origins of many contemporary challenges and tensions, and can be an important factor of mental decolonization. Caribbean folktales implicitly explore social norms and values, often presenting intersections of daily life and the supernatural. These representations, often of former slaves and indentured labourers, generally include aspects of oral performance and written creole, and sometimes present a contradiction with many students' contemporary lives. As we explore the use of this genre in Caribbean classrooms and

beyond, we highlight specific narratives as examples and starting points, but we by no means suggest that this research was an exhaustive exploration.

Not often considered within the realm of high-culture literature, folklore can nevertheless be used in educational settings to develop and maintain a sense of community (local to global), and to increase critical consciousness in an active citizenry:

> *Toward this purpose, teachers and students, both participating as learners, can use classic folklore involving supernatural characters like Papa Bois, Douennes, and La Diablesse as well as contemporary novels and short stories that reference or are inspired by folklore. They can be used as voices for the Other. So, for example, Papa Bois can make his case for why Afro-, Indo-Trinidadian, or Caribbean people need to take care of the forest as the protector of its ancestral memories. Or the Midnight Robber can be a messenger reminding us of 'Mother Trinidad and Tobago' or sharing the message of the controversial Jahagi Bhai calypso.* [Dennis]

Although easiest to adapt and explore in literature, history, and social studies classes, we also encourage educators beyond the humanities to integrate these stories as well. Exploring the defeat of a soucouyant by having her count innumerable grains of rice before sunrise in math class, or the effects of salt and pepper on her discarded skin in the sciences, can lend a new, exciting, and locally connected facet to traditional instruction.

Connecting to Our Ancestral Culture

More than just continuing these folkloric art forms into the future, folk narratives tie us to our histories; without understanding our histories, we are doomed to repeat the same mistakes as our forebears. Both oral and written folklore help communities and groups pass traditions, warnings, and numerous other aspects of culture across generations. For the African diaspora, stories of the evils of salt and the journey *back home* are common (Anatol, 2000; Besson, 2011a) and even as a Shango Queen lay dying in *The Voice In the Govi* (Besson, 2011b), she reminisces about going *back home* to Africa. Besson's (2011b) penetrating account of life in 19th century Trinidad shares about a time largely forgotten. This is a period when the old ways and the new ways were starting to meld. Language itself was a blend of:

> . . . the French of the Languedoc, Mandarin Chinese . . . obscure
> African languages, Castilian Spanish, public school English, the

> incomprehensible gibberish of the blacks, Creole Patois, High and Low German, broken English, the Arabic of the Mandingoes, Scottish oaths, Irish lullabies, Carib cuss words, and a Venezuelan twang that would linger on for centuries in the foothills of the Northern Range. (p. 35)

This successful blend of contemporary fictional literature, the vernacular, and colonial history lends an authenticity to the novel, and invites English Literature teachers in the Caribbean to explore both home culture and the finer points of creative writing using the same text:

> *The "Voice in the Govi" provided me with important cultural perspectives .For example the Jab Molassi or Molasses Devil character in modern Carnival, according to the character La Serene Rosa on page 82, has its roots to the ghost of a cane plantation slave who had fallen (through torture and punishment) into a vat of boiling molasses. The ghost, restrained by the chains of his imps, dances to the beat of African drums ready to coat the unaware with the hot substance.* [Dyanis]

Besson (2011b) describes, too, the traditional burial methods of the indigenous Caribs, and uses both the old French names of towns and streets as well as the more recent English versions, taking the reader through the transformation of Calle de San José to La Rue de la Place, and later still to its current form, George Street.

Although a large number of these stories trace their roots to the African continent, the Indian diaspora too brought their cultural traditions across stormy seas. In *Salt and Roti*, Parmasad (1984) tells a short story "Rites of the Dead," which explores several aspects of Indo-immigrant culture. In the midst of its comedic ending, readers get to explore the death rites of burning the body at the river, praying with the pundit, and using ghee and incense as part of the ceremony. He infuses Hindu words to reflect the culture and language of the community, blending humour with the traditional folkloric goals of teaching morals, behaviours, and customs.

Mahabir (2005) also explores this colonial blend in his book *Caribbean Indian Folktales*, which presents each story in both the original dialect and the Standard English form, and proffers stories from five different Caribbean islands. In a story of family and forgiveness entitled "The King and His Seven Daughters," Mahabir replicates the spoken rhythm and rhyme of the elderly Trinidadian narrator:

> It did have a king. And he ha' seven daughta. An' de king call he seven daughta one day an' he sit dong. An' he aksin' he daughta an' dem, "Wit' who luck you livin'?" (p. 74).

Then he re-writes the narrative in Standard English, facilitating the goal listed on the back cover of being able to use the book to promote multicultural understanding, and as a language and literature textbook:

> There was once a king who had seven daughters. One day he called his seven daughters, and when they came, he sat down and asked them, "With whose grace are you living?" (p. 76)

Dyanis adds:

> *I found particular delight in how Mahabir, in the story "Churi's Deception," used code switches between English and Hindi, connecting ancestral and colonial languages. We need to see more of this, even in our vernacular/indigenous music like Parang or Chutney.* [Dyanis]

Classic legends and folklore can also be used to explore culture and language, but they are better representations of our past than our present. Besson (2011a), historian and folklorist, while sharing traditional folktales, also provides the reader with much historical context. He shows how so many of these stories connect to the hardships of colonial life and the dangers of travelling through lawless colonies at night. Many of the stories have warnings of night-time dangers.

NALIS (2011) documents Indo-Trinidadian folklore that is distinct from the more common stories discussed above. These stories may be significantly more popular within the Hindu community than within the general Trinidadian population, but this distinction could be due to the fact that many Hindu communities remained relatively isolated into the 20th century. We can read about the protector of the land, *Dee Baba*, who takes the form of a colonial slave master (a white man on a black horse), and the appropriate offerings for his protection. This story is a great example of how tales brought from India were adapted to reflect the realities of their new society. Could this imagery have been due to the tensions initially experienced between former slaves and newly arrived indentured labourers?

We contend that teachers and students as learners can create a space for dialogue around many of these representations, with the intent of co-constructing meaning. Deborah shares an important perspective:

> *As the written history of slaves and indentured labourers is sparse, this type of critical reflection and analysis of local folklore can allow students space and time to explore the traditions of their ancestors, how those traditions affected colonial life, and how they still affect our contemporary society.* [Deborah]

Community Building

Caribbean folk narratives incorporate the spoken, written, and performance arts. Not only can students explore the art form of storytelling, they can also enhance these readings with interpretations and the use of actors, as with the Idakeda projects, thus recreating the story's most intriguing visual effects. In addition, the written form of the stories can facilitate student understanding of both creative writing and the role and forms of dialect within colonial and post-colonial times. Students can gain appreciation for both the oral and written vernacular as a cultural tradition and art form, rather than as something that must be altered and gentrified for public consumption.

Paul Keens-Douglas and Miguel Browne are two well-known contemporary Trinidadian poets and storytellers who are continuing this art form and are good models of the artistic applications of creole culture and language. Both men actively use the vernacular in their poetry, highlighting the sound structure in the dialect and attempting to capture the "tonal quality of [Caribbean] expressions without which so much of our telling would be lost" (Browne, 2001, p. 4). The rhythm and tone of both Keens-Douglas' standard and vernacular English echo throughout our childhoods, and his stories have become entwined with Trinidadian culture, extending into his annual Talk Tent, with its motto *Talk is Art.* Talk Tent provides a forum for talk artists to highlight a variety of oral traditions and continue telling stories that would otherwise be lost to time. Browne (2001) explores and supports the idea of dialect as art form in his poem *Trini Talk:*

> But of all de special talents dat we Trinis possess,
> Is de way we talk dat ranks us among de bes . . .
> . . . Look at de many words dat we Trinis create,
> Jus' to make it easier for us to communicate.
> Words like bobbol, skylark, commess and bobolee,
> Are words dat yuh cah find in any English dictionary.
> Coskel, boobooloops, lahay and dingolay.
> Mou Mou, bazodie, jagabat and tooltoolbay.
> So when yuh fat or overweight, we say yuh obzokee.
> And when something small, we say chinkey instead.
> And we say tabanca when a woman tie up a man head.
> And a person who lazy, we call dem a locho.
> And an inquisitive person is simply a maco . . . (Browne, 2001, p. 11)

Then, too, hearing and discussing the folktales that apply to your own community is just as stimulating. Lisa, on reading the story about Couva in Haynes (2010), shares:

> *. . . living in Couva and going to south regularly I cannot help but remember the story she wrote about it . . . the love story about a sugar plantation owner's daughter and the worker. It reminds me that people lived and died where we travel everyday . . . the bigger picture.* [Lisa]

The authors of the narratives we considered are among many others who have combined the art of spoken word and the rhythm of local dialect into an art all its own and a symbol of national pride. Folk narratives, then, whether relating to traditional supernatural tales or contemporary literature, lend themselves to political commentary, providing a similar forum for artists to share personal perspectives or the general sentiments of the *folk*. For example, Antonia shares:

> *Further benefits include critical thinking, as students are required to think deeply about what is meant by the story, as most can't be taken literally. I have used approaches embedded in dramatic strategies that might involve role-play, reading theatre, music, and even dance. Recently I have been exploring the character the Midnight Robber using student and teacher constructed narrative that exaggerates while bringing attention to important issues.* [Antonia]

Exploring the realm of crime and politics, a character in Edmund Narine's (2011) short story expresses the sentiment that "everybody blaming the government for crime, but nobody looking at what they as individuals doing about crime. Crime is not only the government problem, crime is everybody problem" (p. 51). The reader is then drawn into community negotiations on the process necessary for changing their socio-economic circumstances. Stories such as these reflect the turbulence of the times and the reality of actualizing social change; they can lend voice to the unspoken, and provide a foundation for dialogue, the development of community, and important morality and values. Lisa elaborates:

> *Most of the folktales are stories that carry a moral with it, like being honest, being generous, etc. These are values that are incorporated with our Health and Family Life Education syllabus in Trinidad. These stories can help teachers pass on these virtues. In "Sapotee Soil," in particular, the stories are based in different parts of Trinidad. The author allows the reader to get a map of Trinidad and*

> *locate the places the stories took place. So folklore can be taught in collaboration with Social Studies.* [Lisa]

Transformative Potential

Discussions of history, culture, and language alone will not lead today's youth on a path to critical consciousness. The goal is not reached just because the learner feels connected through their participation, and is able to engage in critical analysis and collective discourse. More than just having an exciting look at history and culture, and maybe a moving discussion, how can we take the next step toward contemporary social change? How can we support students as they discover their own transformative potential, while simultaneously discovering that power in ourselves? Critical consciousness itself is not the end goal. This process of transformation is an essential part of critical consciousness as we, as individuals and as a community, move towards social change. Freire (1970) notes that the type of action we adopt is directly related to the way we perceive ourselves in the world. Before we can encourage social change, we must look critically at our perceptions and the direct and indirect messages learned through the stories—both fictional and non-fictional—of our histories.

Social change in itself is quite a broad topic and a potentially daunting endeavour. Investigating the ways in which our folk narratives present and influence our realities can help us to determine the direction to take and the steps we need in order to get there. The actions needed as we move toward transforming our realities are specific to the community in which we reside. There is no magic formula but, rather, this process unfolds through critical thinking and open dialogue. Towards deciding which topics warrant a discussion regarding this potential social change, Dennis suggests that:

> *What is needed to nurture and sustain the transformational potential is a level of analysis illustrating and requiring an even deeper look at the possibly hidden or lost messages in textbooks and popular media. Consider, for example, the story of "How the Agouti Lost its Tail." This can be revisited as a story of marginalization, desperation, and resistance. It's not just about the comedic. It can be about power, gender, disability, and inclusion . . . it is about our desire to belong, to not be excluded.* [Dennis]

This approach, along with active problem posing (Freire, 1970), will promote the idea of teachers and students as co-researchers exploring the world through the curriculum. As discussed above, problem posing rejects

the notion of the teacher transferring information to students, but rather fosters critical questioning, discussion, and analysis.

Rather than just noting the physical and role descriptions of the legend of Papa Bois, father of the woods, and the French connections indicated by his name, teachers and learners can look at the finer details of the full legend and the fact that in older versions of the folktale, Papa Bois was noted as having arrived on the island as a man with no name or one that was suppressed or unknown. This story mirrors the advent of the African slaves on our shores, and can be explored further to include the connections between those peoples and the land on which they worked, lived, and sometimes hid.

As an additional example relating to this process, Dyanis asserts:

> *Instead of the teacher telling students how that is culturally relevant, he/she can participate as a learner in a discussion about the meaning(s) of namelessness as it relates to the story, to the island's colonial history, and potentially to contemporary society. What about the role of the Catholic church, or religion in general, as saviour in the stories of the unbaptized Douens, or the message and histories behind the vilification of women in the stories of the La Diablesse, Soucouyant, Churile, and Saapin, just to name a few?* [Dyanis]

Potential topics for discussion abound and can even go beyond analysis of the actual content to include the language used in the writing of these tales at various stages in Caribbean history. How and why does the use of the vernacular change in versions of classic literature, or even more contemporary novels? What are the cultural values inherent in the use of the vernacular as an art form? How are other, smaller community groups represented, if at all? Developing critical consciousness through the use of folk narratives in the classroom can foster the opportunity for students at any level of schooling to use these creative tales for critical analysis of society past and present, the discussion of connections to their contemporary lives, and the presentation of options for change.

Discussion and Implications

Having recalled their childhood experiences of folktales, and after considering the lessons they associate with these recollections, the co-researchers set about reading a collection of 15 folk narratives. These comprised literary collections of folktales and folklore referenced fiction. The co-researchers, all teachers, considered how these narratives might be used in their classrooms (Hamer, 2000).

The co-researchers unanimously agreed that the very reading of the narratives proved invigorating. Further, as these apply to teaching, they felt inspired and shared the perspective that using such folk narratives foster opportunities to engage students through humour; enhance communication and storytelling; and contribute to a sense of identity, cultural enrichment, and historicity. These also provide a space through which students can explore narratives for reading and comprehension, as they relate and refer to contemporary society and potential social change. Students can explore historical perspectives, often unwritten or under-addressed, towards *knowing* themselves (as individuals and community members). The narratives might also limit the new colonization developing through the overwhelming popularity of American pop culture (Haynes, 2011). The Idakeda group and Eintou Springer's efforts at cultural education through Anansi and other dramatic forms provide examples of how such performed folk narratives can engage students and facilitate both critical thinking and educated citizens (Gordon, 2011; Springer, 2011).

Folk narratives not only have the potential to redefine community, they also provide "an inherently interdisciplinary body of authentic context and skill-building methodologies of documentation and analysis" (Bowman, 2006, p. 69) that can be integrated into existing curricula and educational outcomes. Ivey (2011) notes that rarely a day goes by without noticeable benefits of having a knowledge and understanding of folklore in his life. He asserts that folklore plays an important role in the development of thinkers and activists.

Connected to unearthing one's position in the current social culture, we assert that critical analysis, collective discussions, and problem posing are essential to the development of this local consciousness, and that the use of folk narratives is an appropriate, culturally relevant pedagogical tool. This method of instruction should not be reduced to a "process of socialization in enlightenment thinking" (Margonis, 2003, p. 149), as we are not telling students what and how to think but, rather, participating in the construction of knowledge. Though much more exploration is needed, we feel that using local and online resources like Cultural Arts Resources for Teachers and Students (C.A.R.T.S) can be beneficial to all participants (http://www.carts.org/). As a path to awareness of self and community, folk narratives are indispensable as new generations navigate their role(s) in a changing global climate.

We invite our colleagues on the front line of classrooms to embrace folk narratives, such as those we considered, as a means of engaging students. We remind them that education is more than just high-stakes testing. It is about understanding who we are, where we have come from,

74

where we are going (Hamer, 2000). It's about valuing others, connecting to our ancestral and contemporary culture, community building, and our sense of self and identity (Chevalier, 1995). Folk narratives, including the lyrics of calypsoes and rapso, need to be archived and accessed. While some rapsos can be acquired via the 3 Canal website (http://www.3canal.com/) and spoken word via the 2 Cents Movement (https://www.facebook.com/The2CentsMovement), community-generated memorized narratives, and the lyrics of folkloric characters like the Midnight Robber are still elusive. These narratives, along with literacy skill development (Herrero (2006), production skills development and performance, are all transformative opportunities to be grasped. We argue that folk narratives offer a means of enhancing student engagement and achievement (Ezeigbo, 2013).

References

Aboud, J. C. (2004). *Lagahoo poems*. Leeds, UK: Peepal Tree Press.

Abrahams, R. (1963). Folklore in culture: Notes toward an analytic method. *Texas Studies in Literature and Language, 5*(1), 98–110.

Accioly de Amorim, A. C. (2009). Literacy and numeracy in select countries of the Caribbean. In Inter-American Development Bank Regional Policy Dialogue on Education & Caribbean Development Bank, *Literacy and numeracy in the Caribbean: Report of the Caribbean Subregional Meeting, Dec. 2–3, 2008, Bridgetown, Barbados* (pp. 44–94). Washington, DC: IDB. Retrieved from http://www.iadb.org/en/publications/publication-detail,7101.html?dctype= All&dclanguage=en&id=20551%20

Anatol, G. (2000). Transforming the skin-shedding soucouyant: Using folklore to reclaim female agency in Caribbean literature. *Small Axe: A Caribbean Journal of Criticism*, *7*, 44–59.

Auld, M. (2007). *How Anansi became a spider*. Retrieved from http://anansistories.com/Anansi _Spider_Man.html

Banks, J. A. (2004). Multicultural education: Historical development, dimensions, and practice. In J. A. Banks & C. A. M. Banks (Eds.), *Handbook of research on multicultural education* (2nd ed.; pp. 3–29). San Francisco, CA: Jossey-Bass.

Banks, J. A. (2006). *Cultural diversity and education* (5th ed.). Boston, MA: Allyn & Bacon.

Bascom, W. (1965). The forms of folklore: Prose narratives. *Journal of American Folklore, 78*(307), 3–20. doi:10.2307/538099

Bertoncini, E. Z. (1989). *Outline of Swahili literature: Prose fiction and drama*. Leiden, Netherlands: E.J. Brill.

Besson, G. A. (2011a). *Folklore and legends of Trinidad and Tobago* (5th ed.). San Juan, Trinidad: Paria Publishing.

Besson, G. A. (2011b). *The voice in the govi*. San Juan, Trinidad: Paria Publishing.

Bowman, P. (2006). Standing at the crossroads of folklore and education. *Journal of American Folklore, 119*(471), 66–79. doi:10.1353/jaf.2006.0002

Browne, M. (2001). *Trini talk: Dialect poetry and stories* (2nd ed.). Woodbrook, Trinidad: Author.

CARICOM Commission on Youth Development. (2010). *Eye on the future: Investing in youth now for tomorrow's community* (draft report). Georgetown, Guyana: Author. Retrieved from http://www.caricom.org/jsp/community_organs/cohsod_youth/eye_on_the_future_ccyd_report.pdf

Chase, S. E. (2005). Narrative inquiry: Multiple lenses, approaches, voices. In N. K. Denzin & Y. S. Lincoln (Eds.), *The Sage handbook of qualitative research* (3rd ed.; pp. 651–679). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Chevalier, M. (1995). Maintaining an ethnic identity in school: A folkloric perspective. *Equity & Excellence in Education, 28*(2), 26–36. doi:10.1080/1066568950280205

Conrad, D. A., Forteau-Jaikaransingh, B., & Popova, D. (2013). Poetry to rapso: Localized narrative in the classroom, *Caribbean Curriculum, 20,* 1–29.

Creswell. J. W. (2013). *Qualitative inquiry and research design: Choosing among five approaches* (3rd ed.). Thousand Oaks, CA: Sage.

Cunningham, W., & Correia, M. (2003). *Caribbean youth development: Issues and policy directions.* Washington, DC: World Bank.

Descartes, C. (2012). The social construction of demographic variables and parenting styles in Trinidad. *Journal of the Department of Behavioural Sciences 1*(1), 51–70.

Diemer, M. A., & Li, C. H. (2011). Critical consciousness development and political participation among marginalized youth. *Child Development, 82*(6), 1815–1833. doi:10.1111/j.1467-8624.2011.01650.x

Dorson, R. M. (1963). Current folklore theories. *Current Anthropology, 4*(1), 93–112. doi:10.1086/200339

Ezeigbo, A. T. (2013). The relevance of oral tradition: Folklore and the education of Nigerian youths. *Contemporary Experiences: Journal of African Humanities, 1*(1). Retrieved from: https://submissions.scholasticahq.com/supporting_files/50329/attachment_versions/50352.

Freire, P. (1970). *Pedagogy of the oppressed*. New York, NY: Seabury Press.

Freire, P. (1974). *Education for critical consciousness*. New York, NY: Continuum International.

Gencarella, S. O. (2009). Constituting folklore: A case for critical folklore studies. *Journal of American Folklore, 122*(484), 172–196. doi:10.2307/20487676

Gordon, Z. (2011, November 19). Eintou Springer's revised Anansi story. *Trinidad Express*. Retrieved from: http://www.trinidadexpress.com/sunday-mix/Eintou_Springer_s_revised_Anansi_story-134188938.html

Hamer, L. (2000). Folklore in schools and multicultural education: Toward institutionalizing noninstitutional knowledge. *Journal of American Folklore, 113*(447), 44–69. doi:10.2307/541265

Harris, T. (n.d.). The trickster in African American literature. Retrieved from: http://nationalhumanitiescenter.org/tserve/freedom/1865-1917/essays/trickster.htm

Haynes, J. (2010). *Sapotee soil*. Frederick Settlement, Trinidad: Lexicon Trinidad.

Haynes, J. (2011). Legends: Recalling, recognizing, modernizing implications for the local curriculum. *Caribbean Journal of Teacher Education and Pedagogy, 2*, 62–68.

Henry, A. V. (1994). Framing a cross-cultural dialogue in Trinidad and Tobago. *Caribbean Quarterly, 40*(3/4), 84–97.

Henry, O. (2006). *Dr. J. D. Elder's work in folklore: An overview* (BA study, The University of the West Indies, St. Augustine). Retrieved from https://www.academia.edu/4074245/Trinidad_and_Tobago_Folklore_-_Dr._J.D._Elders_Contribution

Herrero, E. A (2006). Using Dominican oral literature and discourse to support literacy learning among low-achieving students from the Dominican Republic. *International Journal of Bilingual Education and Bilingualism, 9*(2), 219–238. doi:10.1080/13670050608668642

Hill, D. R. (2007). *Caribbean folklore: A handbook*. Westport, CT: Greenwood Press.

Inter-American Development Bank. (2014). *At-risk youth: An urgent challenge for the Caribbean.* Retrieved from http://www.iadb.org/en/topics/education/at-risk-youth-an-urgent-challenge-for-the-caribbean,6649.html

Ivey, B. (2011). Values and value in folklore (AFS presidential plenary address). *Journal of American Folklore, 124*(491), 6–18.

James-Williams, D. (2011). An investigation of the impact of Amerindian mythology on Trinidad and Tobago's forest folklores. *History in Action, 2*(2), 1–6.

Joseph, L. (1994). *The mermaid's twin sister*: *More stories from Trinidad.* New York, NY: Clarion Books.

Joseph, L. (1991) *A wave in her pocket: Stories from Trinidad*. New York, NY: Clarion Books.

Kincheloe, J. L. (2008). *Critical pedagogy* (2nd ed.). New York, NY: Peter Lang.

Lovelace, E. (2004). *Salt.* New York, NY: Persea.

Lovelace, E. (2012). *Is just a movie.* Chicago, IL: Haymarket.

Mahabir, K. (2005). *Caribbean Indian folktales.* San Juan, Trinidad: Chakra Publishing House.

Maharaj, R. (2011). *The lagahoo's apprenticeship*. Toronto, CA: Vintage Canada.

Margonis, F. (2003). Paulo Freire and post-colonial dilemmas. *Studies in Philosophy and Education, 22*(2), 145–156.

Mbele, J. L. (2000). *Matengo folktales*. Haverford, PA: Infinity Publishing.

Mustakova-Possardt, E. (1998). Critical consciousness: An alternative pathway for positive personal and social development. *Journal of Adult Development, 5*(1), 13–30. doi:10.1023/A:1023064913072

NALIS-National Library and Information System Authority. (2011). *Indian Caribbean folklore spirits.* Retrieved from http://www.nalis.gov.tt/Research/SubjectGuide/IndianCaribbeanFolklore/tabid/501/Default.aspx

Narine, E. (2011). *Spirits of the times*. Charleston, SC: CreateSpace Independent Publishing Platform

Nieto, S. (1992). *Affirming diversity: The sociopolitical context of multicultural education*. Mahwah, NJ: Erlbaum.

Parmasad, K. V. (2000). *Salt and roti: Indian folk tales of the Caribbean.* Chagaunas, Trinidad: Sankh Productions.

Ramsawak, A. (2009). *Monkey Polo tricks Manicou*. Pittsburgh, PA: RoseDog Books.

Roldan-Santiago, S. (2005). Thematic and structural functionsw of folklore in Caribbean literature: The case of the "written" and the "oral". *Journal of Caribbean Literatures, 4*(1), 1–9.

Santino, J. (2004). Performative commemoratives, the personal, and the public: Spontaneous shrines, emergent ritual, and the field of folklore (AFS presidential plenary address, 2003). *Journal of American Folklore, 117*(466), 363–372.

Schlesinger, A. M., Jr. (1998). *The disuniting of America: Reflections on a multicultural society*. New York, NY: Norton.

Sherlock, P. M. (1978). *West Indian folk-tales*. Oxford, UK: OUP.

Sleeter, C. E., & Grant, C. (2006). *Making choices for multicultural education: Five approaches to race, class, and gender* (5th ed.). Hoboken, NJ: Wiley.

Springer, E. P. (2011). *How Anansi bring the drum*: *First rehearsal* [Video file]. Retrieved from http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=mJvEYfWji_E#t=165

Taylor, K. (2012). Multiculturalism and the political process in Trinidad: A case study. *Journal of the Department of Behavioural Sciences, 1*(1), 99–117.

Trinidad and Tobago. Committee on Young Males and Crime. (2013). *No time to quit: Engaging youth at risk: Executive report*. St. Augustine, Trinidad: MPC. Retrieved from: http://www.ttparliament.org/documents/2197.pdf

Zamudio, M., Bridgeman, J., Russell, C. & Rios, F. (2009). Developing a critical consciousness: Positionality, pedagogy, and problems. *Race, Ethnicity, and Education, 12*(4), 455–472. doi:10.1080/13613320903362220