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Drama as a Tool for Addressing Cultural Stereotypes

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Departmental Honors Thesis

The University of Tennessee at Chattanooga  
Department of Performing Arts, Theatre Division

Examination Date: Friday, November 10, 2017

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### Abstract

In children's drama and literature, Native Americans are rarely represented fully and accurately. Generalizations and stereotypes have led to severe misunderstandings and an underappreciation for Native American cultures, even in areas rich with their history. This research study sought the efficacy of classroom drama strategies on classroom learning, particularly using storytelling to further children's understanding of Native American culture. The results show that drama and storytelling can be effective ways to teach children about other cultures by keeping students engaged, promoting participation, and allowing students to make connections and explore learning on their own.

**Key words:** culture, stereotype, education, drama strategy, storytelling, Native American

## Drama as a Tool for Addressing Cultural Stereotypes

### Vocabulary

*Arts integration*: instruction that combines an arts-related content area with a non-arts-related content area in order to enhance learning

*Drama strategy*: used to describe any classroom activities involving drama or theatre skills

*Native American*: this term is used to reference the early peoples of North America; also known as Indian or American Indian. Though many terms are acceptable, the term “Native American” was chosen for this study because of the controversial history associated with the term “Indian.”

*Tableau (pl. tableaux)*: participants make still images with their bodies to represent a scene or particular moment in a story or drama

*Stereotypes*: overgeneralizations that constitute a denial of individual differences among racial and other “out” groups

### Background

#### Differentiated Instruction

According to Tennessee State Education Standards, learning about other cultures happens mainly through a social studies lens and, although there are many strategies within the social studies content area, children are typically limited to simply reading about other cultures, and rarely experiencing them. Howard Gardner’s (1989) theory of Multiple Intelligences, however, shows educators and the like that students learn in different ways—nine, to be exact—and that each student is unique in his or her strengths and weaknesses. For example, a bodily-kinesthetic learner, a child who connects to the

content of a lesson better when he or she is using the body or moving about a physical space, does not thrive in a classroom where he or she is required to sit quietly and read for an extended amount of time. Unfortunately, according to Gardner, schools are only conducive to logical-mathematical and linguistic learners. Thus, Gardner makes the case for differentiated instruction; in other words, using varying teaching strategies in the classroom in order to provide students with different avenues for learning. One way in which a teacher can effectively differentiate instruction is by implementing drama-based strategies in order to appeal to students who may be bodily-kinesthetic, musical, or interpersonal learners.

Aside from differentiated instruction, there are other issues associated with the limited ways in which minority cultures are presented to children in school. Typically, minority cultures are presented in part—usually what is relevant to American history and democracy (Jones et al., 2001). This can prevent students from gaining a complete understanding of others, and can actually promote stereotyping and generalizations. The limited amount of learning in the social studies content area is largely due to the focus on reading and math skills that are featured on standardized testing. To put it simply, teachers are hesitant to spend too much time on subjects that are not as “important” (Jones et al., 2001). It is clear that cultural learning needs to be addressed through a different lens. I believe that one of the best avenues through which a classroom teacher can approach stereotype-free instruction is through storytelling—using an accurate element of the culture to introduce new ideas and perspectives. Because of the benefits of storytelling in the classroom, discussed below, I chose to focus on Native American cultures, and specifically the Cherokee tribe, because of the relevant role that storytelling

plays in Cherokee culture as well as the severity of stereotyping we see in media portrayals of Native Americans.

### **Native American Stereotypes**

More often than not, Native Americans are severely stereotyped, both negatively and positively, in popular media. From *Ten Little Indians* to the Red Man in Disney's *Peter Pan*, Native Americans are often portrayed as mythical rather than living, breathing, and complex human beings with a rich cultural heritage. Furthermore, Native Americans are often grouped into one category and individual tribes and subcultures are rarely recognized (Büker, 2002) when in fact there are 517 federally recognized and 36 state-recognized Native American tribes (Tan et al., 1997). Some common media images and stereotypes include Native Americans being labeled as warriors, savages, and braves with qualities such as laziness, cruelty, and barbarism (Tan et al., 1997). Many people associate things such as moccasins, teepees, tomahawks, and beads with all Native American groups. Perhaps most disturbing of all, Native Americans are commonly referred to as having dark or red skin and as having lived long ago, their people now extinct. In fact, according to Tan et al. (1997), very few national studies on stereotyping even include Native American cultures. Mary Glycone Byler, an Eastern Band Cherokee woman and advocate for accurate Native American portrayals in children's literature, says:

*There are too many books featuring painted, whooping, befeathered Indians closing in on too many forts, maliciously attacking 'peaceful' settlers or simply leering menacingly from the background; too many books in which white benevolence is the only thing that saves the day for the incompetent, childlike Indian; too many stories setting forth what is 'best' for American Indians.*

*There are too many stories for very young children about little boys running around in feathers and headbands, wearing fringed buckskin clothing, moccasins*

*and (especially) carrying little bows and arrows. The majority of these books deal with the unidentified past. The characters are from unidentified tribes and they are often not even afforded the courtesy of personal names. In fact, the only thing identifiable is the stereotyped image of the befeathered Indian.*

...

*It is time for American publishing houses, schools, and libraries to take another look at the books they are offering children and seriously set out to offset some of the damage they have done (Hirschfelder 1995).*

According to B ker (2002), using art to demystify the Native American has been a collective effort made by many Native American artists, including Fritz Scholder, Harry Fonseca, and George Longfish. B ker states that it is the responsibility of Native Americans to combat stereotypes on the individual level, but others, like Byler, believe that it is the responsibility of educators to provide future generations with an accurate understanding and appreciation of Native American history and culture. In an effort to change the educational approach to teaching Native American history, professor of Native American Studies at Montana State University, Walter C. Fleming (2006), calls classroom teachers to move beyond stereotyping and to give students a “basis for judgment that goes beyond generalizations.” This can still be done through the arts so that students are able to simultaneously learn and appreciate Native American culture.

### **Storytelling**

In general, arts integration in the elementary classroom has the potential to facilitate enhanced learning in many ways:

- Sharpening sensory awareness
- Improving verbal/nonverbal communication
- Enhancing collaborative/cooperative skills
- Stimulating the imagination

- Developing creative potential
- Refining auditory/visual skills
- Aiding practice in gross/fine motor skills
- Fostering cognitive, affective, kinesthetic, and aesthetic development
- Heightening sensitivity to diversity
- Providing emotional release and reducing stress
- Improving self-image
- Developing self-discipline

These enhancements, from R. Phyllis Gelineau's *Integrating the Arts Across the Elementary School Curriculum* (2004) cover a wide range and, though not all can be achieved at once, attest to the importance of arts integration. Because of its rich history and cultural importance to the Cherokee people, I chose storytelling as a way to use drama to teach. Specifically, the storytelling lesson I developed for this study has the potential to improve verbal and nonverbal communication and heighten sensitivity to diversity.

According to authors Jordan Lockett and Rose Jones (2009), storytelling is a lost art in elementary education, yet it is proven to improve fact retention and understanding of other cultures. In other education systems around the world storytelling is quite prevalent. By participating in storytelling children are more likely to recall knowledge because these facts become more personal. When stories come from other cultures, children are able to experience these cultures first-hand, rather than simply study facts, and can gain appreciation for the stories and the culture from which they originate.

Research done by Rebecca Hibbin (2016) shows that children gain empathy and understanding of others as well as accepting that different people have different points of view through storytelling by identifying with the many different characters in a story. My goal in this research is to explore whether or not drama and storytelling can be used to address cultural stereotypes and change the way children think about others by using a story basket to tell an adapted public domain folktale from Cherokee legend titled “The Daughter of the Sun” (Appendix A) taken from Barbara R. Duncan’s *Living Stories of the Cherokee* and told by Freeman Owle. I chose to focus on the Cherokee culture for two reasons: one, because the Cherokee culture is prevalent in the southeast and Appalachian regions, where this research was conducted, and two, because there are very few studies that use drama to explore Cherokee culture. Additionally, by focusing on a specific Native American tribe, the lesson supports the effort to eliminate stereotypes in education. This research study will help to fill the gap by addressing cultures that are less talked about in children’s drama and literature and prompting further research.

### **Lesson Planning and Teaching Strategies**

The research activities are presented in the form of a backward design lesson plan and storytelling script (Appendix B). The lesson presents the art form (storytelling and drama strategies) within the context of educational standards and objectives. In his book *Drama of Color* author Johnny Saldaña (1995) outlines several drama activities that are geared toward thirty to forty-five minute sessions. These lessons, along with many teaching strategies he gives, helped me to form my lesson plan for the day of the presentation and data collection. These teaching strategies include using ensemble so that all students are engaged in the story rather than having individual students assigned

to roles, and using verbal cues to keep the children active and engaged. I also drew teaching strategies from Polsky, Schindel, and Tabone's *Drama Activities for K-6 Students* (2006). These strategies include gathering the students in a circle on the floor and side coaching in order to allow the children to develop their own ideas. Most importantly, students should feel that all ideas and suggestions they make are valid and important to the storytelling process.

Students were asked to physically show their understanding of characters through physical statues or tableaux. This idea is rooted in Augusto Boal's "Image Theatre," which requires participants to think through the body. Boal believed that using stage images could tap into unspoken thoughts (Grant 2017). Rather than asking the participants to verbally share their understanding of Native American culture, I instead asked them to *show* this understanding in a stage picture. The goal was for the participants to assign human characteristics to characters in the story, including the sun. By doing so, students will be demonstrating elements of Cherokee culture—the use of personification in storytelling. By playing the role of the characters, students are exercising empathy, which Boal (2000) defines as "an emotional relationship between character and spectator," by taking on the action of the characters, and are simultaneously engaging directly *with* the culture, rather than simply learning *about* it.

## **Research Methods**

### **Population**

The population and sample size for this research consisted of forty second grade students from a private elementary school located in southeastern Tennessee. This particular population was chosen because second graders have only a baseline

understanding of Native American culture, most of which comes from movies and television, since they have not yet covered Native American culture in school. This population choice was also due to an existing relationship I had with the school, which easily allowed me to gain access to the classroom. All students participated in the lesson at once in order to maintain consistency.

### **Education Standards and Academic Language**

The lesson that was presented to students aligns with Tennessee state social studies standard 2.2, “Summarize stories from American Indian legends that reflect the cultural history of various regions in Tennessee and the United States to determine their central message, lesson, or culture.” The study will also address theatre standards 2.4, “Use movement as a means of expression,” 5.1, “Explore and respond to creative drama, formal theatre, film and/or television,” and 6.1, “Explore how various cultures are reflected through theatre, film, and television” (Tennessee Department of Education, 2013). The school where the research was conducted adheres to their own curriculum as a private institution, and the lesson aligned with that curriculum mapping in which second grade students study Native Americans as a part of their studies of local history.

“The Daughter of the Sun” is a story that provides students the opportunity to engage in making predictions, exploring character and emotion, and exploring Native American culture. From an educational perspective, the objective of this lesson was for students to identify elements of Native American and Cherokee culture, utilize movement and tableaux to express personification and emotion, and discuss how the story reflects elements of Native American culture. The aforementioned strategies (ensemble, verbal cues, side coaching) in combination with drama-based learning create a classroom that is

engaging, creative, and flexible. Though the teacher is in control, students often take a lead role in discovering the ideas that they will explore (even if these ideas were planned by the teacher). Though this type of learning may not be effective for daily use or in every subject area, I believe that it can be a useful way to spark interest in a topic as students are introduced to new ideas, especially regarding an unfamiliar and misunderstood culture.

### **Data Collection**

The goal of this research is to gauge the efficacy of this tool in teaching children about cultural stereotypes. This exploration was based on two factors: changes in answers in pre- and post-assessments, and changes in the creative drama activities as the process moves forward (documented through photographs). Institutional Review Board approval was obtained through the University of Tennessee at Chattanooga.

I first piloted the research method as a field test at a suburban elementary partner school with the Southeast Center for Education in the Arts as part of an artist residency. This allowed me to make any necessary changes to the pacing, structure, and classroom management strategies as well as receive feedback from my faculty advisor. Some of these changes included scaffolding academic language into the presentation of the lesson such as tableau, body position, posture, gesture, and facial expression. By providing students with clear coaching in drama strategies, they were better able to connect with the characters in the story, which furthered learning and cultural appreciation. It also provided students a clearer explanation of my expectations for their participation as well as achievement objectives. Although this field test was not a direct part of the research study, it did play a major role in my growth as a teacher and provided me with valuable

feedback that I used to adjust the lesson used in the data collection. I believe that, without this field test, the results shown below may not have been as drastic. In other words, a refined practice is just as important as the strategies a teacher employs.

The research study itself took place at a private elementary school in southeast Tennessee with a total of forty second graders. Overall, the school demographics reflect a 70.7% white population, 4.85% black population, 1.9% Asian population, 1.9% bi-racial population, 1.6% Hispanic population, 1.35% Native American population, and 17.5% that identify as “other.” The research population, the school’s second grade class, was 72.5% white, 5% black, 2.5% bi-racial, 2.5% Native American, and 17.5% other. The students were prompted to complete a pre-assessment that asked them to list three things that are important to Native Americans. They then practiced creating tableaux and learning drama strategies as the second part of the control data. Students were asked to create two tableaux, a sun and snake, at three different levels—low, middle, and high. Not only were students practicing drama strategies to use later during the story basket activity, but they were also being observed based on their ability to attribute human characteristics to non-human characters that would be featured in the story, which would serve as a baseline. Before beginning the story, I gave the students background information on Native American and Cherokee culture that would allow them to make connections and understand the purpose and importance of the story, as well as inform them on what they should listen for. This background information included facts about the Cherokee tribe—that they were farmers and depended on the sun to grow food, that storytelling was an important form of communication and learning, and that their culture celebrates the sun through a Sun Dance. The information was presented in a way in

which the students could make connections. For example, I compared a tribe to their classroom and explained that we would be acting as a tribe to tell the story.

### **Wolf Trap-Based Strategy**

The lesson and storytelling presentation itself was drawn from the Wolf Trap model. The Wolf Trap story basket strategy comes from the Wolf Trap Institute for Early Learning Through the Arts, which strives to “empower teachers to use active, arts-integrated learning strategies.” It is designed for resident and teaching artists who regularly visit classrooms, which aligned well with my research model. This particular strategy uses a story basket, or any container with items that represent characters, setting, or other elements of a story, to visually bring the learning to life. Students are prompted to engage in the story through voice, body, and imagination, and are ideally active and engaged throughout the session (Wolf Trap Foundation).

Following the Wolf Trap strategy, I used a story basket that included a piece of fabric with a gold pattern to represent the sky and stars, a rock with a gold Cherokee sun pattern to represent the sun, a rock with a silver Cherokee moon pattern to represent the moon, a stick to represent the snake, and pine cones to represent the Cherokee people’s homes. During the presentation of the story, students were asked to interact in many ways including giving the characters voices, making predictions and personal connections, and creating new tableaux based on the way some characters were feeling in particular moments of the story. Students were asked to recreate their tableau of the snake at one of the three levels and to show the way he felt right before he struck at the sun, and to show the sun at one of the three levels and the way she felt after her daughter went away.

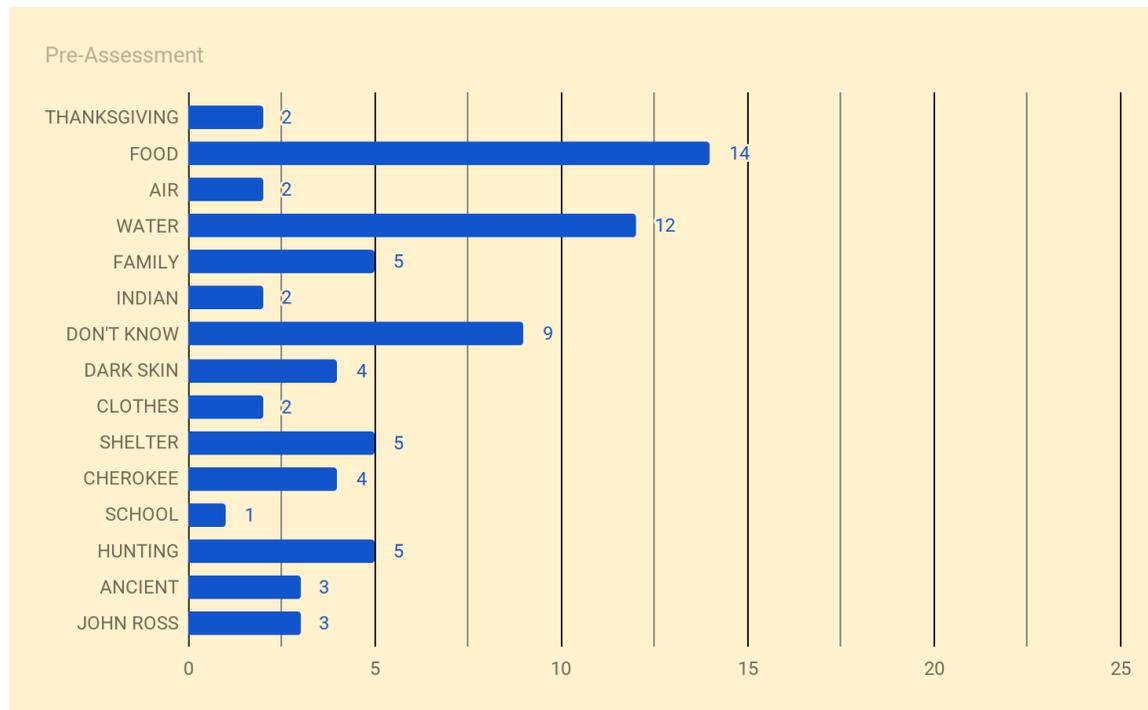
## Data Analysis

### Pre-Assessment

Before beginning, students were issued a pre-assessment that asked them to list three things that are important to Native Americans (Image 1). I found that 22.5% of the students were not able to answer the question at all, either writing “I don’t know” or leaving their paper blank. Of those that did provide answers, 31.4% turned in incomplete responses, only providing one or two answers instead of three. Interestingly, I found that many participants could not list things or ideas that are important to Native American culture, but rather listed things they associate with Native Americans such as “dark skin” and “Indian” (for a total of 25%). Additionally, many responses (82.8%) were associated with basic human needs (“food,” “water,” “air,” “shelter,” “clothing”) and were not specific to Native American culture. Overall, I recorded that 35.9% of the total 64 responses were stereotypes about Native Americans. These stereotypes included “Thanksgiving” (3.1%), “Indian” (3.1%), “dark skin” (6.25%), “Cherokee” (6.25%), “hunting” (7.8%), “ancient” (4.7%), and “John Ross” (4.7%).

These results were somewhat surprising to me. Though I expected stereotypes to appear, I did not anticipate that so many students would list descriptions or identifiers of Native Americans. This is likely due to my own bias, as I may have overestimated second graders’ understanding of the concept of culture in general.

*Image 1*

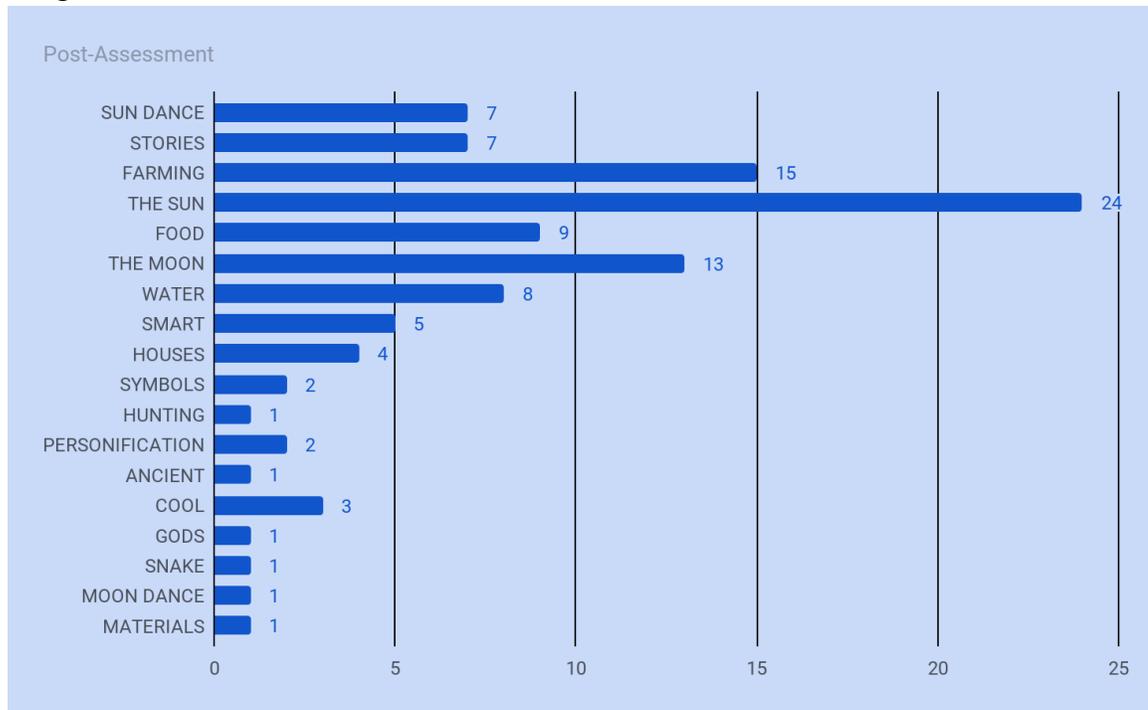


### Post-Assessment

I found that in the post-assessment (Image 2) 91.4% of responses were associated with perceived things or ideas that are important to Native American culture versus the 75% from the pre-assessment. Total number of answers increased from 64 to 105, and 78.4% of students were able to list three or more facts or items. The stereotypes were reduced from 35.9% to 6.7%. Only two stereotypes were repeated from the pre-assessment: “hunting” (0.95%) and “ancient” (0.95%). New stereotypes found in the post-assessment were “houses” (3.8%) and “materials” (0.95%). Of the 105 responses, 76.2% were directly mentioned either in discussion or the story, with 59% being connected to the main idea (“Sun dance,” “stories,” “farming,” “the sun,” and “food”). 81.9% of responses are considered culturally important to Native Americans, particularly the Cherokee tribe: “sun dance” (6.7%), “stories” (6.7%), “farming” (14.3%), “the sun” (22.9%), “the moon” (12.4%), “symbols” (1.9%), “personification” (1.9%), and “gods”

(0.9%). Only 8.6% of responses were ideas associated with or descriptions of Native Americans (“smart,” “ancient,” and “cool”), versus 25% in the pre-assessment.

*Image 2*



The assessment data shows that using drama strategies is an effective method of teaching, consistent with other research data. As stated above, 76.2% of responses were drawn directly from the story-based lesson. This shows that using drama can help students to retain information and gain appreciation for another culture, as previously shown by Lockett and Jones (2009).

### **Drama Strategy Data**

The second set of data came from students’ ability to show human characteristics and emotions in tableaux. During the pre-assessment, when students were prompted to create tableaux without any information on the characters or plot of the story, most used body position, posture, and gesture to create the general shape of a sun and snake (e.g. using the arms to create a circular shape for the sun, and using the hands to create fangs

for the snake). In fact, when asked if they could incorporate facial expression into their tableau of the sun, one student responded, saying, “Suns don’t have faces!”

When students returned to creating tableaux within the context of the story, many showed a change in their interpretation of the characters. I saw changes in the use of body position and posture, and a significant increase in the use of gesture and facial expression. In fact, one student used a facial expression during discussion to show that she thought the sun might be angry without being prompted to do so. Some students were even able to show an abstract interpretation of the characters and how they were feeling, and completely abandoned trying to “look” like a sun (big and round) or snake (long and slithering). For example, one student stood firmly on the ground and created an “X” with his arms to represent the sun locked in her daughter’s house. Another student, when asked about his choice in tableau, responded that he was protecting himself. Though a majority of students kept a snake-like shape, many focused entirely on showing the snake’s emotion, often dropping snake-like characteristics altogether. For example, one student chose to fan herself as a human, representing the way the snake may have felt when he was near the sun. Though more data is needed to test the students’ understanding of personification as a result of the drama strategies, it was clear that they were actively practicing the idea of gaining another’s perspective and attributing human qualities to a non-human figure.

### **Conclusions and Future Study**

Because of the small sample size and research design, it is difficult to draw any conclusive information from this exploration. However, it does point us in a direction that asks for further research. Ideally, this research would be compared with a control

group that was presented with the same information without the use of drama activities. Because the study took place during school hours, ethical implications required that all students have access to equal learning opportunities and prevented the use of a control group. Additionally, long-term studies on the efficacy of drama on cultural understanding are needed, as well as better data collection methods that can more accurately measure the efficacy of drama strategies in the classroom. Ultimately, this study shows that arts integration in cultural studies is an area in which researchers in education and cultural anthropology should continue to invest.

This research has many educational implications. One is that drama and storytelling are effective learning strategies and should be used to differentiate learning in the classroom. I found that students were engaged at all times during the lesson and any loss of focus or control was due to excitement about the lesson or drama activities. Though teachers should maintain classroom control, using drama strategies where appropriate can be effective and stimulating. In many ways, using drama strategies in the classroom is a form of constructivist teaching that allows students to explore their own interests and form connections. It is flexible and the level of standards and objectives achievement will highly depend on the students' interest in the content of the story that is presented. By experiencing Native American culture rather than studying it through direct instruction, students will feel more connected to and proud of their learning and will be more motivated for further learning, whether or not it involves drama strategies.

I found several limitations that could be addressed in education and research in the future. One is that, in order to overcome generalizations about other cultures in the

classroom, I had to use generalizations about Cherokee culture (i.e. the importance of nature, storytelling, and tribes) as well as focus on only one of hundreds of legends to be able to simplify the information enough for second graders. Future researchers should explore whether or not education about other cultures can ever be truly stereotype-free. Another major limitation is that there is little opportunity to dig deeper. Teachers have an incredible amount of information to cover over the duration of a school year or semester, and spending more than a few classes on one area of a social studies or drama unit may cause issues with curriculum coverage. Lastly, using a model where children are asked to share ideas freely could lead to classroom interruptions, and teachers and teaching artists must be prepared to handle situations that may arise, including comments and suggestions that may lead students away from the outcome objectives, or even that are inappropriate or offensive.

In my own experience I felt a considerable amount of growth in my confidence as an instructor, especially in regards to classroom management. Although much of this research was data-driven, a major portion of the learning experience was the execution of the lesson itself, both during the field test and data collection phases. This research study allowed me to gain valuable experience in the classroom that would not normally be available to undergraduate students before teaching residency.

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**Appendix A****“The Daughter of the Sun”  
(Duncan, 1998)**

The daughter of the Sun was another legend the Cherokees told.

And this one is not told as much,

but it has a lot of very interesting meanings and values to teach,  
and it's unusual that the Sun would be a woman.

The Sun and her daughter the Moon are crossing the sky.

And one day the Sun looked down and noticed

that all the people were looking at her rather squinch-eyed  
and with ugly faces every time they looked at her  
because of her great brightness.

So the Sun got very angry

and said that she didn't like for people to look at her like that.

And the Cherokees were making fun of her  
by making faces at her.

And she got very angry,

and she began to increase her heat  
coming down upon the earth.

And the people were so hot their crops began to dry up,

and they began to pray to the Great Spirit  
to get the Sun to stop making it so hot.

And it continued on.

So they began to turn to their medicine people,

and they went to this old medicine man,  
and he said,

“Well, we can talk to the Sun,

and we can sing to her,

and see if we can get her to calm down

and lessen her heat.”

So they began to sing to the Sun.  
But of course when they looked at her  
    their faces were still all squinched and drawn.  
And she was not very happy,  
    and she didn't like the music,  
    so she made it even hotter.  
And the streams began to dry up,  
    and the trees began to die,  
    and the crops they planted wouldn't even come up,  
    so the Cherokees had real problems  
And they decided, through their medicine people,  
    that they would kill the Sun.  
And so the medicine man changed a person into a rattlesnake,  
    and he was supposed to go up into the heavens  
    and find his way to where the sun crossed the sky,  
    and when she went in to visit her daughter the Moon,  
    the next morning when the Sun came out,  
    the rattlesnake was to bite her and kill her.  
So sure enough,  
    he made his way into the heavens  
    and found the house of the Moon,  
    and he sat out by the doorway  
    and waited for the Sun to come out.  
And she came out that morning,  
    and she came out so quickly  
    that he struck--  
    and she was so bright,  
    and he missed.  
So he came back to the earth  
    and told the medicine people what had happened.  
So they were very upset with him

and told him that the next day they would send a copperhead.  
So the copperhead went up and he hid by the doorway,  
and the Sun came out,  
and he struck--  
and he was to try to get her before she came out--  
and he struck too soon  
and missed,  
and the Sun went on its way.  
So the next day they sent both of them up  
and told them that they would *have* to kill the Sun,  
that they would both strike  
just before she came out,  
as soon as the door was open, they would strike.  
And sure enough, the door opened that morning,  
and they struck,  
and all of a sudden they hit something  
and looked,  
and it fell to the ground,  
and it was the daughter of the Sun.  
The Moon had come up that day.  
And so they were very upset.  
And when the Sun saw this,  
she was very, very angry,  
and she began to burn  
and even set fires on the earth with her great heat.  
The people were digging into the earth trying to save themselves.  
And the rattlesnake came back, and the copperhead,  
and they changed themselves back into people,  
and they told the people what had happened.  
So the medicine man said the only way they could make things right  
would be to go to the land of the dead.

Take seven sourwood sticks  
and find the daughter of the Sun  
dancing in the great circle of the dead,  
and when she came around  
they would touch her  
seven times  
with those sticks,  
and she would fall down asleep,  
and they would put her into a great basket  
and carry her back to the land of the Cherokee.

But the medicine man said,  
“Under no conditions should you open the basket  
even just a little bit.”

So they had gone to the land of the dead;  
after many, many days’ journey  
and great problems finding their way there,  
they finally made it.

And sure enough,  
there was that great circle of death  
where the people were dancing,  
and they saw the daughter of the Sun.

She danced around to where they were,  
and they touched her the first time,  
and seven times they touched her  
with those sourwood sticks,  
and she didn’t even know it.

On the seventh time she fell to the ground.

They picked her up and put her in the basket  
and started their long journey back to the land of the Cherokee.

On the way back, the daughter of the Sun began to talk  
in the basket.

Said she was getting very warm inside,  
and would they please open it just a little bit.  
But they wouldn't do that;  
they remembered their instructions.  
After a while she began to say she was getting thirsty,  
and then they ignored that.  
Then she said she was hungry,  
and they sort of thought,  
"Well, if we let her starve to death, we'll really be in trouble,"  
and they were tempted to open the basket,  
but they didn't.  
After a while she began to say  
in a very weak voice,  
"I'm hungry  
and I'm smothering to death.  
I need air."  
So one of the people in the group decided they could open it  
just a little bit  
to give her some air.  
When they opened it  
there was a red light,  
a fluttering coming out of the basket,  
and it went off into the forest.  
And they closed it back real quickly  
and said,  
"Well, we can't do that.  
We better follow instructions."  
They carried the big basket  
all the way back to the village,  
and when they got there,  
immediately the medicine man knew they'd opened the basket.

So when he looked inside he was very angry  
because there was nothing inside at all.  
They began to wail in their great sadness.  
They looked outside, and the Sun was scorching the earth.  
All of a sudden they noticed that it began to cool off a little bit.  
They looked out, and the lady Sun was smiling.  
And they listened,  
and they heard the sound  
of a beautiful song  
coming from a bird in the bush.  
They looked over to the bush,  
and there was  
a beautiful redbird.  
And as it sang,  
the Sun smiled,  
and the heat decreased.  
They then knew that the redbird  
was the daughter of the Sun.  
From that day forward,  
the Sun has been good to the Cherokee people.

**Appendix B: Lesson Plan**

Ms. Ellie Smoak

2<sup>nd</sup> Grade Theatre**Learning about Native American Culture Through Drama**

**Synopsis:** The instructor will present “The Daughter of the Sun” in the form of a story basket. Students will interact with the story and explore Native American culture through drama activities using the voice and body.

**Sequence:** Introductory

**Tennessee State Standards:**

- **Social Studies 2.2:** “Summarize stories from American Indian legends that reflect the cultural history of various regions in Tennessee and the United States to determine their central message, lesson, or culture.”
- **Theatre 2.4:** “Use movement as a means of expression.”
- **Theatre 5.1:** “Explore and respond to creative drama, formal theatre, film and/or television.”
- **Theatre 6.1:** “Explore how various cultures are reflected through theatre, film, and television.”

**Instructional Objectives:**

1. TSW identify elements of Native American and Cherokee culture, including the importance of nature.
2. TSW utilize varied movement and tableaux to express the humanity of the characters in the story.
3. TSW discuss how this story reflects elements of Native American culture.

**Assessment:**

**Pre:** TSW list 3 things that they know to be important to Native Americans based on their background knowledge (things they've learned in school, seen on television, read in books, etc.). ["List three things that are important to Native Americans."]

Students will be asked to make a tableau or "shape" of a sun and a snake at low, middle, and high levels.

**Post:** TSW answer the same question, but this time based on what they *now* know to be important to Native Americans. ["List three things you now know are important to Native Americans."]

During the lesson, the students will be asked to recreate their tableau of each character within the context of the story, considering how the character is feeling in a particular moment.

In comparing the pre- and post-assessments, the instructor will be looking to see if the students' understanding of Native Americans (including stereotypes) has changed at all. The instructor will also be looking for students to demonstrate the characterization of the sun and snake.

**Procedures:****Set:**

Before beginning the story, students will be informed that they will be hearing a story about Native Americans, but first the instructor would like to know what the students already know about Native Americans. The students will be prompted to answer a question that will ask them to list three things that are important to Native Americans. This information could come from school, books, television, movies, or other things they have seen. Students will also be informed that they will not receive a grade from the assessment and that it is okay to leave answers blank.

The students will warm up with a physical exercise. First, they will be told to find a “perfect place” in the room—somewhere they feel comfortable moving around and with enough space. The instructor will show them what a tableau or statue might look like. They will be asked to first make a statue of the sun at a low, middle, and high level. Then they will be asked to make a statue of a snake at a low, middle, and high level. They will learn that this “statue” is called a *tableau* and that sometimes we use our bodies to help tell stories. This is the second part of the pre-assessment. After their physical warm up, students will be told that they are going to use their bodies to help tell a story created by Native Americans.

### **Main Activity: Story Basket Presentation**

Once the pre-assessment is complete, the main part of the lesson will begin: “*Storytelling is very important to the Native Americans, because that is how they kept their history alive.* Just like we have books, the Native Americans had stories. Storytelling also helps them to connect with one another, because *being together is important.* Native Americans live in tribes, and their tribes are like one big family. Our story today comes from the Cherokee tribe, and they used to live right here in Chattanooga! *The Cherokee people grew their food and relied on nature in order to survive. One of the most important parts of nature to Native Americans is the sun.* If the sun didn’t shine, crops wouldn’t grow and there would be no food! We all need the sun to give us energy, keep us warm, and to help us grow. Because nature is so important, a lot of Native American stories tell us about our connection with nature. Sometimes in Native American culture, stories help us to understand why we do certain things. These stories are called folktales, and today I am going to share a folktale with you that explains why the Cherokee people do a sun dance.

“Picture the sky. In the sky we have a sun, a moon, and stars. Each day, the sun travels across the sky and stops at the very top to say hello to her daughter. One day, as she was passing through, she looked down at the people below and noticed that they were all making an ugly, twisted face at her. Can everyone stay in their seat and quietly make a face like you were staring straight at the sun? Can somebody raise their hand and tell me

why the people may have made this face? We know that the people didn't like the sun, it was just too bright for their eyes. But the sun didn't know this. She became very sad and angry. Let's all take a moment to stand up and make a new tableau. Can you choose one of the levels—either low, middle, or high—and show what the sun might look like in this moment? Can you share with us why you changed the way your Sun tableau looks? In this story, the Cherokee storytellers have given the sun human qualities such as emotions. Let's sit down and continue our story.

One day, the sun told her daughter, the moon, that she wanted to punish the people on earth for being rude to her. She decided to send an illness. What do you think it sounded like with all of the people sick? Let's stay seated and use our voices to show what this sickness sounded like. Good job everyone! Let's be silent and listen again. All of the people on earth became so sick that they decided they had to do something to stop the sun. So, they sent a snake into the sky to bite the sun! He crept up into the sky and, while the sun had stopped to visit her daughter in the middle of the sky, he waited for her to come out so he could bite her ankle. Remember when we made a new tableau for the sun when she was angry? Let's make a new tableau for the snake in this moment. Silently go to your perfect place and choose one level to show me how the snake might be feeling right now. Can you tell us why your snake looks different now? Now we know how the snake is feeling, so that helps us to create his character to look like this. You can all sit down now.

While the snake was waiting for the sun, the door finally opened and he made a strike at the sun! He bit her ankle, only it wasn't the sun! It was the sun's daughter, the moon. She jumped so high when the snake bit her that she flew into the stars and couldn't come back down. The sun was so upset that she locked herself in her daughter's house and cried, and cried, and cried. On earth, the people could no longer see the sun! It was dark, and her tears would not stop. The people realized they made a mistake. Have any of you ever made a mistake before? Can someone raise their hand and tell me what you did *after* you realized you made a mistake? When I make a mistake, I know I have to fix it, and that is just what the people on earth did. They sent two of their strongest people up

into the sky to rescue the moon. They went up, and up, and up until they found her! The only way down was to dance. The people swirled and swirled with the moon until the sun and her daughter were reunited. The sun was so glad to see her daughter that she stopped crying and came out to celebrate! The earth grew warm again and all of the sun's tears dried up. To this day, the Cherokee people still do the Sun Dance so they will stay connected and to thank her for providing food and clothing. And that's the end of our story!"

**Checking for Understanding:**

The students will be asked to re-take the pre-assessment, this time considering what they have learned and listing what they *now* know is important to Native Americans. Their answers should be similar to "nature, community, sharing, telling stories, the sun, survival," etc.

The students will be evaluated on their ability to create a character out of non-human figures (the sun and snake) by creating a tableau. This evaluation will be mixed in with other interactions with the story. The students should show more human-like figures and emotions when they re-create the tableaux during the story.

**Supervised Practice:**

Supervised practice will occur throughout the lesson as the instructor prompts the students to interact with the story and discuss the choices they make in their tableaux.

**Closure Summary:**

"Thank you for letting me come share this story with you. It's very important for us to know more about the Native Americans who lived right where we are today. I hope you enjoyed the story and had as much fun as I did!"

**Alternative/Supplemental Activities:**

Students who cannot read or write can answer the question out loud with an instructor, while the instructor records it on the iPad. This should *not* be someone who is involved with the research.

Students who have motor or physical disabilities and cannot create a tableau can share out loud what shapes they think the sun and snake would make.

If time allows and students are actively participating in the drama exercises, teach the sun dance as a way to end the lesson and celebrate the learning that took place.

**Materials/Media:**

Story basket: sky (fabric), sun (large rock), moon (smaller rock), snake (stick), people (pine cones)

Assessments (pre- and post-)

Recording device to track students' oral responses