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Aesthetics of Listening: Creating Spaces of Learning

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The Aesthetics of Listening: Creating Spaces for Learning

A Dissertation

Submitted by

Lisa Donovan

In partial fulfillment of the requirements
for the degree of
Doctor of Philosophy

LESLEY UNIVERSITY
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ABSTRACT
The Aesthetics of Listening: Creating Spaces for Learning
By Lisa Donovan
Lesley University

In this study with 9th -12th grade students in an urban Massachusetts school I consider the question "How can theater education develop a sense of voice and identity in adolescents?" Students in a drama class engaged in a variety of performance techniques including: interview theater, improvisation, and pantomime while considering the concept of voice/identity development. They then created an interview based script focused on an issue of their choice: the rules of the school and how they were enforced.

Investigating how drama activities could develop students' sense of voice/identity, I found instead that students' voices were, in fact, quite strong. Despite the strength and intensity of their voices, however, students expressed concerns that they were neither heard nor listened to outside the drama classroom. The drama classroom, they said, provided an oasis in which their voices were honored and encouraged.

Data collection included video-taped class sessions, interviews with the drama classroom teacher, student peer interviews, and a final focus group session six weeks following the conclusion of the project. The data suggest that, especially for adolescents, being heard is as important as developing strong voices, and that listening sustains the development of strong voices. Drama education can develop a strong community of learners, while performance acts as a powerful vehicle for bringing student voices to agency. I conclude with a discussion of the need for teachers to develop a critical pedagogy which invites and values students' voices.

Dedication

To the men in my life.

to Rick for making this achievement possible with so much support over such a long time. To Alex and Jack—in hopes that your education honors your voices and who you are and creates space for the possibility of who you will become.

Acknowledgements

Special thanks to my graduate committee which has inspired and supported me throughout the program—

to Annie Pluto for being a wonderful and supportive advisor, providing valuable insight on theater, voice and motherhood

to Harley Erdman for giving me the opportunity to move into teaching at the college level, introducing me to the innovative ideas of Augusto Boal, and for immersing me in community-based theater

to Gene Diaz for pushing me further and deeper than I've ever gone before in writing, for challenging me to think at a new level and try new methodologies, and mostly for helping me see myself as a scholar

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to Denise Mooney for all she "did do" editing-wise and beyond

to the faculty of the Creative Arts in Learning Division who listened, supported and challenged my ideas as needed!

to Danielle Georges whose advice, challenges, humor and editing powers pushed me to polish, polish, polish until the bitter end!

Hear me

Listening is **more**
than **hearing** words
It is leaning your ear to the ground
sensing for vibrations of
subtext

It is **looking**
for meaning
in metaphor
considering
what is being said
in moments of resistance
searching
for the questions
the challenges
the emotion

It is **grasping** nuance in tone
noticing the gaps and silences in dialogue

It is **creating a space**
an invitation
for voice to enter

rather than

filling the silences with your ideas.

It is letting
a question hang
in the air and

.....**waiting**
It is— — — **holding off on assumptions**... — — — yours and others

Listening is a
difficult
and
fragile
practice in unpredictability

A Crystallizing Moment

We were creating a script about voices on rules. Students were interviewing each other, peers, police officers and teachers on their perspectives about school rules. The script got students energized and eagerly participating and the results were a raw and intense commentary on the rules of the school and how they are enforced. The energy around the script was intense as students felt they'd not been heard on this topic and they leapt at an opportunity to explore this topic in a way that would allow them to voice their opinions.

The classroom teacher felt that this exploration was getting out of hand and indicated a fear that, after we left, she would not be able to control the students. She felt we were feeding into something that was getting out of control. I worked to compromise by stopping development of the script which I had intended would slowly bring in multiple and balanced perspectives. Instead I took the material and edited it into an abbreviated script that could be explored through performance in class and provide a sense of closure for students. Several students reacted strongly to this editing, suggesting that I had, in fact, silenced them. This came as a shock and with the realization that in a project that was designed to empower voices, I had unintentionally oppressed them.

“You ask us to get truthful voices but then edit them?” one of the students said. In a crystallizing moment I realized the complexity of empowerment and oppression. Not clearly black and white, or easy to decipher, oppression sometimes happens by intention, sometimes by default and sometimes happens because of interpretation. We must grapple with all of these possibilities in our teaching. As teachers we must acknowledge that our positions afford us a level of status and power that becomes part of everything what we do. Decisions we make have an added impact. We must move toward vigilance—constantly questioning, analyzing, reflecting on the choices that we make and the impact of those choices on the students we are working with.

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Chapter One: Introduction

Introduction

Perhaps one of the greatest goals of education is that students know what and how they think, and be able to effectively communicate their thoughts to others. This goal implies that educators must assist students in finding their own voices so that they can articulate what they think, and feel confident about using their voices to as agents of change in the world. At the same time we must be able to listen for, hear, and understand the thoughts, ideas we are inviting forth.

Adolescence is a time of transition, growth, and questioning for young people. They are faced with the questions of who they are, what they believe in, and where they belong in life. Adolescence can be fraught with crises and emotional turbulence as the search for self unfolds. How can educators support the delicate evolution of child to adult? How do we create a bridge between the two worlds and encourage confident, bold, and joyful crossings, knowing that teenagers will be able to find themselves along the way? Theater education can prompt and even facilitate the exploration and experimentation adolescents need in order to successfully and safely navigate the development of identity. How might students learn to voice their thoughts and feelings about who they are and what they think through dramatic explorations? How might theater education facilitate the process of identity development in adolescents?

My research has been deeply influenced by my work as a residential counselor for troubled adolescents in a group home in Vermont. This work is at the core of what I bring to the research and what informs my approach. As a

counselor working with teenagers who had been shuffled from foster home to foster home, I found that these adolescents knew much about themselves in the world, but weren't fully aware of what they knew, and what they had to offer. Their way of questioning the status quo, their willingness to hold and explore conflicting ideas, and their ability to imagine how things might be different drove me to seek ways to amplify and develop their voices. Knowing that drama could be useful, I was curious to find out how it could provide a space and impetus for the development of voice.

Evolution of Research

My research explores the ways students develop and use their voices in schools. Employing a variety of drama techniques, combined with critical ethnographic research methods, I chose to investigate the question "How can participation in theater education develop a sense of voice and identity in adolescents?" The goal of the research was to discover what drama would illuminate about adolescent voice.

I anticipated that student voices would develop into stronger, more mature, and informed voices as a result of dramatic work—a phenomenon I'd witnessed in my pilot research project at Simon's Rock College in a Theater for Social Change course (Donovan, 2002). My role in this present inquiry as teacher, artist, and researcher was to investigate how theater education contributed to this voice development at the high school level. It was clear from the moment I entered the classroom at Richmond High, that the students in the drama class already possessed clear, powerful, and articulate voices. Despite the strength of

their voices, however, school culture and teacher/administrator practices left students feeling that their voices were not heard. I embarked on the research looking for the development of voice in adolescents, and instead found strong, articulate voices that were quieted, and sometimes silenced, disempowered by a lack of listening on the part of educators. What emerged as a result of dramatic explorations was a hidden curriculum of oppressive structures and assumptions about race and gender limited both the use of students' voices and the ability to hear these voices emerged.

My research led me to unexpected realizations about the significance of creating a space for voice, and perhaps more importantly, the need to listen for voices even when they are saying things we'd rather not hear. A clear theme in the work became the dual struggle of putting one's voice out into the world and having one's voice heard and acknowledged. Being heard implies recognition that one has a legitimate place in a dialogue. For students, this might mean having a voice in what and how they learn in schools. For teachers, it might mean the opportunity to have their work acknowledged by administrators or to have a say in the development and implementation of curriculum practices mandated by the school, the district, and the state. For a researcher, this might mean creating a space for a critical dialogue between researcher and teacher, researcher and student. This struggle emerged for the students, the teacher, and for me as researcher.

Educational theorist Joan Wink defines hidden curriculum as "the unexpressed perpetuation of dominant culture through institutional processes"

(2003, p. 54). Educational researcher Rosario Diaz-Greenberg notes that the term was originally conceived of by Philip W. Jackson in his 1968 book *Life in Classrooms* and is “understood as the unspoken words and climate existent within the educational system.” Diaz-Greenberg also points out critical theorist Henry Giroux’s definition addresses “the norms, values, and beliefs embedded in and transmitted to students through the underlying rules that structure the routines and social relationships in schools and classroom life” (2003, p. 7). The characteristics of the hidden curriculum at Richmond High School (RHS) relate directly to the institutional practices that define and confine the possibilities for learning—those practices that demoralize youth and devalue youthful ideas about justice and equity.

This research considers the following questions, which emerged during the study and in response to the primary question, “How can participation in theater education develop a sense of voice and identity in adolescents?”

- How does Reader’s Theater expose ideas, voices, and emotion?
- How does a trusting relationship between student and teacher invite student voice?
- What are the differences between hearing and listening?
- What do we as teachers allow ourselves to hear from students?
- How can we listen to learning?

This high school project began as an artist residency in which I, along with another theater artist, worked with a classroom teacher and sixteen 9th – 12th grade students throughout thirteen intensive sessions in an urban high school in

a mid-sized city in western Massachusetts from September through December 2003. Students in the class participated in a series of dramatic explorations focusing on various aspects of adolescent voice as I define them, including *personal voice* (understanding one's views/identity), *physical voice* (tone and vocalizing one's ideas), and *voice as agency* (a willingness to put one's ideas into the community).

Participants in the study included sixteen 9th to 12th grade teenagers enrolled in a drama class at a school, which I will call Richmond High School. All participants enrolled in the class were female, and consisted of nine African-Americans, seven Latinas, and one white student. Over the course of the thirteen sessions three students were transferred out of class because of schedule changes. One of these students ultimately gave up her lunchtime to continue to participate for a portion of each class. In addition, one male student often participated in class, though he was not officially enrolled. He was African-American. All student, teacher, and school names in this document are pseudonyms in order to maintain confidentiality and ensure the anonymity of the participants.

I facilitated the thirteen project sessions in the classroom in collaboration with an artist educator, Linda, and a drama classroom teacher, Deborah. All of us are white, middle-aged women who have come to the drama education classroom from careers in different areas, but with a commitment to work with teenagers in schools. On-site data collection began in September and ended in December 2003.

I am an arts educator who is interested in how drama education develops voice and identity in adolescents. Trained as an actor, I realized early on that my passion for drama lay in its ability to empower one's voice. I have worked in a variety of settings including K-12 partnerships, with teenagers in a group home, with students attending intensive arts institutes, and with college students and teachers exploring issues in and through the arts. I bring 19 years of experience working as an arts administrator and/or arts educator in a variety of arts organizations including Jacob's Pillow Dance Festival, the Berkshire Opera Company, the University of Massachusetts Department of Theater and Boston University's Theater, Visual Arts, and Tanglewood Institutes. My work has included building school partnerships, working with teachers, and developing programs. I have served as the Executive Director of the Massachusetts Alliance for Arts Education, one of 46 state alliances that are members of the Kennedy Center Alliance for Arts Education Network, and am currently the Director of the Creative Arts in Learning Division at Lesley University. In addition, I have taught in a variety of university settings including the University of Massachusetts, Simon's Rock College and Lesley's Creative Arts in Learning Division since 1998. I chose to play several roles in the research—artist, teacher, and researcher. Each role brought with it a particular approach to and way of seeing the dramatic explorations, student/teacher reactions, and the data analysis. These multiple perspectives allowed me to ask questions, frame discussions, and direct the course of the inquiry in a multi-layered, nuanced way. I have explored these multiple roles more fully in Chapter Eleven.

My colleague in the drama work and fellow artist-educator, Linda Eppel, (pseudonym) is an actress and educator whose background is in dance and theater. She co-founded a theater program for teenagers that has developed an impressive reputation for empowering teen voices. My contact at the school and collaborator, Deborah Mickle, (pseudonym) is a high school teacher who began teaching English and shifted to drama when she realized how much she loved theater.

In Chapter Two I investigate different theories of voice and voice development including the work of theater artist Kristin Linklater and literary scholar Peter Elbow. I explore the connection between physical voice and one's inner or personal voice. Linklater's ideas, introduced to me by Linklater voice teacher Normi Noel, were pivotal in allowing me to uncover and explore the links between physical voice and one's psyche.

I continue the discussion of voice development in Chapter Three by creating an understanding of the development of adolescent identity and relating it to the work in drama education of Augusto Boal (particularly in the context of schools). Having trained with Boal at the Pedagogy of the Oppressed Conference in 1997, I found his techniques on Forum Theater a powerful tool for investigating issues of power and status and provided a rehearsal for social change. Boal's transformative Theater of the Oppressed, and Forum Theater as well as various approaches to Reader's Theater techniques are considered as both research techniques and opportunities to honor multiple perspectives.

In Chapter Four I describe my methods as a qualitative researcher using interviews, focus groups, and participant observation with a critical ethnographical approach based on critical ethnographer Philip Carspecken's ideas (1996). Using a critical ethnography methodology in this study served to:

- consider education as a social and cultural practice
- promote connections between the work and students' real world connections
- bring student voices to the center of the curriculum
- allow students and classroom teacher to be co-researchers so that they could work with me in co-constructing understanding about drama's role in developing personal voice and identity
- prompt students to consider issues through a researcher's lens
- create conversations about and movement toward social justice

This methodology allowed for a problem-posing approach through which students and classroom teachers and I worked together to explore issues.

Problem-posing is a strategy introduced by educator and activist Paulo Freire (1993) in which students and teachers work together to identify and investigate a problem, which provides a frame for learning:

Problem posing brings interactive participation and critical inquiry into the existing curriculum and expands it to reflect the curriculum of the students' lives. The learning is not just grounded in the prepared syllabus, the established, prescribed curriculum. Problem posing opens the door to ask questions and seek answers, not only of the visible curriculum, but also of the hidden curriculum (Wink, 2000, p. 61).

The context of the school culture at Richmond High School, detailed in Chapter Five, explores the forces at work in the school that create a powerful hidden curriculum. Students' voices about the restrictive environment of their school, about violence, and other issues that pervade student life illuminate the ways in which strong voices are effectively muted. I also describe the complex relationships that developed with the collaborating teacher while engaged in the process of exploring ideas about voice, and her subsequent efforts to explore both her own and the students' expressions about the school culture.

In Chapter Six, students share their personal views on voice through a discussion of peer-interview transcripts about voice and the use of social mask. This discussion reveals a nuanced understanding of the power of voice: how students manipulate voice to get what they want, and how they alter their voices depending on whom they are speaking to and under what circumstances. In addition, I explore what students are saying as they express themselves during the dramatic work and theater activities.

In Chapter Seven I discuss the use of Reader's Theater as a way to invite voices about an issue of significance to students—the rules in the school. I also introduce a powerful theme that emerged from the research, the notion of the drama classroom as an oasis.

Chapter Eight identifies the various discourses that structure the school culture and how these different discourses can affect opportunities for connections across disciplines and among groups.

In Chapter Nine, I discuss how students embarked on a Reader's Theater project as a way of collecting and expressing views on school rules from a variety of vantage points, and how the power of having their voices shared creates agency and at the same time threatens the teacher's sense of control. These voices have important things to say and their commentary is revealed poignantly in the dramatic work completed in class. The unfolding of this process signifies the flexing of voice for students and classroom teacher as they seek to use their voices in new ways.

In Chapter Ten I identify moments of *conscientization*, the process of "coming to voice" that is described by Paulo Freire (1993) and illustrated so clearly in the work of Boal (1985). The realization of the power of authentic voice through action allows the students to see their participation in their own oppression through silence, and allows the teacher to articulate the power of drama.

Chapter Eleven separates the dual roles we take on as both teacher and learner and how these roles create boundaries and expectations that can both block and enhance communication and connection.

Finally, I examine the interconnecting strands of the role of drama in strengthening students' voices and the discipline of the art form—and how these work in conjunction with each other.

The dissertation concludes with a discussion of eight implications for classroom teaching derived from the research and the development of a critical pedagogy through drama education. I include an example of how my own

teaching has changed, and continues to evolve, as a result of this inquiry process.

In the end, I found that students' voices were already strong—but were not heard. This silencing in the school lead students to define the drama classroom as an oasis—a place where their voices were sought, heard and valued. Throughout the research issues of race, class, and gender surface and resurface as significant factors influencing the development of voice. This is an inquiry into the explorations students undertook, their realizations about voice and school. It examines what the drama classroom can add to students' experience. In addition, the research suggests that teachers' ability to listen is as important as the power of drama to elicit voices. Realizations and the development of voice occurred not just for students, but also for the classroom teacher and myself.

Chapter Two: Defining Voice

Introduction

The concept of voice in its different manifestations will be explored in this chapter. I begin with my early reflections on teaching theater to adolescent students, and continue with the literature by scholars who have explored voice and brought to their explorations their respective groundings in the fields of theater (Linklater, 1976; Rodenberg, 1992), education (Boal, 1985; Lawrence-Lightfoot and Davis, 1997), psychology (Gilligan, 1982; Rogers, 1993) and dimensions of voice (Elbow, 1994). In the process I will offer the concepts of voice that inform this research: personal, physical, and voice as agency. The connection of voice to identity, especially identity in a specific socio-cultural context, must be acknowledged as we seek to build a comprehensive basis for understanding the construction and development of adolescent student voices.

Exploring the process of developing voice in adolescents holds great promise for educational institutions. Maxine Greene, in the late 1970's, asserted that many teenagers feel lost, disempowered, and disconnected (1978). I believe this is as true today as it was then. Like Greene, I believe the arts, specifically theater, have the power to reconnect our youth with the world by allowing them to discover their personal voices and to learn how to use them.

Voice is the means by which we express and construct who we are aurally and metaphorically. It's how we are recognized (our sound) and what we listen for in others. It is a reflection and expression of how we construct ourselves and our personal views in a social context. It's how we put ourselves into the world,

how we share who we are, and how we communicate ourselves. It is how we create a connection with others; the vehicle for how our views (personal voice) are shared and heard. It's how we differentiate ourselves from and locate ourselves in relation to the ideas of others. In the conception of Lyn Mikel Brown and Gilligan,

Voice is ...our channel of connection, a pathway that brings the inner psychic world of feelings and thoughts out into the open air of relationship where it can be heard by oneself and by other people...Voice, because it is embodied, connects rather than separates psyche and body; because voice is in language, it also joins psyche and culture (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 20).

The term voice is used in many discourses: in writing, in theatrical performance, in music, in politics, in communities. The concept of voice has multiple meanings. In one context, voice may mean one's style; in another, the act of expressing one's thoughts in conversation; in yet another, voice might represent the perspective of a homogenous group of people. Often, "voice" is synonymous with "identity"—a reflection of self.

The concept of voice spans literal, metaphorical, and political terrains: In its literal sense, voice represents the speech and perspectives of the speaker; metaphorically, voice spans inflection, tone, accent, style and the qualities and feelings conveyed by the speaker's words; and politically, a commitment to voice attests to the right of speaking and being represented (Britzman cited in Diaz-Greenberg, 2003, p. 4).

It is an intangible yet highly complex notion that ultimately is linked to having a place in the world. As Deborah, the classroom teacher, suggested during the research project, knowing that your presence in a group makes a difference influences how you see yourself.

Walsh's notion of voice is "the speaking of consciousness and the speaking to reality...voice cannot be considered an individual phenomenon but must be seen as the product and process of society, identity, and reality" (Cited in Diaz-Greenberg, 2003, p. 8).

Beginnings

When I began teaching theater, I witnessed a phenomenon that continually repeated itself in my classrooms. Over the course of each semester, adolescent students who were actively engaged in experiential learning in theater became increasingly aware of their own voices as a powerful tool. Time and again I saw this occur in the portrayal of characters in scene work and in dramatic improvisation. Not only did students gain a sense of their own voices in relationship to others, but their voices—and this sense of self—also grew stronger with use. Often these voices became powerful enough by the semester's end to affect the community of their peers. Students grew comfortable voicing their opinions, challenging the assumptions of others, and engaging in dialogue excited by the power of their discourse to uncover new landscapes of learning. I watched students begin to own their questions, understand and accept their vulnerabilities and then identify new directions for themselves. I heard students articulating their discoveries and realizations.

When I reflected on this phenomenon, I remembered my own discovery of voice, which also happened in and through the dramatic arts. In playing a variety of characters I experienced and saw the world anew through the perspectives of characters I played, recognizing the voices that resonated with mine and

situating my own ideas in contrast to other perspectives. Later, as I launched my career, I began to recognize my ability to voice my own ideas within a community of educators and theater educators, and understood the possibility for provoking changes in education in the process. I decided at that time to research this process of “coming to voice” through theater education and make it the focus of this research.

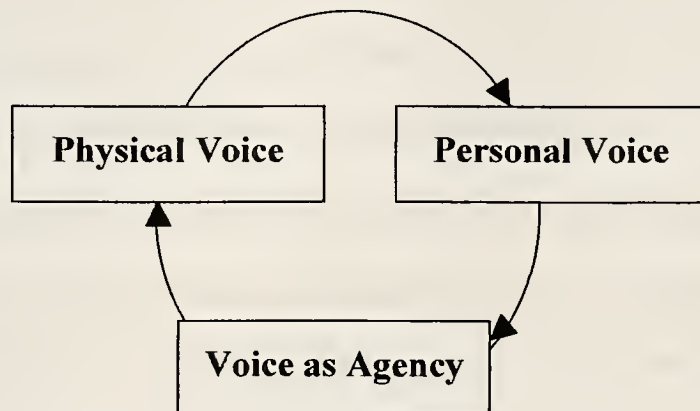
Dimensions of Voice

This research focuses on the development of voice as an expression of identity through engagement with theater. Here, I define three ways I use voice in this research.

personal voice—a construct that reflects one’s inner world: one’s identity, one’s beliefs, ideas, and assumptions

physical voice—the manifestation of voice. This can be one’s vocal tone and expressive qualities of sound, carrying one’s external expression or other mechanisms for expression

voice as agency—one’s voice when used for social change, the ability to influence one’s community



Each of these uses of voice is interrelated. Physical voice carries the message and intention of personal voice. Personal voice has the capacity to effect change; voice serving as agency. Agency in turn influences and develops personal voice.

It is important to note that I am using physical voice to refer to the manifestation of one's voice. Though most of my references relate to the physical sound of voice, clearly communication of one's voice can occur through a variety of forms including spoken word, writing, art, or through artificial devices such as technology. Linklater's work focuses on vocal sound and her approach to dramatic work begins through the exploration of one's sound. I wish to emphasize that people who do not have physical voices or whose physical voice might be impaired can communicate as effectively through other forms of expression and engage fully in drama work.

Physical Voice

"Voice is the carrier wave for thought, breath is the mule of meaning"
(Appelbaum, 1990, p. 38).

The physical aspect of voice is its most tangible feature and the one with which we are most familiar. Thus, examining physical voice is a logical place to begin an exploration of voice in general because it is through our physical voice that ideas, thoughts, and feelings are communicated in sound and language. Each person's voice is as distinctive as a fingerprint (Rodenberg, 1992).

Physical voice provides a bridge between one's inner world (personal voice) and one's ability to affect the community (voice as agency). Scholars such as Peter Elbow, Carol Gilligan, and Kristin Linklater support this connection by

illustrating ways in which thoughts and feelings are manifested in the physical voice, thus revealing the “psyche” or “inner world” of the individual.

Physical voice is created by the vibrations of breath across the vocal folds. In her landmark book *Freeing the Natural Voice* (1976), master voice teacher Kristin Linklater explores how strongly the physical voice, mind, and breath are connected. Though others concur that physical voice is a reflection of what is happening mentally and physically (McCallion, 1998; Gilligan, 1992), Linklater is one of the few voice teachers who has explored the connection of physical voice and identity. Linklater co-founded Shakespeare and Company, a theater group, in 1969 with Artistic Director Tina Packer and a core group of artists. Her ideas about voice developed out of her theater work with the company. She continues her theater and voice work today as a faculty member at Columbia University. Her work is pivotal to my research and, and has helped develop my own ideas about voice. It will serve as a primary lens through which I view voice.

Philosopher Marcus Tullius Cicero describes the voice as “a picture of the mind,” suggesting the ability of the physical voice to reflect one’s inner world (Elbow, 1994, p. xxii), building a strong connection between mind and body. Gilligan supports this connection when she writes that “we have the capacity to bring our inner world into the outer world to be in relationship, to connect the inner world...to include our outer world” (Gilligan, 1997).

Linklater, whose work has greatly influenced Gilligan’s ideas about voice, defines voice as the place where “the psyche connects to the body.”

Psychologist Annie Rogers says that finding one's inner or personal voice is not just a metaphor—rather, it is linked to one's physical voice (1993). “The voice, played on breath and linked with real feelings, reveals the self—and is, therefore, vital to authentic contact and to the recovery of courage” (Rogers, 1993, p. 281).

To understand and nurture the connection between ourselves and the world is to understand oneself, to communicate one's ideas effectively, and to be an integral part of one's community. Linklater delves deeply into this connection, proposing that the breath is connected to one's emotional life and that tapping into this inner life fuels the voice, revealing both thought and emotion (Linklater, 1976). Linklater's voice techniques are based on two assumptions: First, that everyone has a voice that has a range of two to four octaves with which we can express our emotions, moods and thoughts. Secondly, that the tensions that pervade our lives, both from our environment and from our own defense mechanisms, limit our range of expression and may even distort the way we communicate. She has developed exercises to bring the individual back to his/her natural voice by removing obstacles and tension, and identifying habits that block the connection between thought and communication. The ultimate aim is to develop “a voice in direct contact with emotional impulse, shaped by intellect but not inhibited by it.” (1976, p. 1). We have this kind of uninhibited vulnerability in our voice as children but often disconnect from it as we grow older.

Linklater's technique releases muscle tension so that one's true voice can be accessed and reflect the direct impulses of thought. Habits that stifle the natural vibrations of thought and emotion develop over time as a protective reaction to the stresses of life. Linklater suggests that these habits distance us from our truths because our voices are not able to carry meaning as effectively.

Linklater believes the voice is:

prevented from responding with spontaneity... because that spontaneity depends on reflex action and most people have lost the ability and perhaps the desire to behave reflexively. Except in moments 'beyond control' such as extreme pain, extreme fear, extreme ecstasy, nearly all visibly reflex behavior is short circuited by secondary impulses (1976, p. 11).

She indicates that it's not that it's always desirable to be spontaneous, but that spontaneity should at least be accessible to us. Theater artist Keith Johnstone (1992) echoes this point and suggests that too often, the ability for spontaneity has been taught out of us.

Linklater's approach requires taking risks and can leave us feeling vulnerable because voice can reveal us to ourselves and to others in ways that we had not anticipated. In order to maximize the impact of voice work, Linklater says that "people must want to reveal themselves, be unafraid of such openness of countenance and believe that 'vulnerability is strength'" (1976, p. 14). A safe space is necessary to explore freely and to feel comfortable in taking risks.

Breath has been considered a mysterious life force; once esteemed as "spirit" by ancient peoples (Idhe, 1994). The importance of breath is a recurring theme in Linklater's work. Breath is necessary to supporting voice. Exploring breath in Linklater's process brings this feeling of spirit in voice to life. In

describing the process of how a voice works, Linklater (1976) suggests it is the intent to communicate which gives voice its life. This intention creates a nerve impulse, which triggers breath to move across the vocal folds. This creates vibrations, which are magnified by the body's resonators.

To begin to release the voice, and to dissolve physical habits, Linklater advocates focusing attention on one's breathing process, developing the connection between mind, body, and breath, and examining the relationship of thought to breath. She then moves into exploring vocal range, examining how vibration works in the body and how tension stifles vibration. Ultimately the goal is to work to free breath and tone from tension.

Voice work begins with a focus on the intent to communicate and the desire to make a connection with another person. Voice must be looked at in a social context because voice finds life only in its expression to another. One's intent to communicate is connected to personal voice, to what one wants to express. The physical voice becomes the vehicle for this expression and communicates information that can be picked up by the receiver. Gilligan refers to speaking and listening as a kind of "psychic breathing" (1994, p. 178). Writer and professor Walter Ong describes sound as a "special sensory key to interiority" because by its nature voice is created by inner connections (Ong, 1994, p. 22). Like Linklater, Ong differentiates between interior and exterior selves, again supporting the mind/body division.

My research searches for spaces where the voice can flourish and where students become masters at listening for the person within the voice—in

themselves as well as in others. I use voice as our connection to ourselves and to the world. It is our living lifeline. The connection between self and world runs both ways.

Personal Voice

I refer to personal voice as the ability to recognize, locate, and ultimately express one's own ideas and beliefs—an internal expression of ourselves and who we are. Our inner landscape is shaped by our desires, fears, beliefs, hopes, and dreams. It is what psychologist Annie Rogers (1993) describes as the “true I” (p. 291). Each of us has an authentic voice, a “true I” that is connected to an inner knowing that can be expressed to the public through physical voice. This sense of voice reveals who we are; it is an indication of identity. One’s “voice speaks about one’s stance, perspective...reflecting (one’s) angle of vision” (Lawrence-Lightfoot & Davis, 1997, p. 105). Voice includes one’s frame of reference—the window through which we view the world—that is shaped by experiences. Voice develops and changes over time as we experience new things.

Vygotsky (1978) suggests we have inner speech—inner dialogues with ourselves. He differentiates between “inner speech” meant for ourselves and “external speech” meant for others. This inner speech reflects our feelings and thoughts but is different from the voice we put out into the world, which we tend to censor. We are much more free to express ourselves in our inner discourse. Our physical voices are shaped for public consumption. We have internal

censors that determine what is safe to say and what is appropriate to share and what is not. We often don't take the time to know ourselves beyond the censor, to listen to that small quiet voice inside. This voice is our intuition—our gut reaction to life.

Growing up, we are often unaware of what our “real voice” sounds like. Appelbaum refers to “voice’s voice” and suggests our real voice often hides behind our speech (1990, p. x). This suggests that we may hide our identity from others and that our identity can even be hidden from ourselves. Personal voice becomes masked behind protective layers and facades. Part of the process of developing voice is discovering, uncovering one’s own personal voice. Tuning in leads to hearing and acknowledging this unspoken voice within ourselves.

Developing an awareness of physical voice serves to develop areas of one’s identity, including *personal* voice. According to Linklater, “the natural voice is transparent—revealing, not describing, inner impulses of emotion and thought directly and spontaneously. The person is heard, not the person’s voice. To free the voice is to free the person, and each person is indivisibly mind and body” (1976, p. 2). Linklater contends that voice work is psycho-physical in nature. Her techniques focus on a deep connection to the individual rather than beauty in vocal tone (1976). Her work suggests that a disconnection between mind and body leaves us out of touch with our own authentic voices.

Participation in theater accesses one’s voice in all three aforementioned aspects. In a program for adolescent girls, psychologists Annie Rogers, Carol Gilligan, and theater artist Normi Noel, used theater as an effective tool for

connecting with and freeing girls' physical and personal voices (1993). These researchers found that theater techniques could assist with developing the courage to use one's personal voice. Personal voice sparks the intention to speak.

Voice as Agency

Using voice as a means to agency is yet another facet of voice (Boal, 1985; Schutzman-Cruz, 1994). By agency, I mean using voice as action, a means of exerting power and influence. Voice as agency implies voice in dialogue with others. Through the exploration of our ideas, we can name possibilities about what we believe the world can be. What begins with understanding our own voices grows into using our voices to speak to and for others. It is the art of speaking our minds that can effect change in our communities (Freire, 1993; Greene, 1995).

We must preserve a theory of human agency so that our students as well as ourselves can, like Archimedes, seek a place to stand, a place from which to resist against a world so badly in need of change (Freisinger, 1994, p. 210).

In order to become fully self-actualized we must be able to use our voices to make a difference. Using one's voice in this active way takes courage.

Rogers (1993) believes that the self is inseparable from courage. This notion of voice as related to courage stems from Simpson and Weiner's definition of courage (1989, as cited in Rogers, 1993). They state that courage means "to speak one's mind by telling all one's heart." "Finding a voice to speak what has been the unspeakable" implies that courage is necessary in developing voice in adolescent years (Rogers, 1993, p. 281). By "unspeakable" Rogers refers to the

oppressive power of taboos, societal rules of acceptance, and trauma that render ideas unspeakable. Theater can provide the space and impetus to speak the unspeakable, to gain courage.

Janine Rider asserts that students must learn “to speak their own minds...By allowing a student his own voice first, we allow creativity and imagination, and we expand the possibilities of our language and our ways of knowing” (quoted in Yancey, 1994, p. x). Rider, like Rogers, believes that courage is an integral part of the process. Rider urges educators to “begin not with students’ language but with their souls, first giving them the confidence to bare those souls in their own voices, and then teaching them the tricks to help make those voices heard” (quoted in Yancey, 1994, p. x).

Voices grow stronger with use (Linklater, 1976). Students must feel comfortable and safe putting their ideas out into the world. Once they speak their thoughts, it grows easier, and if encouraged, movement toward agency is natural.

In the United States, groups that have been marginalized over time such as women, blacks, and gays to name a few, have all had their struggles with speaking out. Having a voice, having it be heard, and dealing with the consequences of putting their voices out into society in new ways has not been easy. Feminist author bell hooks challenges her students to speak taking advantage of the privileges this culture provides,

Encouraging students to speak, I tell them to imagine what it must mean to live in a culture where to speak one risks brutal punishment—imprisonment, torture, death. I ask them to think about what it means that

they lack the courage to speak in a culture where there are few if any consequences. Can their fear be understood solely as shyness or is it an expression of deeply embedded, socially constructed restrictions against speech in a culture of domination, a fear of owning one's words, of taking a stand? (hooks, 1994, pp. 57-58).

Finding one's voice, and developing the courage to use it, allows for agency—using one's voice to affect one's community. As part of the work of developing one's voice we must identify where the boundaries lie (the limitations to or oppression of voice) and where we stand in relation to them. Cummins (1994) suggests that understanding the processes of "coming to voice" can give us insight to how authority works in our lives—a consideration of those who empower and those who silence us (p. 50). Student ideas about issues of authority—who has the right to speak, for example—can identify silent oppressors in culture. For students to use their voices requires an act of courage. Once their sound enters the room, once they have been engaged, awareness of and development of voice can begin. Students undergo a process of development through which voice is triggered. (Belenky et al., 1986) suggest that the development of voice often naturally sparks agency, noting that the women they studied showed a pattern by which, once they began to reflect on thinking and to understand how much they knew, they began to take action as a natural next step, saying: "Certainly it was clear that as they began to think and to know, they began to act. Some were even driven to action by their inner voice" (1986, p. 77). hooks suggests that voice is a metaphor for transformation in which students discover the power of putting their ideas into the world:

[C]oming to voice is an act of resistance. Speaking becomes both a way to engage in active self-transformation and a rite of passage where one moves from being object to being subject. Only as subjects can we speak. As objects we remain voiceless—our beings defined and interpreted by others (hooks, 1994, p. 53).

For Ong, sound indicates power because it is active. “One cannot have voice without presence, at least suggested presence.”(Ong, 1994, p. xx) Taking action will at times place us in juxtaposition to social norms. For example, standing up against the marginalization of a particular group has often triggered conflicts due to unspoken prejudices. Writer and educator Randall Freisinger (1994) warns that students must be allowed to make their own choices about agency without pressure. Putting their voices out into the world in itself forces them to take a stand. During adolescence young people begin to realize that they have a right to their own opinions (Belenky et al., 1986; Perry, 1970).

Agency is perhaps then the culmination of voice and the goal that we as educators must inspire our students to reach. This is not to say that all adolescents must be agents of change; rather, they should know that possibilities for change are open to them. A pedagogical approach that develops the scaffolding necessary to allow students to construct their sense of agency needs a teacher who is willing to listen to and hear the voices that students put forth.

Voice and Identity

By composing our language we compose ourselves and while there are other ways of presenting ourselves to the world, our language remains the most persuasive, the most delicate, the best way we have for defining ourselves (Gibson, 1994, p. 17).

Developing voice is a significant part of development of self. Students discover their own voices in juxtaposition of the voices of others. Through

understanding our voices—we understand ourselves. Educator and author Toby Fulwiler, in his search for voice in writing says, “I realize that the only convincing way to locate ‘me’ in my own prose will be to locate a significant number of ‘not me’s’ in other people’s prose. Voices against which my voice might be tested for distinction” (p. 160). Though Fulwiler is discussing voice in writing, locating one’s voice by considering the voices of others that are “not me” holds true in spoken word as well. I ask students to tune into moments in which character voices feel like their own voices and where a character’s voice feels foreign to them. In time, they become very good at this and not only discover the landscapes of their own voices (both personal and physical) but also begin to identify points of agency—areas where they would like to have an impact. Along the way they also learn to listen for and hear the perspectives of others. In a theatrical journey one student said she felt she had inhabited the voice of a woman who had judged her. She said it was a strange feeling seeing/hearing from another’s perspective but that it allowed her to understand where the woman was possibly coming from (Simon’s Rock, 2002). Testing one’s identity by trying other perspectives or by listening for what voices “fit us” is an integral part of the adolescents’ journey toward self. Voices are influenced by external forces that serve to shape them, such as: where we grow up, whom we “hang out” with, what work we do, the things we read, etc. In order to understand one’s voice, one must look at the discourse communities one is part of. Each of us is part of many communities: our family, our town, our religious group, etc.

Each of these contributes to the construction of one's identity and consequently one's voice (Fulwiler, 1994).

Belenky et al. note that during one period of women's identity development called subjectivism, one learns about oneself by listening for contradictions both inwardly and outwardly. "They watch and listen to themselves and begin to notice inner contradictions; they watch and listen to others and begin to draw comparisons between their own and other people's experience" (1986, p. 85). One gains clues about oneself that can be clarified by listening to one's voice compared and contrasted with others. These researchers refer to developing an awareness of one's inner or personal voice. This voice provides clues to self, which, if faced, will assist in our understanding of self.

Finding one's voice is at the heart of an individual's exploration and expression of identity. It is the way we understand ourselves, the way we express ourselves and the way we make our impact on the world.

Professor and author Peter Elbow wrestles with the intersection between voice and identity in writing, which, he acknowledges, is a murky area. Authentic voice reflects the sense of the author behind the words. He seeks to develop a voice which has the ability to be flexible although he suggests that "*resonance* is a more apt word than *authentic* in discussing voice, and that people listen for this 'fit'—the relationship between the words and the speaker behind the words" (1994, p. xxxix). We are constantly listening for these relationships. Increasing resonance lies in the answer to Elbow's question "How much of yourself did you manage to get behind the words?" (p. xxvi).

The theater techniques I use in my classes invite observers to become acutely aware of this fit between words and speaker's intentions. Using art to illuminate concepts in life, one of the students in my pilot study was interested in examining the split between how people are polite to each other regardless of how they really feel. He devised a scene to examine what people say in a particular situation versus what they were really feeling to the contrary. The observers all picked up on this split very quickly and discussed how it is part of a social norm to be friendly, not hurt others' feelings, even at the cost of hiding your own true expression. Adolescents seem to be particularly attuned to this kind of dissonance in the gap between what we say and how we really feel (Simon's Rock, 2002).

Elbow discusses our familiarity with speech and how, when reading, we tend to listen for character voice—the person behind the words. He suggests there are many dimensions of voice and that resonance involves bringing more of ourselves to fuel the intention of our words. It is not about finding one united voice. "Of course, we don't have simple, neatly coherent or unchanging selves. To remember the role of the unconscious is to remember what Bakhtin and social constructionists and others say in different terms: we are made of different roles, voices" (Elbow, 1994, p. xxxv). Linklater's concept of voice is both authentic and dramatic. She believes we can use our voices, in theater, to express our true feelings and at the same time can explore a range of emotions—our own as well as those of others. This allows us to make our voices more flexible and express

much more—which is important for freeing our natural voice, as well as for developing performance skills.

All of us listen for the unsaid—intention, intonation and resonance—and add our interpretation of tone to the mix of communication and understanding. I bring students' attention to the ways in which we do this to enhance their communication skills and help them in understanding the voices of others.

Voice in Context

Voice has always implied a connection to power—something to be attained. People whose voices are heard and listened to are those who dominate a society according to professor David Appelbaum (1990). Appelbaum suggests that Plato's stance on excluding poets in his *Republic* (360 BC) from the ideal political state had "less to do with the control that they exert over the emotions than with their power to recall us to voice and voicing ourselves" (p. xiii). They are dangerous.

Cultural and social contexts are important to consider in the development of voice since voice is so deeply influenced by social norms and values. The meaning of voice changes when considered from different cultural vantage points. An American view of voice tends to focus more on the individual. Voice in Asian cultures is often related back to the community character as opposed to the individual voice. In Native American culture there is a choral sense of voice—here, one has individual voice but it is always linked to the community. Here, expression thus represents a larger group than oneself where focus is

often on the *process* of voicing rather than on the expression itself (Yancey, 1994). Awareness of cultural contexts is crucial to considering voice.

In my work teaching drama, students explore issues significant to them, develop an awareness of themselves and their values and beliefs, and sample different value systems by playing a variety of character roles. This dramatic experience provides students with an opportunity to understand how they fit into the larger world and to develop an understanding of how voice and identity are dictated by context, cultural groundings, and the multiple roles we play.

It is important to consider social context, as voice is not an element that works alone in a vacuum (Yancey, 1994). Voice always works in relationship with other variables. The context of a situation, the community one is part of, and the people being communicated with, all influence the shaping and expression of voice (Bakhtin, 1994).

One variable of voice in context is gender relationships. Gilligan's work with girls' development and loss of voice brings into focus the idea of how voice works in relationship. Gilligan (1982) links the power of voice to relationship and connection. She believes that relationship is foundational to identity.

Each will struggle with a central relational quandary: how to stay with herself and be with others, how to keep her voice in connection with her inner psychic world of thoughts and feelings and also to bring her voice into her relationships with other people (Brown & Gilligan, 1992, p. 184).

I want to acknowledge the existence of gender differences in the development of voice. According to adolescent psychotherapist Eva Nagel "Boys are more verbal but less relational and less tuned in to their emotions. They can

often overpower girls unless care is taken.” Nagel suggested to me in a conversation about my research that “boys may be more aggressive in the [theater] exercises, but the girls may be able to take it to a deeper place.” She cautioned me to ensure there would be “safety and a chance for all to speak” in the drama exercises (Nagel, 2003).

The social context that voices are situated in colors what is being communicated and how it is being understood. Another variable of voice in context is recognizing one’s voice in contrast to others. The idea of juxtaposing voices of others against one’s own, is offered as a way of recognizing and understanding one’s own voice. Elbow also points to the role of relationship in voice, discussing how he works with students on listening for the relationship of the words to the speaker, and hints about what the speaker intends to communicate. Clues come in the sense of a person behind the words. He cites Aristotle who in his essay “Rhetoric” concludes that people listen to dialogue for clues about the speaker (Elbow, 1994, p. xii).

Is a single, authentic voice even possible? Elbow responds : “Discourse can never fully express or articulate a whole person. A person is usually too complex and has too many facets, parts, roles, voices and identities” (p. xxxiv). We have multiple selves and as a result, multiple voices. We explore the possibility for authentic moments, knowing when our words feel like us. Elbow believes that by tapping into our own true voices, we develop them. They grow richer and stronger with use. This does not leave out the Bakhtian idea of many voices informing one’s voice. Elbow says, “It’s not that I give up the original

voices, but I develop more options. Gradually, I find I have more flexibility of voice—more voices that feel like me” (Elbow, 1994, p. xiv).

The Construction of Voice

Our voices are constructed at least in part by voices from the discourse communities we are part of (Cummins, 1994). In other words, we are conditioned and influenced by the voices that surround us as we grow up and develop our own voices. In a natural way the voices around us become the foundation for our own. Our voices are colored by our cultural groundings, our social groupings and our lived experiences. In the end, it is difficult to decipher where environmental and social influences begin and the individual development of our voice ends.

Using a theatrical model for exploring one’s voice or multiple voices allows students to listen for and try on the voices of others. Elbow has employed strategies of role-playing in his work noting that “role playing and irony and make-believe often get at possible or temporary selves or dimensions of the protean self that are important and useful but unavailable to consciousness” (p. xiv). This playful exploration helps situate one’s own voice and allows it to become more flexible. Elbow suggests there is a dual process occurring:

In one case it is a matter of using, trusting, and “playing in” (as with an unplayed violin) a voice that feels like one’s own—and seeing it become more flexible. In the other case it is a matter of trusting oneself to use unaccustomed or even alien voices in a spirit of play and non-investment—and seeing those voices become more comfortable and owned (1994, p. 30).

This idea of tapping unknown dimensions of ourselves is important in my teaching. I believe that students will discover themselves by being introduced to

these dimensions. This is true for unknown aspects of ourselves, negative as well as positive. I am reminded of the story of the acting student who, playing the role of an SS guard in Nazi Germany, was chilled to discover that having the power over another was intoxicating (Wilhelm & Edminston, 1998). This is a disturbing revelation in a world in which we hear so often that something as horrific as the extermination of Jews could never happen again. Clearly, though, the potential for such evil lives in all of us. I encourage students to dig deeply into the understanding of voice in relationship to personal attributes and the effects of culture. Understanding the dark side of ourselves is as informative as understanding our best possible selves.

In another consideration of voice in writing, author Maureen O'Leary talks about students having three voices:

1. one which they are born with, and which is shaped by gender, race, ethnicity; and social, economic, and cultural factors
2. one which students have "thrust upon them" (a reference to Malvolio's monologue in Shakespeare's play *Twelfth Night*) as a result of their experiences within the communities they are part; and
3. a voice developed through education and focused practice.

She identifies these three strands of voice posed as questions:

- "Where have I been?"
- "Where am I now?"
- "Where am I going?" (1993, pp. 4-5)

These three voices are constantly changing both through the influence of lived experience and as the result of our relationships with others. Each of these questions works together, with the third being influenced by the first two. O'Leary identifies the culminating voice reflecting all three voices as a "full voice." Ultimately, O'Leary suggests that "[a]ll three are embraced by the single most important question both inside and outside the academy: 'who am I?'" (O'Leary, 1993, p. 13).

Achieving voice, like identity, is a fluid process that is never ending. O'Leary notes that identity is often mistakenly considered static. Once we have come into who we are, we're expected to stay that way. Similarly, students often perceive voice to be static:

They are convinced that their voices, like their looks, are a given—immutable, unchangeable. A voice, in short is "born." And it is. When this voice really emerges, it reflects significant aspects of a student's identity: her socio-economic and cultural background, ethnicity, race, age, gender, all that the student has experienced thus far (O'Leary, 1993, p. 2).

O'Leary's students indicate that in early attempts at writing, their voices don't represent them. She suggests this is because their writing is colored by the "generic, homogenized voice of clichés of advertising, of popular culture." She goes on to say that our own voices are suppressed by culture until we find ways to jump start them.

Thus the voice that is "born" needs something else to jolt it into life and resonance, so that it can reflect the individual student in all her glorious tones and colors. Unattended to, it is often interchangeable with the next student's voice (O'Leary, 1993, p. 2).

In my teaching I see students at all academic levels, from adolescents to middle-aged master's degree candidates, who have not experienced the jolt that O'Leary refers to. How can we allow this door to be opened for our students? One can slip through the educational system assessed by standardized tests, which evaluate whether a student has the "right answers" without ever examining if the student's imagination has been released or if his or her mind has been invited to make sense of the world, to think of how things might be different. Why then are we surprised when young people grow into passive adults unwilling and/or unable to effect change?

How then do we come to voice? Linklater proposes that it is through focused exploration of the physical voice. Gilligan's work suggests we focus on voicing one's inner life. Elbow suggests that the journey entails identifying and developing one's voice through different modes of writing. My approach is focused on examining one's voice in juxtaposition to the voices of others and by trying on voices through character exploration. My method of teaching and research incorporates much of the work and ideas of these authors.

I find that student voices come to life most vividly set against the relief of the voices of others. For some, this juxtaposition can be accomplished in discussion (small group); for others in role playing—and for others, in playing multiple characters. I prefer dramatic exploration. Asking students to move into a set of circumstances allows them to explore without thought to their internal censors or real life repercussions. Creating a context that is safe for exploring a virtual world allows students to swap places with someone who is not— but could

be—themselves. Watching the dramatic work of others, engaging in explorations of rehearsal techniques, and theater exercises make students conscious of the dynamics of such things as the intonation, personal voice, resonance and agency that have been discussed here. In scene work we examine the inner and outer worlds of a character by asking them provocative questions, by creating monologues of inner thoughts. We replay scenes making subtle changes in intention and intonation to see how the scenes may move in new directions. We consider what each character wants and how he or she goes about getting it. Bartholomae asserts that as part of students' development, they "must learn to try on a variety of voices and interpretative schemes" (quoted in Yancey, 1994, p. xv). It's a way of learning to speak different languages.

Awareness and training of one's manifestation of voice is necessary to expand one's range of expression and to explore the connection of voice to inner life. Through dramatic exploration I ask students to be aware of how their voice is distinctive, to listen for its dramatic qualities, and to consider the potential for expressing their authentic selves. Students examine the elements of confidence and authority in voice. The progression of my work in theater begins with listening for the manifestation of voice, slowly becoming aware of its characteristics and its potential range. Students are invited to play with trying on voices different than their own, and to discover in the process voices that are authentic to themselves— that reflect their inner landscape. Ultimately students become comfortable enough using their voices that they become stronger and

develop a sense of authority. Authority is necessary to move into a sense of agency.

Summary

In this chapter I began with my own understanding of the development of voice through theater education and have introduced the various ways that voice, as a concept, is used in this research: physical, personal, and active as agency. I have discussed the connections between voice and identity development in adolescent students. Voice must always be considered in context, whether social, cultural or relational, and it must be understood as dynamic. Voices grow and develop, but always within a context. As we construct our voices we take on ideas from others around us, and the context in which we construct our voices influences the voices we develop. Students who engage in theater education activities during adolescence have the opportunity to enhance their understanding of concepts of voice as they explore and discover their own voices.

Developing student voices not only allows students to be active participants in their world, but also provides the opportunity for students to see how their voices might have an impact on the community. Coming to an aesthetic awareness that each of us has something important to say and that each of us has a right to be heard should be one of the strongest priorities of education. Developing, strengthening and empowering all of our students' voices now, ultimately has the power to change the future.

Chapter Three: Identity and Drama Education

Introduction

In this chapter, I begin by discussing the development of identity in adolescence as a cultural construct and continue by exploring the application of drama education as an intervention that fosters adolescent identity development. In the United States there is permission to explore identity during adolescence. Despite this, we've lost many of the traditions and rituals that allow teenagers to effectively approach this exploration. In addition, educators must be concerned with promoting the development of students' voice and identity, (Greene, 1985) but with the push of standardized testing, educators are often frustrated when their goals are not fully realized. Drama education can provide a safe space, and a powerful intervention tool to support this inquiry for students into their own identity, as they attempt to understand who they are, what they believe, and how they can have an impact on their community (Linklater, 1976; Boal, 1995).

Adolescence is a concept developed only during the last century to describe the time between childhood and adulthood. Though there has always been a transition between childhood and adulthood, contemporary views see adolescence as the crux of an individual's search for self. Psychologist Erik Erikson suggests that this time of development became significant with the movement of immigrants into the United States as they tried to find their place (Erikson, 1963). Adolescence is a time of exploration; a search for answers to a wide range of questions including:

- Who am I as a young woman/man, individual, sibling, family member, and friend?
- What do I care about?
- What role do I play in my world/society?
- What are my opinions, attitudes, and values?
- What do I stand for?
- What are the patterns/repeating themes in my life?
- Through what lens/frame of reference do I see the world?
- What are my life questions?
- What do I know?
- How do others see me?
- What is my niche?
- How am I different from and similar to my peers?
- What do I have to offer others?

The answers to these questions place the adolescent in the world, so that he/she begins to understand who he/she is as an individual and in relation to others.

There is a general consensus that identity changes over time and that it is during adolescence that a major part of identity exploration and development occurs.

The phenomenon of adolescence is a Western idea (Rogers, 1969). In other cultures there is an acknowledgement of the transition between childhood and adulthood; however, there is often no clear adolescent period of exploration because individual development is often not as highly valued as it is in Western cultures. Rather, the focus tends to be on the group, the community. In other cultures, there are often, however, rituals that mark the start of adulthood that ease the transition and define expectations of being an adult.

More traditional, non-industrial and ritualized societies provide “place” for the individual at prescribed times. The more restrictive the society, the more the individual has to adapt to what is socially dictated. The individual is absorbed into pre-assigned roles, a transition marked by more or less elaborate rites of

passage. The individual has little or no choice: He or she is usually born to a place that then may or may not have to be earned through proving oneself (Josselson, 1994, p. 14). In such cultures, adult roles are clearly laid out and young people grow into adulthood, stepping into their assigned roles without an exploration of choices (Redman, as cited in Csikszentmihalyi & Larsen, 1984).

In Western cultures such as the U.S., there is increasingly a lack of clear markers or set rites of passage into adulthood. Strong cultural and community frameworks can substitute for this lack of a path, as in the case of strong ethnic or religious groups, in which honored rituals, such as bat or bar mitzvahs, confirmations, etc., are carried forward. However, many families have lost touch with these connections. While these rituals may be dissipating, Eisenberg (1969) points out that there are explorations of different roles that allow for experiences earmarked for the development of the adolescent (e.g., school, dating, etc.). Although exploration of roles is not accepted in many cultures, it is considered part of the adolescent process here in the United States. In places where individuality and freedom of choice are valued, identity development evolves into an exploration of alternatives.

Societies that offer choices to young people provide the idea that options can be tested. Young people are free to test the water—exploring alternate ways of being and doing, considering what that might fit him or her best (Josselson, 1994).

The exploration associated with adolescence can continue into one's twenties. The development of adolescence is attributed by some to the

extension of schooling and the delay of work. "The economic conditions of an affluent society in which adolescent labors are unnecessary for societal survival and well-being may indeed have contributed to the marginality of adolescents and the problematic conditions for adolescent identity" (Kroger, 1996, p.4). Sieg suggests, then that adolescence is a cultural phenomenon "and not physiologically necessary to the development of the human being" (cited in Kroger, 1996, p. 5). Interestingly however, Kiell, researching the transition between youth and adulthood by reviewing accounts about adolescent experience from around the world and over 15 centuries, has found that "the great internal turmoil and external disorder of adolescence are universal and only moderately affected by cultural determinants" (as cited in Csikszentmihalyi & Larsen, 1984, p. 16). In other words, even if exploration is not accepted in a culture, the questioning and search for self still occurs as a child moves into adulthood.

The development of voice and identity for both boys and girls is not always encouraged in our society. Education that encourages passive learning, and the impact of media in the MTV and internet era can contribute to a disconnect of personal opinions and values and the development of a personal stance. The literature suggests that there are ways for educators to intervene in the identity development process to assist adolescents in finding their way through this often confusing time. I believe methods of intervention can be introduced to foster healthy identity development. With such a large range of areas to explore and develop, there is a search for specific methods that might assist teenagers in

navigating the obstacles inherent in identity development. I believe that theater education is a powerful tool for intervention and assists adolescents in exploring these areas.

Psychic Energy and Intervention

In developing programs to intervene in and facilitate the development of adolescent identity, it is crucial to understand how adolescents focus their attention. Researchers Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) argue that an adolescent's attention is determined by the "interaction of three broad principles of organization: instincts, habits, and values" (p. 17). Instincts are developed over human history and are related to issues of survival. Each individual develops habits during a lifetime, based on patterns of behavior found to be beneficial or enjoyable.

Instincts and habits shape attention from behind, as it were, by channeling and structuring psychic energy in terms of past experience. Values, on the other hand, shape attention in terms of future expectations
(Csikszentmihalyi & Larson, 1984, p. 17)

We choose our behavior based on our values. Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) believe that part of the conflict and confusion of adolescence is created by the competition between these forces. Each individual only has so much psychic energy. Csikszentmihalyi and Larson define two states—one positive and one negative. "Psychic entropy" is a decrease of energy, which Csikszentmihalyi and Larson believe includes four "dimensions" — "bad moods, passivity, lack of motivation, and unfocused attention" (p. 21). These dimensions take away from the productive use of energy toward growth and if prolonged, can block the

development of identity. Csikszentmihalyi and Larson (1984) call the opposite of psychic entropy “negentropy,” which is described as optimal experience.

Regardless of the specific activities, people mentioned a set of consistent elements that are related to optimal experience. They described profound involvement with their activity, which combined a loss of self-consciousness with deep concentration.... Many respondents used the word “flow” to describe the effortless buoyancy of the experience (p. 23).

The aspects identified with negentropy include:

- Positive feelings toward self and others: happiness, friendliness, and good cheer.
- Psychological activation. This happens when action follows action without need for thought or hesitation, and the person experiences a sense of energy and competence.
- Intrinsic motivation: spontaneous involvement with whatever is going on. Intrinsic motivation means a person identifies with the goal of the activity.
- Effective concentration: A person is absorbed in what he is doing and is able to think about it clearly (p. 24).

Waterman (1985) also makes the case for what he calls optimal psychological functioning:

Experiences of an activity as personally expressive for an individual occur when there is: (a) an unusually intense involvement in an undertaking; b) a feeling of special fit or meshing with an activity that is not characteristic of most daily tasks; c) a feeling of intensely being alive; d) a feeling that this is who one really is. Such experiences of personal expressiveness appear conceptually linked with the feelings associated with intrinsic motivation (Deci & Ryan, 1985), flow (Csikszentmihalyi, 1988), and peak experiences (Maslow, 1964) (p. 58).

Programs seeking to foster the development of adolescent identity must seek to develop these positive experiences. This kind of “*flow*” experience can serve to foster the development of identity. When this kind of connection occurs in engagement with the arts it is called an aesthetic experience. An aesthetic experience— a connection with art that is so deep that the viewer/participant is somehow transformed.

Intervention

Psychologist James Kroger feels that though there is natural movement towards identity achievement, many adolescents tend to get caught between Marcia’s statuses of diffusion or foreclosure in which exploration is either not ended or that commitments are made before options have been fully explored. This may be the result of not enough opportunities for exploration of alternatives being offered or encouraged (Waterman, 1994). He suggests that educational programs can be designed to facilitate identity development. Research conducted by Markstrom-Adams and Spencer indicates that “intervention training strategies in social perspective taking may facilitate identity development (cited in Kroger, 1996, p. 43). Kroger (1996, p. 142) has identified many researchers (Dowell, 1971; Rustad and Rogers, 1975; Erikson, 1975; Exum 1977; Kessler et al., 1986; and Sprinthall et al., 1992) who have suggested that intervention at the secondary school level can bolster identity and maturity. Waterman suggests that there is a strong need for intervention and the development of curricula that address and support identity development.

Researchers who advocate for interventions also suggest there may be an optimal time for them. Piaget says:

I have a hypothesis, which I am so far incapable of proving: probably the organization of operations has an optimal time...it is probably possible to accelerate intellectual development, but maximal acceleration is not desirable. There seems to be an optimal time. What this optimal time is will surely depend on each individual and on the subject matter. We still need a great deal of research to know what the optimal time would be (Piaget cited in Kroger, 1996, p. 179).

Psychologist Lawrence Kohlberg's research suggests that adolescents who have been in a particular stage of moral development for a while are more likely to shift than those who have recently entered a new stage (Colby et al. as cited in Kroger, 1996, p. 179). Developmental psychologist Robert Kegan also indicates that there is an optimal time for this kind of exploration and if one is pushed before one is ready, the intervention could backfire.

The subtle and overt messages a college freshman gets that he is on his own in the conduct of his academic and private life can serve to honor that newly emerging voice in the development of personality. But for a person who has not yet begun this emergence, the same messages—which professors and advisers may think of as confirmations of the student's adulthood—can be experienced as an abandonment, a refusal to care and a disorienting vacuum of expectation. This new embedded culture is not yet called for, and the old one has been lost (Kegan cited in Kroger, 1996 p. 179).

Interestingly, Blos (1962) noted that there is a surge of creativity and artistic ability during adolescence. This supports the idea that theater education seems to be a particularly good fit as a contributor to the development of identity.

Developmental psychologist Robert Kegan suggests that the interventive approach may well be introducing a disequilibrium in adolescence, which prompts growth and development while at the same time providing a safe and

supportive relationship to support the adolescent through the disequilibrium (Kroger, 1996). Kegan suggests guidelines for environments that support the development of adolescent identity. These “cultures of embeddedness:”

- 1) holds securely (confirms and recognizes)
- 2) lets go at an appropriate time (contradicts and assists differentiation) and
- 3) remains in place to see its guest through the transition to a new balance (cited in Kroger, 1996, p. 168).

Kroger goes on to note that our culture places numerous demands on adolescents' and requires commitments in school, in work, reliability to work, and ability to understand the needs of others. Kegan advocates for the development of a curriculum that cultivates students' minds as opposed to a curriculum that provides information and skills (Kroger, 1996). There are specific factors that must also be addressed in our consideration of identity development. Josselson points to the social nature of identity development:

Identity development is an integrated process between an individual and the society of which he/she is part of. Social intervention necessitates an analysis of the role of the external world in supporting or hindering the process of identity formation. The adolescent does not do it alone: The process, in its essence, requires dialogue. Thus there must be people there for the adolescent to explore with and against. Someone must be making limits so the adolescent can find boundaries. Someone must provide support so the adolescent can go on when the way becomes frightening. Someone must be there to exemplify and take an interest so that the adolescent can measure himself or herself while feeling invited to join... Intervention thus must take account of both sides of this process. To intervene on the individual side, we try to make changes in the internal world of the adolescent so that he or she is more able to undertake and complete the journey. To intervene on the social side, we attempt to reform our social institutions so that they promote optimal development (Josselson, 1994, p. 23-24).

Josselson warns that society expects adolescents to achieve identity within a certain time frame and parameters. Individuals who fall out of this framework

may be labeled for something that was merely part of their investigation of self (1994). In other words, for someone who's timeline of adolescent identity development is longer than what's generally accepted may end up living with the unfortunate consequences of their choices rather than being given leeway for exploration that is often afforded teenagers.

Dreyer points out that the creation of identity is a blend of the individual's search and society's expectations. Providing a safe place within which young people are afforded the opportunity to experiment and explore options through theater work and without repercussion can provide a tool for intervention. In creating intervention programs, Dreyer suggests that students must have ownership of the work they are doing. He suggests that an identity development curriculum promotes:

- exploration, responsible choice, and self-determination by students;
- role-playing and social interaction across generations;
- the students' understanding of time and how the past is related to the present;
- self-acceptance and positive feedback from teachers and counselors (Dreyer, 1994).

Drama Education as a Tool for Intervention

Drama education can prompt the development of identity in adolescence because it allows the kind of role playing that allows us to be empathic—to “walk in the shoes of another” without the risks involved in making choices for ourselves. Often, playing a role can be as powerful as lived experience. We can

use theater as a magnifying lens through which to look at complex issues from a safe distance. We are safe because we are not looking at our own lives and experiences, yet we can identify with the thoughts and feelings of the characters before us. By taking the stance of a character different from ourselves we can look at his or her personal reaction to a dilemma and uncover realizations about our own ways of thinking. Theater can place us in unusual situations that allow us to explore what we might do or feel in a similar scenario. This kind of role playing can facilitate identity development. Also called “social perspective-taking,” this process allows students to see the world from someone else’s frame of reference, and can reduce ego-centrism (Markstrom-Adams, & Spencer, 1994).

Theater work can use scripted pieces to explore the world of fully developed characters, or students can create original pieces to examine issues in their own lives. Both can engender huge realizations in participants. Students see the connections made between their own lives and a “virtual world” in which anything can happen. Through theater education, we can give our young people the time and space to learn the lessons of life without the risks of making grave mistakes with irretrievable results, and the unique chance to step outside of their personal frames of reference to understand how others think, feel, and react. In addition, it is in the adolescent’s nature to look at possibilities, as noted in the discussion of Piaget’s theory. Possibilities are the business of theater. Kohlberg believed that “moral education” could be devised to facilitate the development of moral beliefs and ideas based on hypothetical situations that

introduced dilemmas to be resolved (Dreyer, 1994). Theater education does this naturally, offering a range of moral dilemmas to be wrestled with and explored. Theater can reflect the complexity of our lives and the issues we are faced with. Grappling with moral issues supports the development of moral reasoning.

Gilligan and her colleagues chose to work with theater exercises and writing in their research on identity development in girls because, as Gilligan noted, theater and writing were “art forms which could hold the layering of psychological experience” (Gilligan, 1992, p. 38). Boal notes that the human being is the only life form that has the ability for self-observation. Theater provides the “aesthetic space” for such self-observation, using what Boal calls an “imaginary mirror.” Boal believes that theater examines relationships by allowing people to look at human nature and conflict in a theatrical setting (Boal, 1995, p. 13). A powerful connection between people and issues can be created in this space. Placing students in fictional scenarios can provide them with opportunities for authentic responses that help them understand how people change and develop in response to their circumstances (Lambert & O’Neill, 1991). I believe that theater education can help adolescents locate their personal voices and ultimately their identities. By personal voice I mean a way of understanding one’s beliefs and values and a willingness to put them out into the world.

Theater can offer ways of learning that generate interest in students who have otherwise failed in other areas. By illuminating the facets within students that teachers had been unaware of, theater can provide experiences in the

classroom that allow each student to find his or her own voice (Gallas, 1991; McCaslin, 2000). Theater appeals to a variety of learning styles, allowing students to connect with the work according to how they learn. Much of this new understanding of what the arts can accomplish has been fueled by Howard Gardner's work on multiple intelligences. Gardner proposes that there are seven kinds of intelligence or ways of learning: linguistic, logical-mathematical intelligence, spatial intelligence, kinesthetic intelligence, musical intelligence, interpersonal intelligence, and intrapersonal intelligence (Gardner, 1985). Most curricula focus on learning that appeals to the first two intelligences: linguistic and logical-mathematical. Current educational policymakers are moving away from limiting students to just these two ways of knowing and are beginning to accommodate the wide variety of ways in which students learn. The arts span all of these intelligences and as a result, provide a useful method to tap into students' diverse learning styles. Gardner's work encourages an expanded view of the arts and their relationship to education (McCaslin, 2000).

Unlike many theorists, I believe that rather than identity being formed during adolescence, children enter adolescence with strong beliefs but need to understand, explore and test these belief systems during their teenage years. They need assistance articulating their beliefs. Time and again I have seen students' voices, ideas and sense of self drawn out through dramatic work. Their ideas are clear and often fully developed, but often students lack the confidence in expressing who they are. The adolescent's exploration process entails coming to an awareness of his/her identity, uncovering rather than constructing it. In

other words, it is more of a discovery process than a creation process. During this process, the landscape of one's identity is discovered then reshaped as new information is confronted. I see students locate their own positions as they are placed in contrast to others. This becomes strongly apparent during theater explorations in which they are asked to don the perspectives of people quite different from themselves. Adolescents consider new information and situations, new perspectives, weigh them and place them against lived experience, balance them on value systems, and accepting, rejecting, or changing new ideas to fit with their current knowledge, views of the world, and belief systems.

Ultimately, participation in theater as a tool for intervention can trigger an understanding of self. By exploring ideas of characters different from themselves, students locate their own ideas, values, and belief systems. My research seeks to discover the ways in which theater may provide a useful tool to promote successful identity development, and can be harnessed to provide a unique intervention and supportive approach to the development of identity.

Drama Education as Cultural Grounding

An intervention program must include elements that promote an understanding of students' own background and culture, and an awareness that theirs is not the only perspective. Asking students to reflect on their backgrounds and what makes them who they are develops an awareness of where they come from. Often the sense of what has influenced them is so ingrained that they have lost the ability to see it without actively looking for it (Banks, 1994; McIntosh, 1990). This "monocultural" perspective leaves students thinking that there is one

cultural system that everyone is part of. This notion blocks students from understanding others who are different from themselves. As McIntosh notes, “there is no culturally unmarked person” (p. 3).

Drama education can encourage cultural grounding for students and sensitize them to an awareness of otherness. This knowledge, once unearthed, creates an awareness of how powerfully their unique perspectives and backgrounds influence their responses to life issues. Students need to be aware that they carry assumptions about the world with them. Exploring their own set of assumptions provides students with a basis for understanding their own socio-cultural perspectives. Studies have suggested that identity formation can be promoted by encouraging individuals to take different social perspectives by looking at themselves in relation to others and by attempting to understand the vantage point of others (Adams, 1985).

Training of the physical voice is an integral part of theater education as students explore vocal elements (such as volume, pitch, and diction) and how these elements play the role in communication (Linklater, 1976). Theater allows students to situate themselves among the voices of others, allowing learners to identify the elements that resonate with or contradict their own authentic, multiple voices that inhabit their own voice. Dramatic work activates students’ thinking process. It requires that knowledge and information be transformed. Students take their understanding of a situation and of a character, and based on their knowledge create new ground in a dramatic situation. Students play with a fictional set of circumstances, investigating a diverse range of possibilities for

human behavior. Multiple perspectives are explored and multiple voices are examined from the “inside-out.”

Describing the power of dramatic role play, Doherty (1996) says:

Students are at least offered the chance through improvised role-plays to rehearse, ‘inhabit,’ and ‘voice’ perspectives. Role plays offer the possibility of sensitizing students to both their limits and capacities for understanding unfamiliar points of view (p. 157).

Brazilian theater artist and social activist Augusto Boal uses engagement with theater to develop agency in a rehearsal for change. In a performative dialogue (a dialogue between actors and an audience sparked through performance) that uses powerful theater exercises, participants explore a variety of social problems using theater as a communication technique. The work engages the audience in exploring alternative solutions to problems. Participants see the power of their own ideas; their voices come to life before them. This work has been used in both theater and non-theater settings, to explore the nuances of a situation and to launch discussion around complex and sensitive topics (Boal, 1985; 1995; Schutzman-Cruz, 1994).

Theater can provide a way of magnifying and exploring sensitive issues by using metaphor to understand complex concepts (Goldberg & Phillips, 1995; Parsons and Blocker, 1993; Boal, 1995; Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz, 1994). It provides a unique lens for looking at problems, and uncovering fresh perspectives. Theater can provide a point of intersection between expressing oneself (personal and physical voice) and learning about how one relates to the world in a way that makes the learning process a conscious one (Greene, 1995).

Transformation through Drama

Theater enables us to make the familiar strange, and to look at what we know in new ways. Creating an aesthetic space allows us to explore different views through connection to characters. Ultimately this notion suggests that theater can be a base for understanding, and can trigger social change.

Incorporating the details of speech that also hold information—pauses, stutters, half-statements—adds additional unspoken meaning. Meaning is embedded in our hesitations, stutters, the nuances and the idiosyncrasies of our language. Theater artist Normi Noel makes the point that it is important to consider all of these nuances because a quiet moment, pause or false start can communicate more than a full sentence. The *way* in which we communicate, not just what we say, is loaded with meaning (conversation with Normi Noel, 2001).

Theater has the ability to magnify. It provides the opportunity to tease out nuances of complex issues. It can provide distance, a safe space within which one can walk amidst the pieces of a complex puzzle, reflect, and consider while keeping emotion and personal agenda at bay.

Harvard law professor and author Lani Guinier suggests that because theater creates a connection, it can prompt us to engage with material in a different way and as a result be sparked to effect change. She says that, “It’s about exciting the mind and exciting the soul and exciting the people to become citizens in their own democracy” (Guinier & Smith, 2001, p.45).

Theater, like all the arts, creates a connection by demanding active engagement (Langer, 1953; Dewey, 1934). Maxine Greene advocates providing

students with access to the arts in order to energize them to "wide-awakeness." Engaging with art can lead to questioning of how we relate to the world (Greene, 1978).

Dramatic Explorations

I sought to explore the power of drama described above in ways that would support the development of voice. The work in this inquiry process began with a series of theater games and exercises in which students played with role and identity, and voice and imagination. This allowed students to build basic skill levels in dramatic techniques and performance, to develop their imaginations, and their ability to and comfort with taking risks. This group became an ensemble in this early work, learning together the elements of drama, how to share ideas and how to "play" with the concepts offered in class. The second layer of this work was to allow students to identify issues of concern in their lives, through working with a series of exploratory and metaphorical exercises.

One of the dramatic explorations we engaged in was the development of a Reader's Theater script. Reader's Theater is an arts-based research method that is used to collect different perspectives on a complex topic, and put them together in a script, which brings real voices to life and illuminates different aspects of the issue being explored. My approach to Reader's Theater has been deeply influenced by Anna Deavere Smith's work, which she terms "Interview Theater." Smith's approach entails interviewing selected people about a particular topic. Real voices are transcribed, capturing all of the idiosyncrasies of speech. The script is created by juxtaposing these voices in a way that reveals

multiple perspectives on a topic. The piece was to provide a through-line for the work we conducted during this voice project. The goal of the theater piece was for students to critically consider issues of significance to them, in this case, the rules, which monitor their behavior. My hope was that students would move from feeling oppressed and silenced by rules, to playing a more active role in exploring multiple perspectives about why the rules were developed, by whom; what the thinking had been in their creation, how teachers felt enforcing them, as well as how students felt about them. I also thought that the process of collecting the information would spark a dialogue about the rules that the teachers and administrators would also, in the process, be encouraged to consider multiple voices. The idea was to juxtapose many different perspectives on the rules. This exploration was in essence asking students to critically read their world. The aesthetic frame of Reader's Theater allows for disparate and conflicting ideas to be considered. Subtext, and spoken word hang together to create a framework that creates a coherent whole. Striking patterns often emerge from this kind of investigation. Allowing contrasting voices to reside together in the same space allows for realizations and a new kind of hearing in which both spoken and unspoken voices become known. Dialogue becomes punctuated in new ways. A "grammar" develops that is specific to the topic being explored. Metaphors begin to emerge that transcend the whole. There is a way in which the voices in a script begin to work together that is larger than the sum of its parts. The voices when heard together illuminate gaps and understandings, emotion, and even privilege.

The script of *Rules!* (See appendix) was developed by students as an investigation of their students' perceptions of the fairness of school rules. Concepts explored included their interpretation of school, their understanding of their relationship with teachers, and how they navigated the school day.

Summary

The development of identity in adolescence requires a complex questioning of self and self in the context of others. While adolescence is a relatively recent Western construct that identifies the transition between childhood and adulthood, it now represents an opportunity for educators to contribute to learning and growth of students. Through an engagement with drama, educators can make significant contributions to student development by fostering a greater understanding of oneself and one's ideas, beliefs, and values (identity/personal voice) and willingness and ability to express one's views (physical and personal voice). Drama also can provide opportunities for exploring socio-cultural perspectives, biases and how one's assumptions can color perceptions. Ultimately drama can provide students with a realization that one can impact one's community (agency), and create a vehicle to develop the voice to do so.

Chapter Four: Methodology

Introduction

In this chapter, I discuss my research methodology using critical ethnography. Critical ethnography is a method that allows the researcher to challenge research, policy, and other forms of human activity. Critical ethnographers attempt to aid emancipatory goals, negate repressive influences, raise consciousness, and invoke a call to action that potentially will lead to social action (*Dictionary of Student Outcomes*, 2005).

Using this method of research allowed me to frame my inquiry in such a way as to both uncover information about the development of voice for students involved in the study and to effect change in the classroom.

Statement of the Research Question

The purpose of this study is to understand *if* and *how* teaching theater techniques in classrooms influence the development of a sense of voice and identity in adolescents. The research question that framed this study is, “How does theater education affect the voice and identity of adolescents?” I was interested in student perceptions of the dramatic experience and how participation in dramatic journeys influences the development of voice and identity. Several questions fueled the design of this study:

- How do students understand voice?
- What realizations emerge from learning to listen for under-represented voices?
- How do status and power influence voice?
- Do students’ understanding of their own voices and their ability to listen for other voices change through their experiences with dramatic work?

- Does working in an aesthetic space and through the creative process influence students' ways of understanding voice?
- Can exploring the perspectives of others through character work assist students in hearing and considering perspectives other than their own, and shift their understanding of the world?
- How are certain voices privileged and others silenced?
- What is learned (both intentionally and unintentionally) through the drama exercises selected?

Research Design

The five-week theater education and research project explored the role of student voice in telling and understanding student stories through dramatic work during a course that lasted thirteen sessions. Students engaged in an ongoing discussion of voice as they embarked on a series of dramatic explorations. I chose a critical ethnographic methodology because it allowed me to conduct research in a way that was visible for students that would honor the wisdom they brought to the classroom from their own experiences and perspectives. I also wanted an approach that would have the potential to create positive changes through drama. As research becomes praxis, effecting social change is an integral goal of the critical ethnographical process. The critical ethnography method was an approach that made students and classroom teacher co-researchers, as I worked to my make my process and inquiry transparent and to share my realizations along the way to check their validity. Part of the

methodology includes an approach that seeks to uncover issues of inequity and works to affect social change as part of the research goals and process.

Data collection began in September 2003 and ended in December 2003. Participants in the study included sixteen 9th- to 12th-grade teenagers enrolled in a drama class at Richmond High School in a medium-sized city in Massachusetts. Participants included nine African-American, seven Latina, and one White student. During the thirteen sessions, three students were transferred out of class due to schedule changes. One was transferred into an upper level English Class, and two left because of other course changes. In addition, two students joined the class. One African-American male student often participated in class though he was not officially enrolled.

I facilitated the project session in collaboration with artist educator Linda Eppel and Richmond High School classroom teacher Deborah Mickle (these names have also been changed). My role as teacher/observer allowed me to ask questions, frame discussions, and steer the course of the work to maximize the students' dramatic exploration.

My work is grounded in critical theory and I work to address issues of inequity and silencing. This has allowed me to develop a critical pedagogy—an approach to teaching that promotes social justice. In my practice, I use a critical approach to name social justice issues, reflect critically about them, and take action to make sure that student voices are heard and respected. I have worked to interrogate my teaching to find more effective ways to provide educational experiences that are inclusive, accessible, meaningful and relevant to students'

lives. My interest in drama (and all of the arts for that matter) in a large degree has been because of its power to bring students voices forward, to draw them out and strengthen them. The arts often level the playing field with students for whom traditional forms of education have failed. In my teaching of integrating the arts across the curriculum I have heard teachers, new to the arts, report on how their classrooms have been transformed by the arts—and how the arts create a space in which everyone is welcome, and each unique voice can have value.

The Arts as Research

Using the arts as a tool for collecting and examining data has powerful implications for considering nuance, context and perspective.

[Research] is only research. After all the facts have been marshaled, all the documents studied, all the locales visited, all the survivors interviewed, what then? What do the facts add up to? What did the life mean? (Zinsser as cited in Glesne and Peshkin, 1992, p. 156).

In addressing how qualitative research can be presented in alternative, artistic methods, qualitative researcher Glesne discusses how “the contextual nature of knowledge along with the role of language in creating meaning has become a focal point of current thought and debate.” She asserts that:

Some critical, feminist, and interpretivist scholars highlight, in particular: (1) how the research tale cannot be separated from the teller, the researcher; (2) how the language the writer chooses carries with it certain values; and (3) how all textual presentations are “fashioned” and, thereby, in a sense, fictions. There are no “true” representations (Glesne, 1992, p. 175-176).

Reader's Theater advocates Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer support Eisner's stance that the arts can provide a fresh and useful way of looking at data. The arts are useful in supporting the goals of qualitative research, which

are a response to documenting aspects of an experience that statistical analysis cannot.

What the writer is able to do, as is the painter, composer, dancer, or critic, is to transform knowledge held in one mode into another, namely the mode within the material with which he or she works. Somehow the artist finds or creates the structural expressive equivalent of an idea, a feeling, or an image within the material with which he or she works. The material becomes the public embodiment—a medium, in the literal sense of the word—through which life of feeling is shared. The arts are not a second-class substitute for expression. They are one of the major means people throughout history have used both to conceptualize and express what has been inexpressible in discursive terms (Eisner as cited in Donmoyer & Yennie Donmoyer, 1995, p. 2).

Eisner suggests that knowledge can be obtained through nondiscursive as well as discursive methods and he encourages exploration of non-traditional forms of qualitative research. He makes the case for considering research as art (Konzal).

The very choice of language you use—whether clear and coherent, complex and disruptive, removed and formal, or personal and evocative—tells a story in addition to what you mean it to say (Glesne, 1999, p. 177).

Elliott Eisner outlines five reasons for alternative methods of qualitative research:

- (1) creating a sense of empathy for research participants;
- (2) providing a sense of particularity and authenticity;
- (3) generating insight and attention to complexity;
- (4) increasing the kinds of questions that researchers can ask as they think within new mediums; and
- (5) making better use of the variety in researchers' representational abilities (as cited in Glesne, 1999).

I believe that theater, by its nature, does all of these things. Glesne posits that using alternative methods for research forces researchers to think about data in new ways, "When creating drama or Reader's Theater, for example, you tend to focus on dialogue and how people's words support and challenge each

other”(Glesne, 1999, p. 81). Qualitative researchers Coffey and Atkinson suggest that using an alternative method, such as theater,

forces [you] to think about the meanings and understandings, voices, and experiences present in the data...Analytical ideas are developed and tried out in the process of writing and representing (as cited in Glesne, 1999, p. 81).

Reader’s Theater has been identified as a powerful tool for representing research data. I sought in my work to incorporate techniques of actress and playwright Anna Deavere Smith’s work in what she refers to as Interview Theater, which builds on the structure of Reader’s Theater. Reader’s theater does not strive to portray realism. Rather, it engages the audience as a participant in creating meaning from its more stylized format (Glesne, 1999).

Reader’s Theater brings the source of the data into the room to present through the research participants’ own voice. It provides a context for the data through the suggestion of character and the exploration of metaphor. The telling of the story is an interpretive act. In other words, the way language is used creates meaning in addition to what the words are communicating.

When using Reader’s Theater as the mode of presentation, data take on the characteristics of theater: a moment is created anew each time it is performed. It is not static, therein lies its fresh and exciting nature and the deepened connection. Connection occurs between the performer and the audience as voices and content are shared.

Reader’s Theater is a way to juxtapose the voices of research participants, to present multiple perspectives together, and to exemplify the complexity of a phenomenon. To be sure, the researcher/writer shapes the drama, but constructs it so that readers might understand more fully (Glesne, 1999, p. 189).

This juxtaposition creates a dramatic tension that often serves to illuminate the nuances of an issue that were previously invisible.

Research Tools and Methods: Data Collection and Analysis

Data was generated from dialogue, student interviews, observation of class participation and discussions, and a focus group discussion in addition to conversations and debriefing with the classroom teacher and fellow teaching artist. I documented with videotape, audiotapes, and/or written field notes.

Each of the thirteen class sessions was videotaped and the tapes were reviewed for identification of themes and categories. Short peer interviews were taped and used as a technique to make voice visible and to help students explore and clarify their thinking, and to observe transitions where sense of voice was developed or located. This process of inquiry required students to be self-reflective and aware of what and how they communicated. In the process of theater exercises, students demonstrated their ability to “read” body language, gesture, and vocal nuances. I developed interview protocols that would allow students to draw out their impressions of voice, and prompt reflection on the work we’d done. These protocols are included in the appendix.

Videotapes of class work and focus group transcripts were viewed and analyzed to determine what transitions in the understanding of voice occurred, at what point these shifts took place, and how students defined voice and described their changing ideas about voice. I looked for moments in which students were able to demonstrate or articulate their realizations about voice. Videotapes were analyzed to identify practices that may have contributed to such changes.

In addition, I wrote research memos throughout the inquiry process that captured emerging ideas, potential hypotheses, explanations, relationships, themes, and concepts that fed into my analysis of data. I kept a journal documenting my own reflections of the experience, carried a tape recorder with me to catch reflections on the hour drive home and spent time in taped debriefings with my teaching partner to process each stage of the work and plan next steps that would build on the interests of students and work that had been completed to date.

Data Analysis

I approached the analysis of data from a blend of the following three methodological strategies: 1) a critical ethnographic technique of providing participants access to the process of data analysis, 2) a consideration of critical incidents in the data from three different points of focus (artist, teacher and researcher perspectives), and finally, 3) coding of data that identifies patterns and themes to be explored.

The first level of my analysis occurred before the project ended because students' participation was crucial to the analysis. I used the process of "dialogical data generation" in which students involved in the research reflected upon the meaning of the data—in this case, my preliminary conclusions. Critical ethnographer Philip Carspecken (1996) suggests exploring what he calls *meaning fields* with participants, asking them to consider potential meanings that individuals in the setting might bring to the data, intentionally or unintentionally. These fields are meant to reflect a range of possible meanings, although we

cannot know what their true intention is. In this interpretative process, data is constructed **with** participants rather than **about** them—through dialogue, discussion, and interviews with study participants. This information is compared to the primary record and makes the research process a more democratic one. The process is hermeneutic, requiring perspective sharing on the part of the researcher—taking different vantage points to consider possible interpretations.

The next phase of my data analysis included the search for themes and patterns. The first attempt at categorization was accomplished through what qualitative researcher Steinar Kvale calls "meaning condensations," in which the subject's comments are boiled down and rephrased simply to reveal their essence (1996, p. 192). Once the "meaning units" are identified, the researcher asks questions of the data to uncover meaning. These meaning units identify significant themes. These themes and patterns create main categories, first identified, then tracked to see how often they occur. This allows the themes for exploration to emerge directly from the data. I alternated between examining the data at close range and telescoping back to the larger focus on the project. The final step of this phase was to organize my thoughts on the implications of the data.

I used *ATLAS.ti* software as a tool to code, sort and analyze my data. This allowed me to group and sort code categories easily and see relationships within my data. Another feature of this software that proved highly useful was its ability to attach memos to quotations in the transcriptions. After a thorough process of coding the transcripts, I read through the transcripts and wrote memos when

ideas, realizations, and observations emerged in my thinking. This process also served to identify new codes and moved me into analysis as I worked with the text. Once the coding was complete I reviewed and collapsed the codes into categories that allowed me to examine relationships among the data. The data suggested ideas about the development of voice and identity. I also explored other emergent themes such as the role of resistance in learning and the development of voice, and the significance of the drama classroom as an oasis.

In the final phase of analysis and interpretation, I adapted a process of guided listening developed by psychologists Brown and Gilligan (1992) in which transcripts are read through several times, each time with a different focus (dictated by the codes and patterns identified in phase I), in order to pick up nuances that may have been missed by reading with a single perspective. Three of these readings were conducted on a series of critical incidents from the vantage point of the three different roles I held: artist, teacher, and researcher. I discuss the intersection of these roles in Chapter Eleven and the implications for the research in Chapter Twelve. I tuned in at different times to the changes in voice and role of students and classroom teacher, resistance and realizations. Finally, I used Kvale's approach to coding—identifying codes and then looking for patterns as a way to uncover the salient patterns in the data.

Using this combination of methods allowed me to develop my understanding of the data in three crucial layers involving multiple perspectives:

- My initial interpretation of the data

- A more advanced interpretation of the data achieved by the application of different approaches to listening for different aspects of voice
- Student's interpretations and reactions to the data and my interpretations

Validity/Reliability of Data

The emphasis in critical epistemology is on validity—the idea that an argument is sound rather than reflecting a truth (Carspecken, 1996). Truth is “culturally bound” (p. 57). In other words, there is not a single truth—all truth is based on the context in which it is understood. Critical research maintains the following claims to validity: 1) that the data is accurate; 2) that the analysis performed on the data was conducted accurately, thoroughly and conscientiously; and 3) that the conceptual basis of analysis is sound” (p. 57).

In order to ensure validity, I incorporated triangulation, the use of a number of techniques to check and confirm my observations. This included noting the reflections of my teaching partner, the classroom teacher, and the insights of my study participants to provide checks and balances for my own assumptions and interpretations.

A structured dialogue between me as researcher and my partner-teacher Linda was held after each session to uncover my own assumptions and ideas that may have had an impact on my interpretation of the findings. I also examined my own bias as researcher studying in my own field of drama education considering biases and expectations for the research.

I used *peer debriefing* (Lincoln and Guba, cited in Carspecken, 1996, p. 89) sharing emerging ideas and theories to my partner teacher and the classroom teacher to verify authenticity.

I used *member checks* (Lincoln and Guba, cited in Carspecken, 1996, p. 89) during a follow-up focus group discussion held 4-6 weeks after the project. This strategy included sharing my preliminary thoughts and analyses with participants, to check and clarify my impressions and to gather theirs. Students were asked to do a series of brief writing assignments and taped interviews with each other to capture their reflections on the work done in class. Results of my analyses were reviewed by three graduate committee members who are experts in theater and/or arts education. I have relied on student comments, peer teacher feedback, and my own observations to understand the characteristics of the process of voice development through theater education.

Human Subjects Committee Approval

All participants in this study were provided with a description of the project, including information about the purpose and techniques of the research, with an option to switch sections of class if they were not comfortable participating. Participants signed a consent form agreeing to their full participation and to the use of their writing, comments, and observations of their work in the research. This research was conducted in “established or commonly accepted educational settings, involving normal education practices” and is thus exempt from institutional review (*Doctoral Handbook*, 2002, p. 68). The consent form can be found in the appendix.

Summary

A critical ethnographic method allowed me to study the development of voice from sixteen students' perspectives. The intersection of reviewing information from students, classroom teacher and fellow teaching artist created opportunities for reflection from different vantage points. This method also illuminated the development of voice in three layers—for students, classroom teacher and researcher. Participants were co-researchers and, as such, commented upon the research as it unfolded—providing checkpoints for validity. The research process sparked awareness of silencing, the role of resistance in developing voice and the significance of creating a space in which voices are invited and heard.

Chapter Five: Context

Introduction

Richmond High School, located in a mid-sized city in New England, has many of the features we know in urban high schools: a culturally diverse student body with many minority students, a predominately white and female faculty, a curriculum of discipline and control, a high dropout rate, acts of violence and disruption, and a visual police presence. At the same time, there are opportunities for artistic or aesthetic experience—and for students who participate in them it seems to make a difference. The student body, made up of 1,666 students, featured at the time of the research 49.9% Latino/as, 35.3 % African-Americans, 12.6% Whites and 2.2% Asians. Of the 113 teachers, 61 were female and 52 were male; 79 were White, 16 were African American, 17 were Latino and 1 was Asian. The school is located in a neighborhood that reflects the high poverty socio-economic status of most of its students. The houses surrounding the school were in a state of disrepair, and yards were littered with trash. When I visited I saw people within the houses' doorways smoking cigarettes and drinking.

During this research I worked with Deborah Mickle, the drama teacher at the school, in a classroom with sixteen students. The students in her Drama 1 class, an elective for 9th -12th grade students, helped me come to know more about the culture of the school through the stories they told in their drama activities. I also spoke with a police officer, and a math teacher in addition to conducting several in-depth interviews with the classroom teacher during the

research process. The portrait of the school revealed here illustrates many challenges students faced. Despite these challenges, the opportunities that the students had for engaging in the dramatic arts offered hope for students who signed on to explore possibilities for a more aesthetic education.

In this chapter I will introduce a context for the research I conducted. Understanding the larger school culture is crucial to setting the tone for reading the results of this research and considering its significance. I consider what the classroom teacher and her students brought to the research, the police presence in the school, the presence of violence in the every day life of students, and the diverse student body of the school.

The Students

The students I worked with were mostly female with one male student who was participating but not enrolled in the class. About half of the students were African-American (9), and about half Latina (7), with one White student.

I found that the students were energetic and articulate, hungry to be heard, eager to find where they would fit into the world. They knew themselves. They saw inequity in the world and had the courage to stand up against it and raise questions. Unfortunately, the students were not heard. They were at an important crossroads. If they were heard at this moment in their lives, it's possible they could have the potential to be leaders. If things continued as they were, they were in danger of living up to the limited capacity of only what was expected of them—the assumptions of others would create a self-fulfilling prophesy. Deborah's perspective of the students was very different from the one that I developed during my time with them.

Three weeks into the semester, Deborah described the students in the class I was working with:

I think they're pretty typical. They're not highly intellectual. You have to appeal more to their emotions and their body movements. If you wanted to sit down and analyze a scene with them, it wouldn't fly. Or maybe there'd be a couple of them that would be misplaced. They'd go one way or the other...I think most of them will be the people who will be the secretaries or will have a lot of babies or will, you know, I don't mean to make judgments cause there's always surprises and as a teacher I find that the person you hardly notice in the class is the one you are affecting the most.

This kind of categorization of students was limiting. The assumptions about what students couldn't do overrode the possibilities for what they could do. Assumptions such as these have become rampant in schools where teachers are overworked and students are silenced. I wonder where the possibility lies for these students if not in their education? Where is the space for their dreams? How can we honor not just who they are, but who they might become?

There were oppressive structures in the school culture that stifled the kinds of connections and safe spaces for expression that I think are at the core of what students need to thrive. I saw Deborah's hunger for information, passion for discovering theater, her urge to find her niche, and I heard her voice. I told her how articulate she is (though she didn't see it). She told me she'd like to do her own research on things she has seen in class.

Diversity

Although there is a diverse student body, many of the teachers at Richmond High were white. With the issues that students had about how

teachers enforce the rules and relate to them in general, clearly race must be considered as a factor. My teaching partner, Linda, noted the lack of diversity in the teachers.

What's odd to me is I've only seen one African-American teacher so far. I've seen a lot of diversity in the office staff and possibly in the administrative staff... But I've seen almost all white teachers and have a very strongly African-American, Latino student body here. This is endemic in the country—there aren't as many teachers of color so it doesn't surprise me in the least, but it really plays into the status privilege piece to me. It's glaring in some ways.

I asked how this factor played out in terms of the relationship students indicated was missing with teachers. Deborah noted:

I know students connect well with the minority teachers. And it's, I think there was even money set aside. The school department has in the last 10-15 years made it a point of trying to hire minority teachers. I think that every principal in every high school is a minority and most assistant principals are too. And it's simply because, if they have money, more money from the state, from the school department they do that type of thing.

University educators Ford and Harris (1996) note that the lack of engagement of students can be influenced by the relationship between students and teachers. Low achievement for students of color has been documented for students who have "above-average intelligence," Ford asserts that these studies "indicate that many students do not drop out because of inadequate ability, but due to alienation (e.g., poor teacher-student relations) and boredom" (1996, p.1141). Ford notes that "educational outcomes and disengagement are influenced by classroom environments, especially student-teacher relations" (p.1142).

As a researcher I note my own response to the cultural diversity in my field

notes:

The student body is comprised of mostly students of color. As kids enter the classroom, they speak partly in English and partly in Spanish. There is a strong sense of shared community that I'm not yet part of. It distances me ... It seems like there are all these cultures clashing—the world of the kids, the world of the teachers, the world of the cops.

Issues of race, ethnicity, and culture pervade the classroom. Deborah invited me to observe another of her classes to get a sense of students. In one improvisation in the class, a hairdresser scene unfolded. A black female student was talking to a black male student as she pretended to cut his hair. She told him his hair was nappy and she couldn't do anything with it. The same day, a Latina student from this class, was teaching other students to dance salsa before class. These cultural moments were embedded in the day and yet seemed not to enter into the curriculum discussions though students brought these themes regularly into their work.

In my final interview with Deborah I asked about how race/ethnicity and culture entered the work for her. Students suggested that race and ethnicity had a direct impact on the development of their voices and I wanted to hear her thoughts on it. Deborah felt out of her element in this area:

I told you that coming up from an all white community I still don't even after all these years understand. I can remember my first year teaching I was afraid to use the word black even if we were talking about colors. Use the black pencil or something. Because I didn't know how they'd react. And I still have that inside me. I think and, I tell them this, that theater is gender blind and color blind. And I'm hoping that

when I teach them that comes across in real life as well. When I think of them I don't see them as when I when I think of them I don't see them and say they're Puerto Rican or Black and I hope that they look at that way too—as just a person. And I think that theater you can get away with that a lot more than any other. Cause you're dealing with personalities more.

This approach seemed to spare her from grappling with issues of race, ethnicity or cultural differences. While these issues were never brought into the conversations I'd witnessed by teachers, it was very much part of the experience and conversation of students. It was clear that for several students English was not their first language or at least not the language spoken at home.

Students at Richmond embraced their race, gender and ethnicities as significant parts of who they were. They were highly attuned to issues of color and culture. They wanted these conversations to be part of their educations. These themes entered our discussions and work whenever space was created to allow it. There is a wealth of dramatic literature that would allow students to make connection with issues in their lives through the selection of appropriate plays and scenes. It is crucial to invite these themes into our conversations and our dramatic explorations. I chose to bring students' lives into our work by allowing real voices to be at the center of the dramatic explorations on which we embarked.

Black students are likely to be taught by White teachers, even in urban school districts. Much data reveal an ever-increasing cultural gap between Black students and teachers, the vast majority of whom are White males (76% (Darling-Hammond, 1994). Black teachers comprise only 5% of teachers, and the percentage is projected to decrease (cited in Ford & Harris, 1996, p. 1142).

Ford and Harris make the point that many teachers are ill-prepared to work effectively with the diversity they find in their classrooms.

[F]ew teachers have received substantive preparation in multicultural education, few teachers are trained to examine their own biases and stereotypes regarding black students, and few teachers live in the neighborhoods in which they teach. These factors can contribute to a lack of understanding of, appreciation of, and respect for cultural differences on the part of teachers. They may also contribute to low teacher expectations (p. 1143).

Ogbu notes that dealing with social inequalities found in schools can trigger resistance from students of color.

[S]ocial inequities are important sources of vulnerability for Black youth who, when confronted with racism and discrimination, may develop an oppositional social identity. They may deliberately perform poorly in school, rebel against authority figures (e.g., teachers and school administrators) and resist any behavior associated with mainstream society. Ogbu (1987) found that Black students perceive the opportunity structure more negatively than do White students. They are less confident that hard work, effort, and academic success will result in receiving occupational and fiscal rewards commensurate with their educational credentials. Many are disillusioned about the value of schooling, and see schooling as a “subtractive process” in which they must sacrifice something of their sense of identity to achieve in school settings (Ogbu cited in Ford & Harris, 1996, p. 1143).

This research suggests that students of color encounter more obstacles at school than do White students.

Placement

In addition to their full load of academic subjects such as math, science, English and social studies, the students had the opportunity to take four electives

in their high school curriculum: visual arts, music, television production and theater.

Deborah noted that some of the students were placed in drama class because of behavior problems or a pattern of failing other classes. The idea was that drama work will engage them more deeply than would more traditional classes. Deborah told me:

The social worker here has approached me in the past about a kid that doesn't blend well. He's a loner. So they thought maybe they'd put him in to see what happens. And usually they're very delighted. And it's neat because no matter how different or anti-social they are—it's the group thing again. Eventually, they get assimilated into the group because they're part of the group, and they get that group identity.

There was an agreement between Deborah and the social worker that drama in the school could provide a place for student who had trouble succeeding in traditional classroom settings or a hard time finding his or her niche.

The Classroom Teacher

Deborah taught at the high school level for more than 30 years. She began as an English teacher but found herself interested in plays and how they engaged students. She found that the power of theater allowed her students to become more involved in their learning, to become active participants in her class and to take responsibility for their knowledge.

I realized that I had an interest [in theater] and the students seem to be more interested too because they had a voice. They could take a part instead of just reading. And it got to a point where I said 'this is something I have to get into.' I wanted to do acting with my kids.

She found that she didn't feel competent to teach drama, so when she discovered that Shakespeare & Company, a theater company, in collaboration with the National Endowment for the Humanities (NEH), was offering a month-long intensive program, she applied. To her surprise, Deborah was funded by the NEH, joined the program, and this experience initiated an immersion in theater that would have a significant impact on her teaching.

So I said I don't know if I'm going to get it, but this will give me a great start. And then I also signed up for acting classes,... took a course at UMass in theater, I went to University of Maine—to a two week Michael Checkov institute.

As her passion deepened, she decided to go back to school for a master's degree in directing and has continued to take workshops. She went to England to study theater at Stratford-on-Avon, and then received a fellowship at Oxford University.

As her studies proceeded, she began to load her English classes with drama. She started a drama club, which drew 200 students to participate in an after-school program. Eventually a drama teaching position opened at Richmond High and she welcomed the chance to develop a theater program. At the time of the research project Deborah had been at Richmond High for three years. She said she loves what she does, but noted that teaching is difficult. She felt that teachers had little voice in decision-making within the larger school structure, and that the work was exhausting. She acknowledged that teachers have little free time because of the demands of teaching at least five classes a day, many of which contained as many as 30 or more students. Clearly economic issues play a role in educational equality.

Studying drama transformed Deborah's life. During an interview she told me about her transformation through participation in the Shakespeare & Company's month-long intensive training. When I asked what the pivotal moment was for her in this process she burst into tears and asked me to turn the tape recorder off. Deborah's emotion was quite close to the surface when she talked about her life and experiences, particularly around her own coming to voice through the work at Shakespeare & Company.

OK I get emotional on these situations (breaks up) When thinking about voice, I don't think... that how I felt about myself or how I felt about the world changed. It's how I expressed it that changed.

Deborah's transformation occurred when she found that her own voice could be developed and recognized in her work. Like Roger's (1993) "true I" voice coming forth, Deborah found her authentic self develop through her own exploration of drama. She learned to speak the thoughts and feelings that previously had gone unspoken. Deborah pointed to a key aspect of coming to voice. Part of developing one's voice is the ability to speak what one feels.

I never said a lot of things I wanted to. I was always—you couldn't hear my voice. And with teaching, my voice got louder but I still didn't say things.... And I can remember as a teenager thinking I will show any emotion but not the one I'm really feeling.

Clearly, using one's voice is not the only aspect of having voice. Theater creates a space for and a mechanism through which participants' voices come alive, where it's okay to claim authentic voice—the authentic thought. Perhaps that's why it became an oasis or triggered transformations in students, especially

because there were very few other places where voice was a requirement—where one's voice needed to be part of the process.

Deborah's emotions colored her stories about her life and experiences, particularly around her own coming to voice through her experience at Shakespeare & Company. She described a cathartic moment during an exercise in the program. Participants were asked to get up and sit with their backs to the audience in two lines. One by one, individuals got up and turned to face the audience stating their name, one thing about their body that they didn't like, and a line from a memorized monologue that was meaningful. Then participants said something about themselves that they didn't want the group to know. This could be something that was not true, but participants weren't allowed to note that.

I decided to cover everything over with humor...but in the middle of it I broke down so everyone thought I was telling the truth (laugh). And I said that for extra money after school that I'm a prostitute. And I figured that's so outrageous everyone's gonna laugh. And they all believed it.

She said that you could hear a pin drop as she said it. Over the month that followed, other participants would approach her to ask if it was true.

I was kind of like, creating a very interesting personality about myself that I didn't have. And, for some reason everybody—not everybody but a majority of the people pointed it [the exercise] out as being a really pivotal point for them. A very emotional point—and ... it started to open a door...to being vulnerable for me. It's maybe when the first wall dropped.

Sharing one's voice creates a vulnerability that requires courage. During this activity Deborah used her voice in an inauthentic way to protect herself which

triggered a set of responses in her that ended up making her feel as though walls were dropping. In a sense she was also trying on a different role for herself.

So I think my voice changed in that for some reason, somehow and I don't know if it was slowly or suddenly I decided to say exactly what I felt. I became very blunt. And theater does that. I tell my kids this that a lot—almost everything we do is to break down the walls they build up to protect themselves so they can get at their real emotions. And I feel that's what happened to me. And my protection was gone. So, if I'm gonna say what I really want to say... I have a new protection and that protection maybe is being very blunt. And not pretending... the niceties. I just say what I have to say and I guess maybe in a way that takes people back or whatever and that becomes my protection instead of hiding.

Deborah talked about a woman who left the Shakespeare & Company workshop after the first week because her husband missed her, and how this departure left a tangible void in the group. This was meaningful for Deborah, because she realized the significance of each person in the ensemble. I asked her "So if her presence in the group made a difference mine (Deborah's) would too, right?" She responded: "Yeah that the group would not be the same without me."

This experience was a seminal moment for Deborah and changed the way she approached teaching. She told me "what I try and do now is recreate my experience there with my kids." I asked her what was it about this cathartic experience does she work to recreate in her classes. She noted,

I think that they didn't just teach the technical aspects of how to teach theater, they treated the whole person—and the importance of the group. It's hard, but I try to get each class to feel like a group and feel really connected, so they're not afraid to take chances and then it goes from there. They're afraid at first. A new person just came in at the end of last

week and I really wanted to keep him. He was in IB (International Baccalaureate program). He was a male. And he came in a little late. I mean, we'd already begun and everyone felt like a group and he backed away and backed out of the class after two classes unfortunately. Something like that happens you try your best to get him absorbed into it but...

I asked her if she is, in a way, passing the torch. She told me that it's less like passing a torch and more like completing a circle and shares a story.

There's this little story that became very important to me. It didn't happen to me it happened to my sister. She was in New Mexico. And they were sight-seeing. And this Indian (sic) came up to her and,... he was carving on a stone and what they do is they sell it for whatever. And he passed it to her and he said 'I usually sell these but I want to give it to you.' And it was from a stranger and she said 'Why?' and he said (she begins to cry) 'Someone just gave me something.'

She began to notice the work she was doing was empowering students. Drama work was having an impact on students who were not succeeding in other classrooms. Others noted this in school including the social worker, who began to place students in the class as an intervention, as a way to engage students who were struggling academically or behaviorally. For students, this often provided an opportunity to connect with their academics in a new way.

I had one girl that the counselors had—she was an at-risk student who had failed everything. And they put her in an honors English class... unknowingly... So she became part of my acting group and she ended up being Kate in Pennie Latrue.

Maybe a week and a half before we were going to put it on... they found out the mistake and they yanked her from my class. And I'd see her in the hallway and say hello and she'd turn away from me. She wouldn't talk to me. She was blaming me. And it didn't get to me until two days before the performance. I said to the class she was in "Does anyone see her ever? Maybe she'd like to come and do her scene

with us even if she's not in class."The bell rang and the kids left. And I don't think 30 seconds went by and she was running in my room. And she said "yes, yes, yes, yes, yes!" So she got up and did the scene. She'd memorized everything. She went to her counselors and convinced them to put her back in an honors English class. ... And you know—she was failing. She then got a D, and then she got a C and then fourth term she got an A.

Deborah wanted her students to have the same kind of opening-up process that she had, by which walls are dropped, in which students could discover that they matter. She noted that theater could provide this kind of process.

I think that theater techniques, no matter what they are, tend to always pull down the protection. Get them to move more freely. Get them to speak more freely. So I think that they work hand in hand. Maybe I'm wrong.

Understanding Deborah's ideas about drama and the impact of her cathartic experiences through Shakespeare & Company's month-long intensive program was significant in understanding how she approached the drama classroom. She created a space in the school which students considered an oasis. My thirteen sessions with these students was but a portion of a semester long intense experience that students reflected on with me as I asked them to consider drama and the development of their voices.

Police

There was a strong police presence in the school, with four officers patrolling the halls and enforcing the rules. One officer told me that a school down the road was a "dumping ground" for students who were doing poorly. He said, matter-of-factly, that Richmond gets some kids "dumped" on it as well: describing a kind of disposal of students. He mentioned another school in the area, the city's flagship

school, and noted that the other schools served as dumping grounds for students who would taint the first school's reputation. He added that Richmond wasn't as bad as a school down the road.

When the police officer asked me where I was from, he did so with a look of "don't you know this stuff?" He said he'd found a 9 millimeter gun in a girl's backpack, and noted that there were a lot of fights in this school. When I asked if his job was difficult he talked about having a good relationship with the administration. He never mentioned having a good relationship with the students.

In a conversation with a math teacher, the picture of police in schools was presented as a way of life. This teacher felt that students felt safer with police as a part of school life, and that the police officers often related to students. He noted that two of the officers coached sports. Later, Deborah described the roles and responsibilities of the officers as she understood them:

One is responsible for kids that are tardy and I believe he has to walk to Burger King so many times a day and flush them out—they cut class and go down there. For the most part I think it's the "hall walkers" [students who cut class and walk the halls instead] cause there's so much cutting of classes. At one point they couldn't control them and even if the cop asked the kid to stop he'd keep running in the halls. So what the cops were doing at the end of last year, they were going around with video cameras. So they caught the kids on video camera even if they didn't catch the kid and the assistant principal could look at them and say that's so and so.

"Hallwalkers" as they were labeled, were an ongoing problem in the school as students cut class and roamed the halls. These were the students who ended up in fights and teachers and police could be seen clearing the halls with fervor after the bell rang. Several rules and the police officers were put in place to address this on-going issue. Students had just three minutes to get from class to class. This created an

intense throng of students in the hallways, pushing and shoving to get to class on time. Occasionally, I was caught in these panicked crunches. As an eighth-month pregnant woman, head bobbing along, looking over the sea of students, hands up—protecting my belly, it didn't take me long to try and realize it was best to avoid these student traffic jams whenever possible.

Violence

Deborah told me that there was a lot of violence in the school. I asked her how often there were fights and she responded:

Many. I don't hear about them because the administration tends to keep it quiet. But it's not unusual for a kid to come in at the end of the day and say there were three fights today—I was caught up in two of them. I couldn't get to class. That's not a reflection on this school because every school even [the flagship school] has that. You said it's a whole new world, and it is. But I've been to rural schools that are wonderful and they don't have that problem. But I think across the country any inner-city school you're going to see exactly the same thing. So it's a matter of location and type of kid.

Deborah suggested that inner city schools have certain types of kids and that this breeds certain kinds of problems—that the location of schools and the type of kids within a school circumstance created the scenarios found in this school culture and others like it. Teachers and officers accepted these circumstances chalking it up to the ills of inner city schools. Later, Deborah told me that most of the fights involved girls.

I found that with minorities—I think they're brought up that way. And it's usually a female figure that brings the kids up. And they are taught to be that way because they're doubly suppressed. They're not only females, as one of them said, but they're also a minority female and that's their way of survival.

Deborah suggested that female minorities had more tendencies toward fighting than other students. Here again was an assumption that labeled a group and framed what minority females could do and what was expected of them.

Students were preoccupied with the fighting that occurred in school and it came up in our dramatic work. In one of our dramatic exercises called *Top This*, students swapped stories, building in exaggeration. Each story was larger than the one told prior. I asked students to select the topic they would tell stories about. Fighting was at the top of the list. The glamorization of violence, and sense of pride about fighting exploits, though performed under imaginary circumstances in the drama classroom, was part of students' experience.

Deborah told me during the project that two years ago there was a murder in the school. Since then, rules have been more stringent and that the reason for the school's no-hat rule was so video cameras in the school could get pictures of students' faces as incidents occurred in the halls.

Summary

There was a larger context that influenced the work I conducted with students. Deborah's ideas about drama and her own transformation through the work, the violence and police presence in the school, and diversity of students working with a largely white teacher population, the lack of community resources, all contributed to the school culture in a way that encouraged an oppressive climate.

Choreographer Jawole Willa Jo Zollar notes a disturbing trend she has witnessed in doing artist residencies in schools. She talks about her observation that in schools that have low economic resources, obedience is rewarded. In schools that have more resources, critical thinking and creativity is rewarded (Zollar, 1995). At Richmond High a culture of obedience was being encouraged, a culture in which students were pushed to be submissive and obey the rules. There was little space for questioning, for considering possibility, except perhaps, in the drama classroom. Before the research ever began a picture emerged of the urgent need for student voices to be heard.

Chapter Six: Finding and Defining Voices

Introduction

This chapter explores how the students perceived their voices and the changes that took place based on this perception during the six-week drama class. I began with a discussion prompted in class by the students as they were performing a poem by Paul Dunbar about the social masks we wear. The poem is entitled "We Wear the Mask." Students spoke freely and expressively about the masks they wore and the ways in which they manipulated voice. Next, I discussed the themes that emerged from interviews that students had conducted with each other in which they answered a series of questions about their understanding of voice including: How would someone else describe your voice? What do you think your voice says about you? Have you ever worn a social mask? What voice went with that mask? and Have you ever changed your voice in order to get something? Several themes emerged from these conversations including how voice represented who they were, students' dissatisfaction with their voices, and how voice was used differently depending on who was listening (or not) (e.g. parent, or member of opposite sex, or principal) and the circumstances in which their voices were used. I also discussed the significance of gender roles and expectations in depth since students talked about voice manipulation so often in relation to the opposite sex.

Perceptions of Voice

As a classroom teacher, Deborah noted that she has long been interested in exploring voice and has done a lot of voice work with students in previous

classes, including a survey about students' perception of their voices. She noted that students' perception of their own voices was often skewed. She shared questionnaires with me that she had used with students in other semesters asking them to reflect on their physical voices. She said,

[Students] tend to think their voice is not what it is. Their perception of how they sound is usually quite off. And the people that I feel have really strong nice voices—they'll say pretty much negative things. Not all of the time but a good chunk of the time. And the people that have these little squeaky voices that are afraid to speak up, think their voice is like some kind of loud instrument.

Students began the class by sharing with me a dramatization of the Paul Laurence Dunbar poem, "We Wear the Mask" that they had worked on in Deborah's class. It was an interesting choice in that Dunbar addresses the black experience in his writing (Modern American Poetry, n.d.) and for these students race and ethnicity was at the heart of their identity. Interestingly, this aspect of the poem did not come up in the conversation, however, students made strong connections to gender and adolescence and the need for social masks. Clearly, the poem is richly layered with meaning for students. The poem appears below:

*We wear the mask that grins and lies,
It hides our cheeks and shades our eyes—
This debt we pay to human guile'
With torn and bleeding hearts we smile
And mouth with myriad subtleties*

*Why should the world be over-wise
In counting all our tears and sighs?
Nay, let them only see us, while
We wear the mask.*

*We smile, but oh great Christ, our cries
To thee from tortured souls arise.*

*We sing, but oh the clay is vile
Beneath our feet, and long the mile'
But let the world dream otherwise
We wear the mask!*

Paul Laurence Dunbar (1872-1906)

Deborah explained that she had discussed the poem with students in an earlier class and then asked them to dramatize the piece. Students were excited to share their work, and used masks and costumes to create a masquerade ball. The characters rose up in mask and read a line from the poem then used creative movement to reflect their lines before freezing into a tableau above the swirling movement. Lou, a self-described loner, was the last dancing figure on stage in this beautifully poignant work. Jackie pointed out for me the nuances of the masks and the different selections students had made—some students had ones with tears on them, some masks had two sides to them, some masks used color that created a feeling of joy or sadness. Performing this poem in a dramatic fashion allowed the students to share themselves, and take pride in their creative work.

Deborah talked later about the student leadership in the development of this piece.

It was interesting for me yesterday to see who ended up being the directors of the group. And I'm wondering if they know what leadership ability they have.

After the performance of the mask poem, the students and I talked about the social masks we wear. Vernell insisted that her voice never changed. She said she is who she is and just puts it out there. The rest of the students,

however, engaged in a lively conversation about how their voices were masked and manipulated.

Students were aware of who they were in relationship to others and how they presented themselves in public. They said that “there is the person that you think you really are, that you are kind of on your own, and then there’s a series of different way[s] that you present yourself in school or to your parents or to different groups of friends.” I asked them for examples of how that may shift.

Anne gave an example:

If I see a boy that I like or a cute boy I would put on, like—I call it a shy mask. I used to get real shy, but I grew out of it.

I asked students to start paying close attention to how their voices changed in different situations. Anne said: “Especially if it’s a boy!” It’s clear that they were already keenly aware of how their voice changed in response to different situations—and in particular, in relationships with members of the opposite sex.

Students were very open to discussing usually unspoken rules and ways of being. The performance provided access to a very private topic, generating excitement about acknowledging the “masks we wear.” The poem allowed them to name a phenomenon—how voice is often used in inauthentic ways. In naming it, there was a sense that “it’s not just me” and there was an eagerness to discuss it.

Relationships with members of the opposite sex often triggered the feeling that there was a need to disguise one’s true voice. Female students discussed the unspoken rules for voice in relationship with a boy, and described the need to

use sweet and innocent voices to attract boys. Later, once a connection has been forged, one's authentic voice could come out. The group agreed wholeheartedly. Anne made the point that her masked voice was maintained until the relationship was established. Then—"Watch out! Once they get to know you, you let it all unleash! Look! This is me for real!"

Anne shared how she might say something, demonstrating her sweet and innocent voice: "Yeah...that is so nice...I don't even talk like that!" she said and everyone laughed in recognition. It's a mask they recognized and all wore. They acknowledged that they were not being authentic in order to get what they wanted, knowing they could reveal their real voices later, after connection is made. They were controlling how they were perceived. They agreed it's best to start off with being the "traditional" sweet and innocent girl.

Lois expanded the example to include parental relationships. Lois's mom was very formal with her on the phone until she knew who she was talking to. Here the role a parent played dictated how they responded to their child. "If she ain't at work it's 'what's up girl?'" said Lois. Parents often modeled the manipulation of voice for different circumstances. Lois said:

My mom, like she works at an insurance company and she'll be talking to her client in a sweet voice. And she'll hang up and she'll start screaming at the phone and start swearing!

In order to make student's understanding of voice more visible, I asked the students to interview each other on tape asking the following questions:

- How would someone else describe your voice?
- What do you think your voice shows about you?
- Have you ever worn a social mask? What voice went with that mask?
- Have you ever changed your voice in order to get something?

Later we discussed their responses to these questions. The one male student spoke about his voice in a literal way in terms of vibrations.

My voice it sounds deep... It's kind of like a vibration feels like a vibration mixed in with a static, or like, I can say a word, but sounds like I'm misusing kind of. And it sounds sexy.

The girls were keenly aware of how their voices were perceived by their peers and often were critical about their own physical voices. Their responses indicated that they were aware of how their voice quality related to their gender:

- A lot of people tell me I sound like a little girl.
- My voice? I have a really deep voice when I talk even though I'm female. My voice is extremely deep when I do talk.
- A lot of my friends describe it like I said very masculine or like, I kind of get squeaky voice when I'm excited. My voice goes really high-pitched.
- Well, my voice is kind of like real girlie. Like especially when I get excited and stuff.

In their responses regarding other's perceptions of their voices, some of the students expressed dissatisfaction or ambivalence about the sound of their own voices:

- I think I sound immature.
- My voice sounds squeaky at times, when I'm yelling.
- It's squeaky-loud. It drives me nuts and I want to change it.

Students also suggested that their voices communicated personal qualities that they wanted to express to others:

- It shows that I'm really friendly, 'cause I talk with a really sweet tone. I'm loud, I'm crazy.
- My voice shows my personality, the way I dress. I dress like a man.
- I think my voice says--it says Carol.
- It says that I'm a girlie girl. I don't like the way my voice sounds sometimes. But like if I'm real mad. You can tell. Like, my voice is very unique. You can tell what emotion I'm feeling. If I'm real excited I'm

talking real fast and like my voice is like, higher pitched. But if I'm real mad it's, like, stern and steady. I'm able to control my voice real well.

- It shows that I'm really friendly, 'cause I talk with a really sweet tone. I'm loud, I'm crazy.

As students spoke about their voices and how they used them, how they and others perceived them, and how these perceptions contributed to their sense of self and identity, it was clear that they noticed the power of using their voices in different contexts and with different listeners. Since they had manipulated their voices in the past to persuade and cajole their parents and friends, I wondered how might they manipulate their voices in the future to make changes in their school, in their communities, in society?

Manipulating voice

Almost all of the girls, with one or two exceptions, spoke about a time when they had manipulated their voices. Because voice communicates things about who they are, they changed perceptions about themselves by changing how they used their voices. There was versatility in changing voices for different audiences and goals, most often related to getting something they wanted. Several of the girls chose to leave their authentic voices as they tried on new voices, suggesting that in order to get what they wanted, they needed to sound like a "traditional" good girls.

The following excerpts are from the conversations that emerged during the exploration of the different "social masks" we wear. Students made the following comments about whether they manipulated their voices in order to get something they wanted:

- All the time. Like, if I go to the store with my parents and I want something I'll put on this little squeaky voice and try to act stupid so they get it for me.
- Yes, when I'm at the mall. And I want something and haven't got any money and my mom's there. I like act sweet and tell her that I really want it and she gives it to me.
- She wouldn't give me something that I wanted...some clothes. So instead of getting an attitude with her, I tried to be nice, tried to be sweet, tried to be kind to her, even though she was really getting on my nerves.
- Oh yeah! All the time. When I ask my mom for money. She wouldn't give it to me. Well, I gave her this sweet innocent look. I wore my shirt. It looked sweet and innocent and I just looked sweet and innocent and I spoke with her with sweet and innocence, and I eventually got what I wanted.

The students went on to give examples of manipulating their voices to have themselves perceived by others in specific ways. This act of creating a persona, perhaps a new identity, through voice work seemed to them similar to wearing the social masks they had portrayed in dramatizing Dunbar's poem earlier.

- Yeah I have, I switch my mask when I'm around my friends because my friends is a different person compared to my mom and I act like a whole other person when I'm in front of my friends. I use a different kind of language and I use different type of words. I act like a different type of person when I'm in front of my friends. When I'm in front of my mom I have a different mask on.
- Oh yeah, When they were going to put me in the principal's office for supposedly talking back to the teacher. But when I went up to the principal I was acting really polite. I talked to her in a manner that I'm supposed to talk to an adult. And she let me go, because she saw my attitude and she noticed that I wasn't really like that type to talk back.
- Whenever I'm around like the public or anything. I act totally different than when I'm alone. I try to be all happy and stuff like that and funny. But, when I'm home I'm really serious and stuff. I can be funny sometimes but I'm serious when you come down to it.

Students pointed out here the differences between public and private personas, and how they responded to circumstance.

These teenagers were constructing themselves socially—understanding who they were in relationship with others. They used voice flexibly, often creating roles for themselves in order to be accepted or to get what they wanted. They used their voices as a tool and were aware of the power manipulating voice can have. The examples were plentiful and telling.

Interestingly, Russell, our only male student, talked about changing voice only in terms of playing a character role.

Once I had to change my voice for a play that we did last year for drama. I had to make my voice loud and, because my voice is low and conservative, I had to bring it to another level which changed my personality and made me do like became like when I changed my voice the emotion came with it so, I really had to try to be mean cause when you get loud it's supposed to be when you're mad.

This statement suggests that gender plays a role in how voices were used and perceived. Unlike the female students, Russell did not give any examples of how he had manipulated his voice in situations where he was communicating with others, such as parents, teachers or friends. His example was in the context of a dramatic work.

Voice and Gender

One of the key biological aspects of identity development is based on one's sex. One's ideas about one's gender role in society can have a profound impact on self definition. Though children are affected throughout their lives by their understanding of gender roles and expectations, it is during adolescence that they begin to consider how society influences what being male or being female means in their lives (Waterman, 1985). In deciphering the meaning of

what it means to be male or female, adolescents must consider gender role orientation—by that I mean that the assumptions within our culture and communities about what roles in society men and women should play. Often, society defines the guidelines for what is “appropriate” to one’s gender. According to Archer (1985), “One’s sex role identity refers to the selection and internalization of personally expressive values, beliefs, and goals perceived as appropriate to one’s gender” (p. 80). The stereotyping of gender roles is still one of society’s troublesome issues (Greenlaw & Bingham, 1994).

Researchers Greenlaw and Bingham note that over time, certain personality traits have been assigned to specific genders. These include the stereotypical ideas of males being aggressive, independent, career-driven, and more drawn toward math and science, and females being considered more passive, dependent, and verbally skilled. Over time there is increasing movement toward embracing a more androgynous distribution of these traits for both sexes (1994).

Erikson believed that “clarifying one’s expression of maleness or femaleness is an important aspect of establishing one’s identity” (Greenlaw & Bingham, 1994, p. 80). Gender roles are influenced by adolescents’ same-sex peers in early adolescence and by peers of the opposite sex in late adolescence. The media also plays an increasing influence at this time as well, by the way in which they portray men and women and the roles they play (Archer, 1985). The media can perpetuate stereotypes of acceptable roles (e.g. woman as housewife, man as breadwinner) or it can serve to broaden the way that we understand our

potential roles, blurring the boundaries between traditional assumptions and expectations.

Many contemporary researchers such as Carol Gilligan and Lyn Michel Brown focus on the influence of gender differences in the development of identity. Josselson suggests that “the basic sense of female identity and development is based on self in the world and self in relation, while males push for independence and separation” (as cited in Greenlaw & Bingham, 1994).

As in other areas, early research on identity development models has been focused on males. Research by noted developmental psychologist James Marcia asserts that gender differences have been found in relationship to self-esteem and fear of success which suggests social influence (in Kroger, 1996).

Erikson has been criticized for his views on women’s identity development.

Kroger describes Erikson’s approach by saying that:

To Erikson, anatomy is destiny and initially determines the style of engagement with the social milieu: reflecting sexual morphology, boys emphasize outer space in their predominantly aggressive and intrusive play, while girls focus on the inner space in their more peaceful, passive activities (Kroger, 1996, p. 32).

Today, there are an increasing number of researchers presenting a more balanced view, reflecting how gender accurately influences the development of identity (e.g., Gilligan, 1982; Waterman, 1985; Archer, 1994).

Archer agrees that gender influences the process of adolescent exploration. She believes that though the timing of the process of identity development is similar for men and women, the two sexes seem to gravitate to different domains. She says that,

[F]emales have been found to have engaged in more sophisticated identity activity including the areas of sexuality, friendship, and marriage and career prioritizing, whereas males have been more likely to become committed to political ideology than have females (1994, p.4).

Gilligan takes another view. She proposes that perhaps there are not necessarily stark differences between genders, but perhaps a different timeline for development.

In our recent work, we have theorized that early adolescence in women's development is comparable to early childhood in men's in that girls at this time face a relational impasse or crisis which leads to various forms of dissociation (Gilligan, Rogers & Noel, 1992, pp. 2-3).

Gilligan also suggests that identity development should be looked at in a context larger than gender—in one that incorporates voice. She believes that women's approach to the world is different from men's. In this notion,

[T]he male 'voice' defines identity more in a context of individual achievement and goals (instrumental roles of agency) with a focus on the process of separation. In comparison, the female 'voice' defines identity in a context of relationships that are judged by a standard of care and responsibility (expressive roles of communion) with a focus on the ongoing process of attachment and relatedness (Adams & Archer, 1994, p. 205).

Chodorow, looking at differences in approaches to relationships, says that "in any given society feminine personality comes to define itself in relation to and connection with other people more than masculine personality does" (cited in Gilligan, 1979, p. 433). As the quotes of the female students in this study indicate, a focus on voice in relationship to others has been a defining factor in how they see themselves, and the opportunities they perceive they have in defining themselves for others. Clearly, the picture remains a complex one that merits further study.

Gilligan argues that women are caught between and measured by a world based on male priorities. She questions the validity of applying knowledge gleaned from early research studies based on males to girls' development. Because these male-based studies provide the foundation for our current understanding of identity, Gilligan calls for research to be more inclusive.

It's important to note that it's not that theorists haven't acknowledged gender differences early on. Although Erikson acknowledged that identity development is different for women, he saw women's development as happening in relation to men, and notes that

She holds her identity in abeyance as she prepares to contract the man by whose name she will be known, by whose status she will be defined, the man who will rescue her from loneliness by filling the inner space (Erikson cited in Gilligan, 1979, p. 437).

Erikson felt that a woman's identity was incomplete unless she was partnered with a man. "[M]uch of a young woman's identity is already defined in her kind of attractiveness and in the selective nature of her search for the man (or men) by whom she wishes to be sought" (Erikson as cited in Adams & Archer, 1994, p. 203).

Gilligan proposes a different perspective on the development of girls than previous theorists before her:

Since adolescence is, in Erikson's expansion of Freud's psychoanalytic account, the time when the ego takes on an identity which confirms the individual in relation to society, the girl arrives at this juncture in development either psychologically at risk or with a different agenda (Gilligan, 1979, p. 436).

She believes this happens because girls live in a male world in which their issues may not be validated or given space to be addressed and consequently, they may feel out of place or not normal. Gilligan goes on to discuss Virginia Woolf's commentary on the historical context of the situation:

It is obvious that the values of women differ very often from the values which have been made by the other sex. Yet it is the masculine values that prevail. As a result, women come to question the "normality" of their feelings and to alter their judgments in deference to the opinion of others" (cited in Gilligan, 1979, p. 440).

We can see that the female students in this study clearly were aware of what is currently considered "normal" in their contexts, from the references to the "good girl," the "polite student" in the principal's office, and the funny student who is actually shy. In contrast to these shifting voices and changing roles, the one male student remained tied to one manifestation of his voice in every context. The male voice in our society continues to be dominant.

Summary

Clearly, students had a lot to say. They were clear about how they used and manipulated the power of their voices to get what they wanted, to create an impression or to represent who they are. As circumstances changed, so did their voices to meet the needs of the moment. As we worked in the classroom, it became clear that there were potent issues that students were interested in exploring. These issues included the kinds of rules they lived with and the way in which they were enforced; the impact of gender on how the rules were enforced; the desire, in fact, the need to be heard within school culture. As Gilligan points out, the use of voice is contextual, varying in relation to the social and

geographical context in which it is used. The female students in this research substantiate this theory in their statements regarding the variations upon their voices depending on context.

Chapter Seven: Harnessing Voices in an Act of Agency

Introduction

In this chapter I review the use of Reader's Theater as an artistic frame and as a way to consider complex issues in the lives of these adolescents. I move into a description of the process of developing the Reader's Theater script, a script based on different perspectives of rules in the school. I begin by explaining how the issue of rules emerged in early dramatic explorations as a potent theme for students. Next, I take the reader through a progression of activities: identifying who should be interviewed, brainstorming questions that should/could be asked, and themes that emerged in the interviews.

I also consider what student and teacher voices were saying throughout our in-class discussions and during the interview process. In the midst of these discussions, it became clear that the drama classroom was considered an oasis for students, a place where they could be themselves and explore possibility. Students identified the elements of this oasis including the creation of an ensemble, the predictability and reliability of the ensemble, the choices they were allowed to make in this space, the connection they felt to the dramatic activities and reflective work, the creation of a space that invites and supports their authentic voices, their ownership of the work through their own decision-making, and the room there was for freedom of opinion. In the last section of the chapter, I investigate the boundaries of this oasis, which seem to lie in an isolated space separate from the rest of the school.

Reader's Theater as an Artistic Structure

Reader's Theater is a technique used in arts-based research to reveal participants' voices on complex issues. Taped interviews are transcribed into rich thematic segments and crafted into a script that illuminates a variety of perspectives juxtaposed against each other in revealing ways. As mentioned in Chapter 4, I used Reader's Theater as part of my approach to elicit and document voices. My work with Reader's Theater has been deeply influenced by the work of Anna Deavere Smith in what she terms Interview Theater. Smith is an actress and playwright who takes the techniques of Reader's Theater to new artistic levels.

Donmoyer and Yennie-Donmoyer suggest that Reader's Theater work lives in its re-interpretation each time it's presented.

No text, or utterance can be repeated without a change in meaning and in context. The reproduction of the text is a new, unrepeatable event in the life of the text...a new link to the historical moment that produced it. This life always exists between two subjects, the self and the other. The basic, underlying structure of the text lies in its connectedness to the boundaries that join two consciousnesses, two selves...Two speakers (or a reader confronting a text) create a context for meaning that cannot be easily transferred to another context. This life is thoroughly contextual, grounded in the moment of its existence (Denzin as cited in Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995, p. 13-14).

Using Reader's Theater can provide a transformative experience for participants as well as for viewers. For those presenting the data, a connection to character occurs in a different way than for an audience. The reader takes on a perspective different from his or her own and performs the language of the study's participants. Here a graduate student describes her thoughts about this medium after participating in an Reader's Theater piece.

I believe that the aesthetic dimension of reader's theater imparts a unique quality to the data that could not otherwise have been achieved through conventional reporting methods. The presentation of data in the form of a written or even orated report would have, of necessity, been passive rather than active, descriptive rather than experiential, empathetic rather than real. For an audience, reader's theater imparts the advantages of classroom observation (observers see, hear, or, in the case of the actors, speak, students' accounts of their lives), but the observation technique of theater creates a myopic lens that screens out extraneous activity and concentrates solely on the students' own visions of their world (S. Finley personal communication, as cited in Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995, p. 15-16).

If the connection is strong enough, there is a blurring of boundaries between oneself and the research participants. The nature of theater is that it brings data to life in a newly created virtual world for the participant as well as the viewer.

This perspective sharing allows us to examine someone else's belief systems.

It gives us human beings in three dimensions: bodies that live in front of us, that move, speak, change shape, create tension or bestow peace. Film takes us into the world as it is when we're not there, letting us watch it from angles we could never manage to find in life. But theater insists on our presence. We're there in the dark with actors, breathing or trying not to breathe, laughing, then trying to control ourselves so they can go on, synchronizing our internal clocks with theirs, silently asking them to rearrange time and space for us (Jefferson as cited in Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995, p. 17-18).

This Brechtian tactic of making the frame of theater visible never allows the audience to slip into the aesthetic dimension fully. Thus there is a kind of double awareness that is maintained. We are aware of ourselves watching a theatrical moment unfold. I believe that this forges a deeper connection with and examination of the material being explored. This virtual reality transcends time and space. Reader's Theater can prompt new ways of engaging with research data.

Presentational forms of drama like a reader's theater have one additional characteristic: As actors (and script writers and staggers) "rearrange time and space for us," the audience is constantly reminded that this rearranging occurred. This characteristic must be considered a virtue, at least when our reason for making data into drama is to stimulate an ongoing process of **inquiry** among audience members (Donmoyer & Yennie-Donmoyer, 1995, p. 18).

The researcher's voice is always present in Reader's Theater by virtue of editing choices: in the segments of dialogue selected, the way the script is constructed, and in the staging of the piece. The choices made foreground some data and reduce other data. "The same data will tell different stories, depending on the form you use" (Glesne, 1999 p. 181).

The Development of *Rules!*

The theme of rules was so impassioned, poignant and pervasive, in the dramatic exercises it was selected by the students as the theme to be explored in the development of a Reader's Theater script.

The activity began by students creating tableaux or "frozen sculptures" with their bodies to explore a theme. Students responded to a series of prompts including such words as *school*, *hallways*, *teachers* which had many layers of meaning for students. Students claimed voice as they articulated their ideas, issues, and desires in word and movement in the work we were doing. The explorations were grounded in play and unfold in imaginary aesthetic spaces yet were connected to real world experiences. It quickly became clear that:

- Students were frustrated by the school rules and felt they were often random and oppressive in the way they were enforced.

- Students were excited about the opportunity to capture and document the different voices of people in the school as a way to discuss and understand the variety of opinions about the rules.

Students were responding to a labyrinth of rules the school had put in place to deal with student behavior (including fights, setting fires, skipping class, and walking the halls). As a result of such infractions, there were cameras in the halls with an accompanying rule about “no hats” so that videos could capture the face of offenders on film. There was a rule that prohibited students from wearing white tee shirts, as this represented gang colors. Passes were strictly limited and often denied due to past setting of fires in the bathrooms. Many of these rules did not appear specifically in the student handbook but were announced over the loudspeaker or enforced by teachers. There were frequent lock-downs in the schools during which students were told to stay inside their classrooms until a particular situation (fight, fire, or other incident) was dealt with.

Once the topic was determined, the students and I identified the individuals who needed to be interviewed and whose voices needed to be included. In order to provide the most comprehensive approach to understanding the issues we decided that students, police, teachers, administrators, and parents needed to be interviewed for their perspectives about school rules. Next, students brainstormed the types of questions they thought would elicit stories and opinions about the rules; working to expose a variety of perspectives about the rules. The interviewers then took to the field, questions such as, “Who makes the rules and why?” “Who enforces the rules?,” and “Who is impacted by the rules and how?” In the end, the categories that emerged

repeatedly in the interviews included: dress code and appropriate dress, the time spent moving between classes, the ban on hall passes to go to the bathroom during class, and tardiness.

Students next transcribed and shared their interviews. The interviews were grouped into shared themes and we began to consider how to juxtapose voices to uncover understandings about rules.

Reader's Theater Questions

- Do you think the dress code affects the students' academic goals?
- Should students be able to leave school grounds for lunch and return?
- Do you think the dress code is fair?
- If you were elected class president would you change it?
- Do you think the dress code should be a privilege or mandatory?
- Do you think students should be banned from wearing things because colors might be gang-related?
- How do you feel about boys and girls coming to school dressed inappropriately?
- Do you think people should be able to wear whatever they want?
- Which gender violates dress code more?
- Why are school administrators allowed to take cell phones away?
- Should we be able to have cards?

The Interviews

The interview material students brought back to class was potent and often raw—filled with intense language, profanity, jokes, and emotion. The script quickly emerged as a tool of resistance through which students tugged, pushed, and prodded at the boundaries of what is acceptable in school in terms of language and behavior in order to gain attention for what they have to say. Through the script they addressed what was considered to be taboo, and what Annie Rogers (1993) calls “the unspeakable.”

Students found that they could, in a sense, break the rules in their interviews by what they said, or by what they suggested. They could test their potential for or flex their voices by naming their power or, the power they wanted to have.

The transcripts illustrated student reaction to the rules on many levels including:

- **A disdain for the rules**

Why can't we wear like white tees? Like, cause like, It'll be worse, like, if we was walking round with, ... nasty comments on our shirts, or pictures, or whatever. But they just plain, like, white tee shirts...I don't see nothing wrong with that at all.

- **A desire to mock the rules**

[dress code] That ain't got nothing to do with your education. You can learn.....butt naked.

- **A desire to resist the rules**

Can't ban the white tee rule, you know what I'm sayin? Especially can't ban it from me, 'cause, I ain't gonna stop wearing them anyways. Know what I mean?

Being Heard

Students wanted to share their voices through performance. To them, having their voices heard by people beyond this classroom was the point. One of the students, Lois said about the *Rules!* script "If we aren't going to share it what's the point?" I explained to her that it was the process that we were exploring. She responded:

But we're the only person hearing it so it's not going to make a difference...we can be on the subject as long as we want but it's not going to change if we're not going to bring it to nobody and it doesn't matter.

Her point was that one can have voice but it doesn't matter if there is no one to listen or at least no one to impact.

Students feel that one way to be heard, to be seen is to act out. Jackie added,

Now they're not gonna pay no attention to the students that are in here that came on time, that are dressed how they supposed to be, that are doing what they're supposed to be doing, and did their homework and that brought all of it in. They're going to pay attention to the ones who did wrong.

The fact that they were not heard negates students' voices. Consequently, it doesn't matter how strong their voices become, if they are not heard.

The script development process was designed to tap student voices to draw out their ideas and insights, and to prompt students to explore their lived experiences. In the process of developing the script based on the interviews, students identified issues of concern to them and things they think about. As they worked together to bring in the words and concepts that came to them through the interviews they conducted with other students, parents, and administrators, they spoke about what they considered most important in their lives as students at Richmond High.

Even as they spoke out about their concerns with the school they also seemed to be saying that their voices didn't matter to adults. While they freely expressed their ideas in the drama class about the school rules and their enforcement, the dress code, and the impact that these all have on their

everyday lives, they also expressed the idea that what they said was falling on deaf ears. Although I listened to them, and they listened to each other, this was not enough to make any changes, to make a difference in their lives. Students said that as teenagers, they were not listened to or in any case not heard. As one student said "because people...they don't listen to kids."

Rules

Students said that they understood the point of the rules that governed their behavior in school, but felt that they were taken too far. Students voiced frustration with the rules themselves (i.e. no hats) but their main concerns were around how rules were enforced by teachers, police and administrators and how rules were enforced inequitably between genders.

Interestingly, most of the rules that students voiced frustration with were not outlined in the student handbook. Rather, they were announced verbally over the loudspeaker, or by teachers. This manner of rule development and enforcement appeared to the students to be arbitrary and oppressive. The students had no sense of where the rules originated or why they were enforced by teachers.

Deborah noted that teachers were set up to be enforcers and this was a difficult role. She noted that teachers were expected to enforce rules while administrators do not. This "dilutes" the intent of the rules.

And teachers do not see administrators upholding them....administrators will be talking to someone with a hat on or with a bare mid-drift or something and they don't do anything, so it kind of dilutes our intent.

Students also saw teachers who questioned the rules. Lindsey talked about a teacher mocking the rules when she heard of someone enforcing the no bandana rule with a pink bandana and the teacher being critical of that enforcement.

You know what's funny? Mr. Simmons the history teacher...He understands that there are like gangs and stuff like that. But he was like seriously I don't know any gang with a pink bandanna. Can I join?

In the development of the script from the interviews the students openly criticized the rules and the arbitrariness of their development and enforcements. Their voices were strong and direct within the script when they spoke out.

Enforcement of Rules

Of more concern to students than the equity of the rules, was the issue of how rules were enforced. The girls maintained, that if the rules were there (however unfair) they should at least be enforced equitably.

Students shared stories of how the rules were enforced while developing their script. One student talked about seeing the same police officer she interviewed for the *Rules!* script getting physical with a female student as he tried to get her ID. Anne told this disturbing story about how enforcement can cross a line.

He grabbed her arm and he twisted her arm. Yeah, he did it to her for no reason. He twisted her arm. [She demonstrates what happened] OK, he's right here... in front. He grabbed her arm. She fell on the ground. And he snatched the ID. I think we should do something about how they enforce the rules.

The heart of the issue lies not with the rules themselves—whether or not it is fair to wear a white tee-shirt. Students were asking for respect, and were interested

in questions such as—“How do we create a safe space in our schools where everybody is respected? Anne talked about teachers pointing fingers at students and how it offends them.

They think they're authorities... No you can't do that — that's their power symbol. That's their magic stick.

Lois makes the case that their role carries only a limited amount of autonomy.

Teachers need to realize that they don't have a certain authority. They don't have ... authority on everybody.

Students stopped listening to teachers because of the way they were enforcing the rules. It's ironic that students didn't feel heard by teachers and teachers didn't feel heard by students or administrators. These comments came after a dramatic exploration of teacher voices that unearthed a variety of emotions about how teachers enforced the rules. There was a frustration and deep anger about enforcement. Students said things like “You hear these things 20 times a day” and “You hear it so much you tune it out after awhile.” The way rules were enforced seems to breed the desire to fight back: “They tend to provoke people with that whole finger thing. Makes you want to fight harder you know what I mean?”

While they acknowledged that the role of enforcer was a difficult one students were frustrated at how problem kids got the attention and pulled focus from the kids who were doing the right thing. “Bad kids” seemed to weigh the system down and added to teachers' strict enforcement.

Like, I guess I think teachers are more aggressive on their half, because they let the bad kids get to them. I'm not saying all teachers, you know, but like when so many kids do so many things you know...

Students had an understanding of some of the difficulties teachers faced; however, students thought that their issues of not being heard were so strong that they were unable to imagine being in someone else's shoes.

When I was at middle school there was this one boy and he was just so bad he didn't do nothing he was told ... He gets to do whatever he wants, but, if it was us, then we'd get yelled at but they [the teachers] was like— Whatever calms him down we let him do what he wants to do. He was like, getting rewarded.

The students acknowledged their resentment that trouble kids got more attention from teachers. Students wanted to change the rules so that kids who didn't want to be there wouldn't need to be. Jackie said,

What's the purpose of coming to school if you're not gonna do nothing? I mean if that's the reason that we're here is to get an education like Michelle said, if you're not going to be here for an education then you shouldn't be here at all.

Another student noted: "That's true though they treat people like they're in boot camp kind of thing."

Karen brought the perspective of teachers in a difficult role to light:

A lot of people get mad at teachers when they tell you to do something...but they don't make the rules they just have to do what they're told or they're going to lose their job.

Students talked about some of the rules being oppressive and inhuman.

Bathrooms were locked (due to fires being set) and students were not allowed to have passes during class. "No passes at all...ever." "Unless it's an E-mergency."

Students critiqued the justifications for the rules. Carol noted,

They said it was to try to keep order, but, they enforce it so much...it's stupid. You're stopping the learning process to make someone do something.

Vernell pointed out how teachers had certain boundaries, noting that their authority was limited.

Only thing teachers can do is yell at you or write you up. That's not going to do nothing...we can be written up as many times as you want to and still not care about it but when you're at homeIt's different story...

In these initial conversations, teachers were most often identified by students as authoritarians and kids were always positioned as victims. Students felt they were being pushed, so they pushed back.

Drama Classroom as Oasis

Deborah told me during one of our conversations at the beginning of the research that kids refer to the drama classroom as an oasis. I asked her who was saying this, if it was her “groupies” as I called them—students who spent lunch time and every free period in Deborah’s room.

Oh....and not just my groupies... I think that theater uses all the multiple intelligences and they're so used to sitting in a row in a class during the day and doing a language skill or doing a math skill and they come here and they can embody whatever they're doing..... And teenagers are awfully physical. So this is a physical outlet for them.

Students were drawn to the drama classroom. Deborah told me later that “If a kid has a sub (substitute teacher) they come to my class.” Deborah suggested that students actually weren't aware of how much they were learning in her class, “They just think they are having fun.” This idea was reflected in the research transcripts of student comments, and I think it's indicative in part, of students not being asked to reflect on what has been learned.

Deborah talked about how kids saw the theater room as an oasis where they could be themselves. She noted the irony of students coming to a place where they perform as others, and yet students come to be themselves.

I heard it from several kids but one in particular as she was coming through the door dragging her bags and everything and she stopped and said "It's funny it's ironic-coming to a performance class you don't have to perform. You can just be yourself."

Students felt they could be who they were, could bring who they were into this space.

I propose that the development of student voices occurs so strongly in drama because the learning occurs in an aesthetic space. By this I mean a space where rules are suspended or invited depending on the needs of the exploration where possibilities are explored and risk-taking becomes a natural part of the journey. This creates the "oasis" that students talked about.

Part of my research became focused on understanding how Deborah had worked with students to create this sense of oasis. What were the elements that resonated for students and teacher? There was a sense of predictability at one point in the process and this predictability allowed students and teacher to be there for each other. Each participant was responsible for the whole. A sense of ownership allowed all the parts to be embraced. Seven themes emerged in the research as contributing factors for the creation of the oasis: ensemble, predictability, choice, connection, authentic voice, ownership, and freedom of opinion.

Teaching artist Linda noted that in our work we'd created an ensemble. Students created an ensemble and this supported tapping into their creativity and

expression. She asserted that connection to an aesthetic source occurs within the individual and cannot be “taught” by the teacher.

We created an ensemble. They may not be social together, but they obviously function well and respect each other in class. ... These kids are starved, they are so hungry for this activity to express... We and Deborah tapped into their aesthetic source; their source for creativity and expression. But it's not about the teacher making it happen.

We, as teachers, may create the space for an aesthetic and artistic exploration to happen, but it mostly comes from the individual. Linda critiques the idea that the teacher passes knowledge to the student:

In reality it [the aesthetic experience] comes from within each of us and it meets the outside world in drama structures—poetry, music, etc. It's not something teachers can give or take although they can facilitate it and that brought up my question about theoretical approach—teacher as learner, coach, facilitator vs. the all knowing information base.

Drama moves education away from the “banking model” whereby mindless students are filled with information from ‘experts’ (Cohen-Cruz, 1994, p. 112). Drama brings what the learner knows forward. Full engagement of the learner is required in the work. Linda asked “What do we have to learn from our students?” This question shifted from “What is being taught” to “What can we accept from what they bring to the classroom?” Linda noted “These are places that teaching is being a receptive vessel yourself.”

I must note Deborah's skills in creating a space for these elements of “oasis” to come together. Deborah has worked with students to create and hold a space which invited students' voices.

In the final focus group conversation, students talked about the boundaries of aesthetic creation and suggested that working within an ensemble, “you know how far you can go” and that this was reassuring. This generated a sense of trust that the group knew your boundaries and would help you out when needed.

Predictability was an important part of ensemble. You can trust what you can expect. Part of the ensemble was knowing the other group members.

During the focus group, one student said:

Cause you know Karen. We all know she’s real interactive. We kind of expect her to do something more. And Anne we expect her to be melodramatic and go all out.

This supports one of the goals of critical pedagogy—knowing who is in the room, and what they bring to the mix. Michelle talks about “learning” other people. This is part of trust building and ensemble.

We kind of do learn other people. You may learn some people better than others but. Because like the ones who do more acting or like do something you try and pay attention to. That way you can learn them better.

During one class session I asked students about what they liked about this drama class. How was this different than other classrooms? They talked about the energy in the work and how they liked to have the ability to have their own interpretations. I was trying to get at what occurs in this space that’s different than other classes.

Students felt that they were offered more choices than in other places in school. Students noted that they got to be authentic in this space. Michelle noted,

It was more like choice. We get to have choice where we don't other places. We get to be ourselves here, we get to do say things here we don't get to do other places.

Students didn't often get to make their own choices in this school. So much was dictated to them about what they would do, what they would learn, how they would learn and how they would show they've learned. The notion of one right answer is part of their mentality. The drama work allowed them many routes to their destination, and they were taken aback by the freedom of choice. It was exhilarating and allowed them to discover that their ideas were being urged forward.

Deborah described the attraction of drama class for students, telling me how they can't seem to stay away:

I have had kids who have been kicked out of school who have snuck in just for drama class. And the principals will walk by and see them and come in and drag them out.

Deborah talked about Lily a student in our class who skipped class to walk the halls, but ended up peeking through the door to see what she was missing. She had taken a strong leadership role in the directing the performance of the mask poem and students were sharing the performance with me that day.

Oh Yeah, well Lily belongs in E Block. She took over the entire class yesterday. I just step back and I told them I like to see them interact. And I do that because I like to see who ends up being the director type.

She [Lily] took right over and she directed the whole thing. She put the whole show together... And she was part of it herself. And then she didn't show up today and I think I told them they were going to put it on for you too. It just so happens that you had mentioned sending them out in the hallway, so I wanted to see if the hallways were clear. I went to the doorway, yanked it open and she was over by the door going like this [demonstrating] looking in. Right here over here. So I'm sure whether she

was trying to figure out what was going on, what she was missing, who was in the class. She saw me, and then she pretended to be ill. Said something about just coming from the counselors and the doctors. And I said well they always give a pass, where's the pass. She didn't have a pass and oh, she had to go to the bathroom right now, it was an emergency and took off.

Lily was one of the strongest voices in the class and had much to say. She noted that the more you participated, the more comfortable you were, and the safer you felt. As a result, the drama classroom was sure to get students putting more of themselves into the work and consequently, getting more out of it.

Students found that their real voices were being drawn out in this class.

Lily said,

We're taught to think before you act, but here they want you to just go on instinct. So it kind of helps you to express yourself better. Because it's your first reaction and you're not thinking of it. When you think of it and you change your voice you know? Here you automatically do what you feel. If you did this with everyone you'd be the same authentic person instead of changing your voice instead of putting on a mask each time.

This is key—going with one's instinct is honoring your own voice. It is expressing your truth—being authentic. You identify how you feel, avoiding the need for a mask. These students were savvy at detecting nuances and naming the truth of what was happening. They resisted reflection but, when they did reflect, they pinpointed truth eloquently. She continued on to say,

In class when you say something you might be wrong. But when you're here, what you do here is never wrong. So there's no reason not to want to do something.

Michelle compared the feeling of speaking in drama class to putting one's authentic voice out in other classes—and noted it was dangerous to speak in

other classes because you could be judged wrong or right. It was safer to take risks where one's opinions were valued whatever they may be. She said,

You experienced different styles of how people think. Like each of us we each had a different paper but we also had we didn't have the same idea. Like we all had different ideas to express that was in that paper.

In talking about different interpretations and how it's interesting to see what different approaches others will come up with, students began to see the power of their unique perspectives. Anne said:

But when we have class discussions about something, it's **about** your own opinion and what you think.

Early on Deborah also noted the power of drama in empowering students by providing a sense of ownership.

It's taking away the voice of authority which they get all the time and giving power to them.

Working aesthetically, creating something that didn't exist before, creates a sense of ownership in students. In the final interview with Deborah she reflected on the importance of ownership for students, yet saw her role as carefully steering the students. Deborah noted that creativity also emerged from ownership.

I realized all along ownership is important and I'm finding that It's a hard job because everything is shades of gray. There's no black or white. And I have to find out where to draw lines. And that's a huge part of my job. And the lines are constantly shifting depending on the classes, and the kids, and what's happening. ... I try to give them a lot of freedom and ownership because I think creativity comes from there.

In her practice Deborah believes in ownership but there was still a clear sense that she is the one who guides the process. It's a delicate balance. This

became an ever-shifting picture in class as she moved between cultivating ownership, providing opportunities for empowerment, and maintaining some sense of authority.

The focus of the work this semester was the development of students' personal voices and how they were heard or how they perceived they were being heard. Before I could ask them to step into roles other than themselves, it was clear that there needed to be an understanding of their own voices. These students needed to know their voices were heard and valued.

Deborah talked about how her shift from being an English teacher to a drama teacher moved her from being teacher-centered toward being student-centered. Working in drama also shifted her to a more generative model that allowed students to steer the direction of their learning. With learning centered on the students, the teacher must allow the center of control to shift from teacher to student.

My role as a teacher has changed totally. Because as well for 29 years I taught English and it was teacher centered. That I would be the center and everyone would focus on me. And um, I had to learn. It wasn't that hard for me but I think it's probably dreadfully hard for some teachers. I had to learn to back away and make them the center. Which is what I did yesterday with that poem thing... You think that things will fall apart if you're not there to control everything.

Deborah discussed how the work required students to develop the discipline to be willing not to be the center of attention but rather, to work for the good of the group and the project. Ownership generates a deep sense of caring on behalf of students which can develop their discipline for coming to the work and for honing their skills. Ownership for students requires trust from teachers. One must let go

of control and trust that students have the capacity and discipline to hold things together because one can't be sure what the outcome will be.

That kind of thing happens. It happened last year with one of my groupies. He was doing a *MacBeth* fight scene and he decided to break focus totally and went over to someone in the audience and made a joke. So, this is a lesson that's very hard to learn for them—that the integrity of the piece is utmost and that you're communicating something to the audience and, you know, get with it.

Deborah astutely understood the power of place and allowed students to have control over their space.

This is my third year teaching theater here and it was, it's hard getting anything initiated. And I decided at the end of last year to try and do things and give them ownership of the place. I had the seating differently and one day I said I'm just going to sit back during lunch I said How would you think this place should be? So this is how they did it.

When students' sense of ownership took hold, Deborah watched proudly as students took leadership roles. She noted in the dramatization of the mask poem how quickly students worked to pull this piece together.

Jackie described how the group took ownership by allowing leaders to emerge and following them. Leadership included "people who understood what we wanted and how we wanted things to go down."

We had just had a few people who worked everything out and then all we had to do was work with them. We didn't have no arguments or nothing.

Students were generous with each other, giving each other credit, taking credit for their ideas.

When students took ownership of the work they were doing, they began to see themselves as the authorities of their work and process. Ownership was established by inviting and activating student voices right from the start of the process, allowing students to make choices about the direction of the script. During our second session, I asked students to brainstorm words they wanted to explore through tableaux, issues that were relevant for them. They generated a large list:

- kids in the hallway
- relationships
- white tees
- rules!
- stupid rules!
- teachers...plain old teachers
- boring teachers

I asked them to consider things outside of school as well. This generates a new range of responses:

- work!
- McDonald's
- movies
- family
- the mall
- where you go to eat

The answers they gave were ripe with possibility and reflected connections to their lived experiences. It was a natural fit to work to create a script with themes that were relevant to students. This deepened the connection to the work and developed a sense of stake in its success. For example, one student, Kathy, got switched out of the class and sent the tape recorder back with her tape and transcription, thus continuing with assignment even though she had

left the group. Deborah commented on how students responded to being trusted with being given the tape recorders. Time and again they followed-through in a way that was unexpected for this age group in this school.

Using theater in education brings a stronger connection to learning by demanding active engagement (Fowler, 1994; Greene, 1978; Langer, 1953; Dewey, 1934). Maxine Greene advocates providing students with access to the arts in order to energize them to "wide-awakeness," as opposed to the passivity we so often see in classrooms. Engaging in art can lead to questioning of how we relate with the world (Greene, 1978).

Students valued the chance to express their opinions and equated this with freedom. Lily stated,

It's more like freedom. Like in other classes you can't do or say—you can't voice your own opinion. You do your work, it's more of a freedom.

Lily also discussed the ability to be spontaneous, talking about responding in the moment, rather than trying to think things through. This develops a comfort with responding off the cuff, which cultivates a quickness of mind.

The other day we were going through and she [Deborah] was giving a letter and we had to think of a letter think of a word with the letter. And everybody went around. And the one girl said she couldn't get it. And Miss [Mickle] was like... 'oh see when you're here for a couple of weeks you'll be as quick as the rest of us. 'Cause you think more on your toes so your brain works quicker.

There was a sense from both students and from Deborah that this "oasis" had boundaries which allow students to be buffered from the world outside. These boundaries kept out forces that would seek to change what made this space special. Deborah described it in terms of having a threshold where

students could leave their walls outside, and be their true selves or explore possible selves. But of course, the sense of safety doesn't last beyond the drama classroom. As soon as students walked out of it, they became their old selves again.

The oasis could be maintained by keeping it separate from the rest of the school culture. But how can this creative and reflective work have real impact if students must leave it behind as they cross back over the threshold?

How can the elements that students were talking about in this class, what they were hungry for in their lives, promote change for a more equitable learning environment? Students talked eloquently about how these elements promoted connection. Clearly they knew what they needed, and that they were not getting it in most situations in school. If the work felt chaotic at times, it was because they were so engaged by the exploration, that their energy was released.

Clarissa Pinkola Estes writes of wolves, who never kill more than they can eat. Except that is, if they've been through a famine in which case they kill indiscriminately (1992). Students too have been starved for a place for their voice, for connection, for feeling valued. When it is offered, they too go a little crazy as they seek to feed themselves— to fill the void within them. This provides a useful metaphor for understanding the intensity of silenced voices once invited to speak.

Summary

Reader's Theater is a powerful way for students to explore a complex issue like school rules. The process of naming the issue, reflecting on it and

critically acting through the creation of a script is what Freire (1993) refers to as problem-posing. The process was embarked upon with the goal of examining the issue from multiple perspectives and forging a productive dialogue that would create greater understanding of why the rules were there, how they are enforced, how they are perceived, and how they addressed issues of gender.

Students also provide a wealth of information about why drama education is so rich and relevant for them, how they feel their voices were heard and engaged, how the work allows them to connect to the content and to each other, how the drama classroom becomes an oasis for them. If we listen to students, they will tell us both what they need and how to provide it.

Chapter Eight: The Rhythm of Resistance

Introduction

This chapter investigates the role of resistance in the project, beginning with the interruption of the Reader's Theater process when the interviews produced results that triggered a strong negative response from Deborah and resistance as a theme in the project. Resistance also took other shapes including the resistance students had to rules, to school and to teachers, resistance to being told what to do, resistance to learning as an act of rebellion against school culture, and resistance to being known. Resistance has many faces in this research.

The Rhythm Machine

During one pivotal session I invited students to create a rhythm machine, with the goal of bringing in a range of teachers' voices. This exercise required students to pair a phrase of text with a gesture which is repeated rhythmically suggesting a kind of human machine. I modeled the exercise using one teacher voice I had witnessed that morning tensely ordering a student to class: "You need to get to class!" while pointing my finger at the students.

This exercise triggered students to bring in many variations of the authoritative voices of teachers. What follows are other phrases students used in the rhythm machine:

- You need to go to classes!
- Where's your I.D?
- Can't go down this hallway!
- No running!
- Where's your pass at?
- No more passes!

- Don't go down the stairs!
- Unjust!
- Take your hat off!
- Where are you supposed to be?

I could not have anticipated the intensity of emotion that the exercise triggered. Students had deep seated anger and resentment about rules and the way they were enforced and relished the opportunity to embody the voices they'd heard repeatedly.

The classroom teacher, Deborah, who was videotaping the session listened quietly through the processing of the exercise as we uncovered students' response to teachers enforcing the rules. At one point she interjected, "There's some place where I'm going to put my voice in here. Because, I'm starting to resent all this. There's a reason why we do it. How many of you were late for class today?"

Deborah was reacting to student voices gaining power (as they performed their interpretation of the story they were telling) by questioning the process. I invited her to say more after her initial statement—this moment had the potential to prompt students to consider how they were missing an important perspective and to open a dialogue about what it might be like to be the enforcer of such rules. Unfortunately, Deborah would not say more. I spoke with students about the need to listen for whose perspective was missing and challenged them to seek out interviews that represented these missing voices.

I asked the group to think about what Deborah's comments suggested in light of the research—what perspectives were missing? How were we addressing the fact that teachers' roles placing them in difficult situations? The rhythm

machine gave voice to how students hear the rules being enforced. It was cathartic for students to name their concern with enforcement, then reflect on it. The intent of the exercise was to get them naming voices other than their own in understanding rules. I had used an example that I thought would engage them. The next step would be to probe what other kinds of voice/perspective did teachers have on rules to explore the issues from every possible angle.

When the bell rang and students switched classes, Deborah and I gathered to talk about what had transpired. My teaching partner Linda picked up the hand-held tape recorder from a chair where it had been taping the full class proceedings and brought it over to where Deborah and I were talking to capture the conversation. Deborah pulled Linda and me aside and said:

I'm sorry but I just have to tell you I feel like this is making me very uncomfortable. You're getting them all energized and rebellious, and I'm nervous that when you leave I'm not going to be able to control the class. I don't think it's going to be able to come to a regular theater class. You don't understand the context here. You know I have stories if you want to know the context. Two years ago there was a murder where a student stabbed a counselor 11 times. The bathrooms are locked because there are often fires set in the bathrooms. There are fights constantly. These are the reasons that the rules are made.

I said that context is hugely important and that does need to be in the script and that I'd hoped that when the transcriptions from teachers came in and when we'd worked through the process that the script would be a balanced view of perspectives on the rules. Deborah was afraid that it was going to unleash something bigger than she could control...than we could control. I told her that her points were very valid and that Linda and I would think about how we might

adjust our course to address her concerns and put closure on the work that had been done.

It became clear that she had set her sights on having monologues that could be performed for the school later in the year. She'd assumed the work done during our residency could be the foundational piece of her performance. She did not see this as the inquiry-based research project we had planned it to be—that the students' interests and issues would guide the progression of the work. She said she couldn't use these interviews as the language was “not intelligent” and that we had in releasing student voices created an energy that she worried she could not get back “under control” once we left. She said

I'm sorry it was getting to be mob...I think it was getting out of hand. It's something you're feeding into them...I was all right till today. I want you to be aware of what you're doing. These are the kids that are going to be working at McDonalds.

This comment revealed a lack of acknowledgement for students' intellectual capacities. It is a classist perspective. She noted that all the rules have a rationale, they were made by a group of very intelligent people. Deborah was at once angry, and apologetic. She was concerned that we didn't fully understand the context within which we were working and may have started something she will have to finish when we leave.

Suddenly, Deborah noted that Linda held the tape recorder. Deborah abruptly snatched the tape recorder out of Linda's hand and told her that it was inappropriate to have taped her. I reminded her that I had been taping all class proceedings and discussions.

The following day I received a message on my answering machine from Deborah that Linda was not allowed back in her class.

Hello, Lisa. This is [Deborah Mickle]. I just wanted you to know that after... much thought I've decided that Linda is not welcome in my room. I feel that what she did approached entrapment. And, um, you are certainly welcome to come in and finish this week, but I do not want [Linda] there. I think you'll be fine without her. Thank you. Bye.

I was stunned—caught between feeling that perhaps we had gone too far, and feeling like this vital research was now in jeopardy. I relied on Linda's ability to be a sounding board, and I'm frustrated to lose her participation. I felt pressured to compromise the development of this powerful work, and yet if I did not want to damage my relationship with Deborah. Most of all I worried about what a change would mean to my research and to the students.

Process Interrupted

The interviews pushed the limits of what was acceptable in the classroom by the students' choices—inclusion of street language, profanity, (which is clearly not allowed in schools) and views that challenged the rules and their enforcement in school. Interestingly, this served to provide students crafting the script a sense of agency. They were in control and bringing forth important voices. These voices served to push at the boundaries of what would be tolerated in the school. In addition, the use of this language included peers but excluded teachers who might not understand or be as comfortable with the language. This discourse could provide or block access to students' conversations and the students seemed to enjoy this sense of power. As the

interviews began to come in they were, as expected, mostly from student peers expressing frustration and anger about different aspects of the rules. In cases where teachers' voices were included, they tended to represent similar views as the students held. As part of the process I pushed students to consider whose voices were missing. I asked "What aspects of rules were not being investigated?"

My intention was to start with where students were and to build a bridge to other perspectives beginning with voices of enforcement, then move towards other perspectives teachers might have in relation to the rules including the dilemma teachers faced being asked to be enforcers. It was during this interruption that I felt a shift in the research process. Clearly the work was doing more than exposing and releasing voices. We were questioning the structures of power within the school and that was crossing an unspoken line for Deborah. The hidden curriculum popped out in vivid relief. I was being warned to get back in line—not to question the status quo.

At the same time, I realized that Deborah's concerns were valid. Linda and I would depart after a few weeks, having invited students to speak their minds, be outspoken about issues which were at the heart of school culture: rules and teachers. There was a deep rage students held for the oppression they had so often felt in school. We were effectively questioning the power structures that were limiting student voice. But, I realized there was a responsibility not just to draw out and empower voices, but also to help students understand appropriate ways to have their voices be heard.

How could I honor Deborah's position of being caught between students' needs and desires and school structures? How could we spark change without setting off a chain reaction that would ultimately jeopardize students' relationships with Deborah? I could not conceive of the work I was doing in a vacuum. I needed to realize the implications of the larger context. I felt the need to pull the project back into focus. Deborah's voice was as important to hear as were the students.

As we prepared to leave that day Linda and I tried to smooth things over with Deborah. Deborah said "I'm not as angry as I sound. I'm not as upset as I'm coming across. I'll be fine. This triggered something in me." Deborah's denial of her own anger, was also of concern to Linda and me. Deborah had a right to her anger.

When I shared my dilemma with Gene Diaz on my committee she noted:

There's something about voices and people who have been traditionally silent speaking up that's very dangerous, very fearful (Diaz, 2002).

I knew that Deborah felt that these voices were dangerous—that once they were unleashed there may be no way to reign them in again. I felt that all of these perspectives should be examined and they should be examined in different ways. Creating the space for these honest discussions and bringing all voices to life and performing them was useful because we were looking for multiple perspectives on the issue. We were trying to get to the heart of something larger than ourselves. As long as things were looked at equally from other perspectives and we were identifying those voices that weren't represented, we were being

equitable. If students were eager and hungry to discuss their concerns, why couldn't we be willing to join that conversation?

Taking control back from us for Deborah meant using her authentic voice, which she had a difficult time doing. As Linda pointed out, she backtracked on her feelings during debriefing.

She's obviously upset, but ...discounting her own feelings... I wanted to say "It's fine if you're enraged by this because you have a valid need that we're side swiping!"

Ultimately, Deborah's concern was the question of whether she would be able to control the class again when we left. She needed to maintain her position within the power structures of the school. She was fearful that the students might be so out of whack because of our visits that she will not be able to reign them in. It's the idea that we had opened a door that couldn't be shut. I have heard this concern in my teaching of teachers from across the country—a fear of bringing drama or other art forms across the curriculum because it (at first) leaves you feeling out of control—because it feels chaotic. It allows students to steer the direction of learning and this feels unpredictable and prompts teachers to question their ability to control their classes.

Linda told me a story about a time when Deborah chose not to participate but rather, opted to observe and take notes on what we were doing. Linda encouraged her to join in saying that the students can help recall the exercises if need be, but Deborah insists, "But I'm the teacher," establishing a sense of authority and having an authoritative voice with students. This is contrary to the nature of the work we were introducing—that of collaborative research and

exploration. The journey is a joint one. If all of us were journeying together Deborah's voice was an integral part of that.

Deborah was an important part of the research. I want to honor her voice and respect the difficult position she was caught in—between the needs of the students and the expectations of the school. I also don't want to compromise the impact of my research on students' realizations and their voices.

We are limited by our ability to hear. Deborah couldn't always hear the intelligence of the students through their angry voices. Students couldn't always hear the caring of the teachers beyond the way in which rules were enforced. I wondered—how can they ever meet each other halfway?

This created an ethical dilemma for me—had I overstepped my bounds—gone too far with the process? I felt trapped in a situation in which not everyone could be pleased and someone might feel stifled.

Later I found this struggling back and forth, questioning, reflecting developed my own clear understanding and voice about the choices I made and the impact of these choices on the project. There was a tension between the needs of the research and the need to maintain a relationship with Deborah. Compromise was called for but in doing so, I curtailed the aesthetic progression of the Reader's Theater piece on rules. In the end, I edited the students' voices; oppressing in a new way, continuing the silencing in order to compromise. There was no easy way to navigate this dilemma and any solution would have left someone unhappy. This was a researcher's conundrum.

Linda noted that “with more time ahead of us, which isn’t feasible we could do the process and create a judicious space for equity... They would probably attain it in a full semester.” However, she also validated Deborah’s concerns about putting her voice out in front of the students:

I have to acknowledge her choice of doing it privately [this refers to Deborah’s expression of her concerns about the direction of the work after the rhythm machine]. It leaves her way too open to attack...It shifts the status relationship. As she said “I’m one and there’s many of them.” I think we have to respect her experience in this setting. It’s not a pure studio setting and it’s not a performance space—where we’re going to make a show and everybody has equal voice. She has stepped out many times and so to step back in at that point would have cast her in an authoritarian place. I mean she wants to be able to do her work from a neutral place once we go. It would have shifted that neutrality. And she was being protective of herself which I have to again validate. She is not in an easy role.

This is a salient point. I believe teachers should be agents of change and be willing to use their voices. I must also be aware, however, of the power structures that surround Deborah: the students, the school culture, the administration. It’s not fair to expect this without considering context. Deborah’s response/voice was as important to listen to, hear, and honor as the students’. Each of us was an integral part of the research, and as such each of our views must be honored. On September 26, 2003 I wrote in my field notes,

I have one little person on one shoulder that’s the researcher whose heart is palpitating thinking ‘Oh my God, this is really valuable research because it has such powerful things to say about teachers’ voices and the potentially oppressive role and the fears that are inherent to the work and the inability of teachers to release student voices because of their own fears. I can see all kinds of nuances and feel very excited that this research is not only going to be doable. Not only do I have enough data, but it’s important data and it could have huge ramifications for education depending on how I write it up and who it’s shared with. On the other

shoulder is the little mediator who wants everybody to be happy and wants to make everything right. And they're in competition because these techniques are meant to induce change so I don't want to try and undo what I've done. I was literally sick to my stomach thinking "Oh my God what have I done. Is it my fault? Should I have picked something safer? A Reader's Theater piece on living in this city?" That would have been less terrifying. And I still don't know the answer.

Themes of Resistance

Resistance was a significant theme running throughout the research. It took many shapes for both students and for classroom teacher. From the start Linda and I anticipated that students would show resistance to the work. Linda noted that "full engagement means energy and exposing oneself."

[They] can't show you how much they like something cause it makes them too vulnerable. Also we may see students who want to do well in the beginning of the school year, but may slack off because they may not be able to maintain that kind of stamina it takes. It's going to be happening on many different levels.

Here resistance was linked to vulnerability and stamina.

When resistance continued to emerge during the research, I became increasingly curious about it. I considered each instance of resistance wondering what it might suggest about the development of voice and identity. I began to see resistance as a map. Resistance served as a kind of flexing of voice. By this I mean that both students and classroom teacher alike pushed boundaries in order to try ideas out, test the water, make their concerns known through a variety of strategies. The face of resistance changed over time. Resistance on the part of the students seemed to be an attempt to counterbalance the oppressive school culture. Resistance was a way for students to hold onto their voices and ensure they were heard (even if not responded to). Resistance on the

part of the classroom teacher seemed to be an attempt to establish control by emphasizing her boundaries. I interpreted Deborah's resistance as a way to claim and value her own knowledge and experience in juxtaposition to work being introduced by the guest artists in her classroom. Resistance in myself often came out of a need to protect my research, my artistic ideas, my skills as an educator.

There were many points of resistance that emerged from both students and classroom teacher.

- **Resistance to rules, to school, to teachers**

Students clearly felt the rules were not fair, and that the rules were oppressive. Their Reader's Theater script reflected this resistance in many ways, across interviews. Students toyed with making a stand.

Can't ban the white tee rule you know what I'm saying, especially can't ban it from me. Cause I ain't gonna stop wearing them anyways, Know what I mean?

When the principal makes an announcement like —No more passes—Or the students have to use the bathroom later on... What do you expect? But when they say we can't have any more passes that makes us want to—Just gonna make us want to use the bathroom or walk out.

Jackie talked about how students collectively have power and suggests that if they chose to wield it, the school wouldn't be able to stop them.

Now they made this new rule about a lotta of people not wearing white tees. What if we just had the whole entire school just buy white tees and everybody wear them on one day. The school can't stop- what's the school going to kick out everybody who came to school wearing with white tees on? They can't do that.

We tend to demonize resistance in students but resistance can be positive. With resistance students were trying their voices on for size. They were flexing their strength, understanding the power they had to dissent, to make a stand.

- **Resistance to being “told what to do”**

This was also a major theme in the *Rules!* script—of resisting teachers who continually told students what to do. In reaction to the dress code, one student said: “It [’s] a free country you can wear what you want.” In the debriefing after an improvisation about what a caring teacher might feel about enforcing rules, one student responded:

It’s a control thing. There is about one teacher to like every 100 students. And what’s out of control is that when you tell me, when you keep yelling at me “Don’t go down this hallway; Don’t go down this hallway; Don’t go down this hallway” and I’m going to run down the hallway, but if you weren’t sitting yelling in my face about it, then there would be no problem. If you’re trying to control us and we don’t need to be controlled than there’s more kids in the building who do what they’re told than the other kids. We could just revolt. If there is a big uproar then there’s nothing anyone could do about it.

- **Resistance to learning as an act of rebellion against of school culture**

Students were in and out of class. One student, Jackie, spent more time in the suspension room, than in class all semester. Deborah reported that at one point in the semester Jackie “talked her way out” of suspension to be allowed to come to drama. Another student, Lily, skipped class to walk the halls, and Deborah found her peering in through the tiny window in the classroom door to see what

she was missing. This back and forth of connection and disconnection was a pattern for the students. Maintaining a connection required patience and trust on the part of the teacher.

- **Resistance to sharing—to being known**

Students would at times pull back in how much they would share or in how willing they were to take risks. For example, one student, Vernell, always situated herself outside of our circle. She refused to sit with us; however, she would be drawn in by the discussions of her peers. Deborah, also displayed this kind of resistance when she was reluctant to be interviewed on tape initially, noting that she wasn't good at articulating her thoughts yet going on to give an interview rich with insight and detail.

Students who have been part of what Paulo Freire refers to as a “culture of silence” begin to create their own subculture which may take one of two forms:

“Students’ internalization of the passive role assigned to them within the traditional classroom, and their aggressive reaction to this role” (Shor & Freire, cited in Diaz-Greenberg, p. 15). Walsh (1991) notes that this silence in and of itself can be an act of resistance. Resistance in this sense could be a way of reacting to being silenced.

I believe that resistance from the classroom teacher also signaled the development of voice. In the same way that students “flexed” their voices in creating the *Rules!* script as a tool for resistance, Deborah also found ways to flex her voice through resistance. In Deborah’s case, resistance seemed to take

the shape of a demand for a claiming of and acknowledgement of what she knows—her expertise.

The problem with thinking of resistance as a map is that it can be difficult to “visualize” without creating a response of counter-resistance in return. I found myself frustrated at first when Deborah suggested our work was creating a situation in which students were out of control. As an artist I found my resistance related to my belief in the significance of sitting with chaos and allowing the need for other perspectives to rise from the student artists. As a teacher, I found my impulses being challenged and immediately became protective of my teaching skills. The desire to understand both the resistance and my own reactions counterbalanced my own response. Being immersed in the role of researcher, prompted me to move away from my initial gut reaction to the resistance and to allow my curiosity to fully observe it, engage with it, consider what it might mean, and to move from reaction to active listening.

Summary

Resistance served as a foundation for all of the work that took place in this research and fueled the progression of the work. Resistance is often seen as a negative force that we tend to press against, yet, it can serve to drive the creative process. In our dramatic explorations we worked at moving beneath the resistance to figure out what it was made of; what it meant for participants and for the work; and tried to see it in a different light. How might we acknowledge the presence of resistance and keep on working, or harness its intensity to take our work deeper and farther? In the end, I saw resistance as evidence of a flexing of

voice, where students and classroom teacher were trying their voices out in different ways to determine their voice's power. Seen in this light, resistance is a gift.

Chapter Nine: Improvising Discourses

“The Decks Are Stacked”

In my field note entry on September 12th I wrote,

One afternoon, I enter the teachers' room and see a police officer sitting at the computer. Curious about the police presence, I strike up a conversation. He tells me there are four officers at the school each day, there to make sure that violence doesn't break out. Mostly he is called in when the kids are giving the teachers a hard time and the teachers call for help to make sure fights aren't happening, and to “be a presence.” He blames MCAS (Massachusetts Comprehensive Assessment System, the state standardized testing) for some of the problems in schools—for creating the behavioral problems. Part of the job includes taking kids who are out of control away and locking them up. And then, the kid gets suspended. He says they're called in when the teachers can't deal with the students. I ask him if he can recommend a good place for lunch and he tells me that he wouldn't walk around in this area – it's not safe.

Later the same day, I meet a math teacher who talks about having one of his fourteen year old girls in his class leave to have a baby and how another 14 year old from last year has just returned to class after having a baby. He says he doesn't try and judge, just tries to take students where they're at. He said students are very happy about having babies and don't see any problem with it at 14. He moves on to talk about the frustration of being overloaded. He has 33 kids assigned to his class. While he struggles to engage them with hands-on learning and philosophical discussions like “define what a number is in words”, the kids give him a hard time because they feel like it's “baby math.”

During the first three days of school a fight breaks out in his classroom. A girl is caught by the Vice Principal hiding under the stairs in the basement. He makes her come to class. She comes in with an angry attitude and begins talking about the Vice Principal. Another girl gets up and says “don't dis him, he's my man.” A fight ensues. I ask the teacher what he does. He says he calls for help and then throws himself into the middle of it.

In a discussion about the concept of numbers, two of the math teacher's classes “sort of got it and engaged and two of my classes went haywire.” He ends up sending 10 kids to detention and says he probably should have sent 10 more. He's frustrated at the lack of time in the day to create a personal relationship with the kids. He feels this would make a big difference. Because students don't have any free periods and neither does he—creating a relationship would either have to happen before classes or after class and there is no time. He's trying to make a difference but, as he says “the decks are stacked.”

Introduction

In this chapter I discuss the different discourses I found within Richmond High. It seemed at times that cultures were clashing—the world of the kids, the world of the teachers, the world of the police officers. Each group had its own circle of accepted language, perspectives, and frame of reference which provided access for some members of the school, and blocked access for others. These different discourse circles seemed to occasionally touch but rarely intersected with each other. Each group felt they understood the world from the other's perspective but from my perspective they were blocked by the needs of their own frames of reference. I found these frames or discourse circles, to be limited in their scope. Each discourse group included some and excluded others. For example, the police officer never talked about his relationships with students, he talks only about his relationships with administrators.

Conversations with the police officer and the math teacher pointed to their different understandings of the school culture. Their discourses did not seem to connect or overlap. Each group spoke a language that was not heard or recognized by the other. As a researcher, I had permission to dip into different worlds, and heard the distinct discourses of the police, the teachers, the students, the administrators. When students and teachers felt they were not heard it might have been because they were speaking different languages.

Anna Deavere Smith explores voice (both physical, as well as voice as a representation of identity) as a way of understanding our social and cultural groundings. She makes a case for using physical voice to spark understanding

the complexities of race, and encourages us to listen for voices beyond our own.

She says:

There is little in culture or education that encourages the development of a unifying voice. In order to have real unity, all voices would have to first be heard or at least represented. Many of us who work in race relations do so from the point of our own ethnicity. This very fact inhibits our ability to hear more voices than those that are closest to us in proximity. Few people speak a language about race that is not their own. If more of us could actually speak from another point of view, like speaking another language, we could accelerate the flow of ideas (Perkins & Uno, 1996).

What emerged was a clear sense of many viewpoints, each grounded in a real human voice. This connection to particular voices brought the presentation of the work to life and created opportunities for connection. Smith suggests that actors must “create a fiction to illuminate a truth” (as cited in Kalb, 2001, p. 18).

This wrapping of different “truths” in a story allows us to slip beneath the censors of people who would normally be resistant to hearing ideas that conflict with their own belief systems.

Gene Diaz (1994), in her research on artist/teachers, explores the concept of coordinating discourses in order to understand the context of the research environment in a public magnet school for the creative arts. Diaz found that professional artists working in a public school as teachers coordinate the disparate discourses of arts and schooling, which represent distinct interests and perspectives. The artists in the school were obligated to take attendance, assign homework, assess and evaluate student work, and at the same time focus on creative tensions, promote innovation and imagination, and encourage risk-taking and aesthetic discovery.

Discourses, like the social institutions which they constitute, represent political interests and, as such, constantly compete for status and power..... Each of the participants organizes their understanding of the school in relation to the contrasting and competing discourses of art and schooling, but the need for resolution of the contradictions between the two, based on a commonality of purpose, is everywhere apparent. The artist/teachers coordinate discourses (Diaz, 1994, p. 8).

At Richmond High School, the teachers and students interpreted similar situations within their own discourse fields, from the languages they spoke, the beliefs and assumptions that guided their actions, and the perspectives of their lifestyles and positions. Each one made sense of events from their own place in the school.

Discursive fields, such as art and schooling, employ different ways of making meaning of the world, of constructing reality. Artists are negotiators of meaning and translators of experience. Beethoven's Sixth Symphony, *The Pastoral*, translates the experience of watching deer scatter across a meadow at an approaching thunderstorm into musical imagery. Using the language of music, Beethoven constructs an aesthetic meaning from this experience. A botanist, a meteorologist and a zoologist would construct different meanings within a different discourse from the same experience (Diaz, 1994, p. 8).

As a researcher who sought to uncover the full landscape of the terrain I was mapping, this concept of discourse fields or circles allowed me to see the ways that communication was inhibited between the different groups. Each group constructed different meanings from a situation, an event, a spoken word.

Missing Voices/Missing Perspectives

Part of the significance of this research is that the dramatic activities invited students to bring together different discourses—to blur the boundaries between discourse communities to increase and enhance communication.

Initially, students identified a variety of voices that needed to be in the script—those of students, teachers, police officers, administrators— but in the end, produced mostly student perspectives. Even those interviews which included teacher/officer voices had perspectives that agreed with student opinions. Part of the process of developing the script in Reader’s Theater involves allowing students to question the effectiveness of their work, to consider which voices were missing, so that the script continues to evolve and the process itself becomes the problem-posing mechanism. In order to move between discourses, students need to recognize which perspectives are missing.

Hearing voices that are real, human, and authentic, put forth in a dramatic space helps create an aesthetic engagement, a connection. We engage with the ideas in a deeper way because they bring with them a sense of “voice” and identity of real people. This experience feels like a conversation. Having thoughts juxtaposed, offering a range of responses side-by-side, allows us to hear them in a way that is often not otherwise possible. I thought it would be important for students to be exposed to this process with the different and missing perspectives.

During the class session following the Rhythm Machine exercise, Deborah was absent. (The Rhythm Machine, explored in Chapter 8, is an exercise that brings together participants’ phrases and gestures on a theme in a voice and movement piece.) However, in an effort to address the concerns she had raised following the Rhythm Machine exercise, I asked students to participate in an improvisation during which they imagined themselves as caring teachers talking

with a newly hired teacher about their relationship with the rules. I thought this would act as a catalyst for students to arrive at the missing perspectives of teachers. Unfortunately, the improvisation fell flat. When asked what it was like to be a caring teacher, students said they couldn't imagine it. I wondered if they **couldn't** or rather, **wouldn't** imagine. Michelle summed it up by saying:

A lot of us have had bad experiences with teachers so we kind of don't look at the view of the teachers. Because, we really don't **care** for them. You know what I mean. It's kind of like hard to step into their shoes if we don't want to be them or interact with them. You know?

I asked students if they couldn't imagine what it would be like to be a caring teacher, how could they expect a teacher to imagine what it would be like to be a frustrated student? I felt confident that the voices of caring teachers would have been brought in over time, but with all that had happened, I needed to find a way to end the project in order to allay Deborah's concerns. I was seeking a middle ground where Deborah felt her concerns had been addressed—and her voice had been heard. At the same time, students needed to have a sense of closure and if possible, a sense of culmination in the work that made sense.

I reminded students that there is always another side of a story. The goal was not to make judgment calls – about who's right, or who's wrong; the goal was to explore all vantage points on the rules as a way to understand the whole picture from many perspectives.

When I asked students to imagine caring voices they imagined that even voices that sound like they care were, in the end, really coming from teachers who were there for the pay. Vernell said,

They'll tell you that we're here 'cause we care about you guys, but mainly we're here for the pay.

Russell asked "Why would they care?" I wondered "How can this conversation ever begin if all sides have such limiting assumptions of the other group?"

The students' judgments blocked the development of a richly informed view of reality. Assumptions created a thick foliage which shielded students from seeing missing perspectives. I pointed out that students were creating their own perceptions. Since they have never had the experience of being a teacher it's hard to know what it's like. I asked them to consider the quandary that teachers were put in. I wanted students to move beyond their own viewpoints to include teacher and police voices in their script; this toward representing all perspectives, and including those who question what the students believed. Although students interviewed teachers, their questions didn't fully interrogate the teachers' interests, issues and perspectives. I assumed that this lack of perspective would come up in the discussion following the improvisation. Interestingly, it did not. They were not yet in the place of seeing other perspectives.

In thinking about how I might have changed this course given what I now know about the school culture and the students, I imagine we could have made a map of what viewpoints there might be and could have gone "mining" for them. I brought the gap to students' attention by saying:

So you know what's really interesting? In our script we have one set of opinions. If some of these other things started to come out like—the rules are for safety but you see the chaos that's around them—that would be a really interesting conflict and a piece that would pop forward.

There were glimmerings of other perspectives seeping into the discussion and this is promising. Karen noted:

A lot of people get mad at teachers when they tell you to do something, but they don't make the rules they just have to do what they're told or they're going to lose their job.

Then a student remembered hearing a teacher's frustration about having to be both teacher and enforcer of rules.

I remember lots of times my teachers always would like.... the kids are out of control. They're all telling me like "we're not paid to babysit" you know what I mean? When kids don't follow the rules it kind of makes them frustrated cause they feel like they're doing more than one job, more than what they were paid to do.

I told them that's exactly why I wanted to do this improvisation exercise, "because when you hear the script it's clear their [the teachers'] voice is missing." I wanted them to become aware of the opportunity they have in this activity to explore the perspective of teachers and develop a greater understanding of how their world might make sense to them when viewed from another perspective. I wanted them to see the power of perception from a different angle, a different discourse. I asked them,

What might this be like for a teacher who cares about the students, to be in a situation of enforcing these rules? Where are the frustrations? Could this script have triggered some of those conversations? What are the range of emotions a teacher might be feeling about this?

Students have represented the teachers as one-dimensional, from their perspectives alone. I asked them to reconsider their script and include the voice of a teacher who cares about them as students, as people.

Lois went to the crux of the issue by protesting “But the voices not being heard... are our voices...” The hunger to be heard is desperate and as a result students relished exploring and voicing their perspectives, and resisted exploring the perspectives of others. How could they explore other perspectives when their perspective was not heard? Their question seemed to be, “Why bring in voices that already have power?” If students aren’t heard, they are unable to hear others. There was no way for the students to share perspectives fully, to hear and speak the voices of the teachers, until their intense need to be heard was met first. This means we, as teachers, as educators, must learn to listen, and to hear what students say.

There was a sense of futility for students in the work of the Reader’s Theater without a culminating performance. Performance would have brought student voice to a level of agency where they had the possibility of impacting their community, as voices were expressed, heard and validated. Considering the work from an artistic vantage point, performance became the equivalent of being heard.

The Compromise

In order to maintain my relationship with Deborah, I made the choice to conclude the script development process early by asking students to pick a segment of the text and perform it – exploring the segment through the different

dramatic techniques we'd explored using "doodling" (a way of playing with text through performance), tableaux (human sculptures), pantomime, etc.

These were performed for the rest of the class. Though it was not the culmination I had originally hoped for, it ended the project in a meaningful way and the discussions along the way were fruitful.

Later I told Deborah:

That's another theme that came out of this semester. It's one thing to be able to express yourself. It's a whole different level of being heard. And one of the things that became clear doing this improvisation...was them not being able to get into the role of caring teachers. If they feel like they're not being heard then they're not able to hear other people. It actually blocks them from hearing other voices.

Deborah responded by saying that students *were* being heard, but what they were saying was "incorrect," and not worth a response from her. She spoke of a recent incident where the students were talking in class instead of engaging in their assigned work.

...my thought was "they're thinking only with their adolescent little brain, they're not seeing the big picture."In order to do really creative work, you can't talk and do it at the same time.

The fact that she was writing them off as "adolescents with little brains" was demeaning to students who wanted to be heard and who wanted their voices to be respected.

The hunger to be visible and to be heard is a basic level need. A significant part of this process is not only hearing other perspectives, it's knowing that in the process your own perspective is valued. I saw that the role of ensemble was at the heart of the value of the drama experience for these students. They were drawing out each other's voices, valuing them, and

supporting each other. Being part of a valued group was a building block of a larger transformation. But they were working within their own discourse. What students were asking for was to be heard, and valued outside of their own discourse community, their own group. They wanted to be heard by adults. Until this occurs they will continue to be stuck within their own perspective and development will be stunted.

Summary

Understanding the unspoken rules of discourse in communities that exist within the school culture is another significant factor in considering voice. Discourse communities can invite or block voices. This occurs both intentionally and unintentionally. Discourse becomes an invisible force that can serve to elicit or silence voices. Developing the ability to coordinate several discourses might allow us to enhance our ability for making sense of the world around us. Drama provides a space and structure to coordinate discourses. For the adolescent students at Richmond who felt that their voices were not heard it was difficult to hear the voices of their teachers, to step across the boundaries of the discourse circles that separate them.

One aspect of voice I did not address with students was how to use their voices heard by others. It's clear that the *Rules!* script would have triggered strong responses in different discourse communities, e.g., teachers might hear only "incorrect" ideas about the rules. Thus, the students will need to learn how to use their voices in ways that they can be and will be heard. It isn't enough to elicit voice. Students must understand the responsibilities of voicing opinions,

and learn to work across discourse communities to insure they are heard.

Teachers must do the same so that they can meet students across the boundaries of discourse for the sake of promoting learning and fostering students' sense of voice.

Chapter Ten: Focus on Conscientization

Introduction

In this chapter, I consider the transformation of students' voices—from their locating their voices, to using them, to coming to a realization of what they know. I begin with research that asserts that with the development of voice, comes a sense of what one knows. I move on with Freire's concept of conscientization (Freire, 1993) or the development of critical consciousness through reflection and action, before discussing how the students at Richmond High moved toward conscientization as their voices were heard, flexed and reflected upon. The student realizations shared at the conclusion of the project indicate implications for drama education. Drama education for these students prompted changes that impacted their education and identities. Themes of note include: the notion of the drama classroom as an oasis for voice; the power of reflection; drama education's impact on voice; performance as a way to share voices that have agency; interpretation as a representation of personal voice; the development of an ensemble through drama activities; and the power of speaking one's mind.

Drama and Transformation

Drama education provides an entry point for locating, accessing, and developing voice toward agency. Dramatic techniques provide students with the chance to take a hypothetical position, imagine themselves in a role within that situation, then explore and play with a fictional set of circumstances. Students can play with a wide range of possibilities for human behavior. The

ability to play and imagine has been found to be crucial to developing one's identity and personal voice (Vygotsky, 1978; Gardner, 1982, Belenky et al., 1997, Piaget, 1896). Belenky et al. suggest that play allows people to “draw out their own voice.” Gadamer (1986) points out that play (the ability to engage in activity for the fun of it, without purpose) is both necessary to culture and fundamental to art.

Students discover their personal voices as they compare and contrast them with those of the characters they explore. Dramatic explorations allow them to discover new territory. Theater education invites students to engage imagination in an exploration of the stories in their lives. It can create a safe space for taking risks, while interior journeys and dialogue are brought out for discussion. The desire to play, unfortunately, is often subdued or forced out of most of us by the time we reach college, replaced with the fear of being foolish (Johnstone, 1992). Allowing students to play allows them—even encourages them—to step into other perspectives. Playing at being others brings students into direct contact with the voices of others, which serves to clarify their own voices (Diaz & Sierra, 2004). Play creates an environment and invitation to explore other worlds —other ways of being. Play is critical in approaching the exploration of voice.

Finding and developing the ability and courage to use one's voice through theater can be one way of moving toward agency and ultimately, can enhance one's impact on society (Schutzman and Cohen-Cruz, 1994).

Coming to Voice

In their text *Women's Ways of Knowing* (1997) Belenky, Tarule and Goldberger note that the location of voice was found to be an important facet of women's development in their research. The researchers grouped women's ways of knowing into five major epistemological categories in which women move from silence to constructed knowledge. It's important to note that the most disempowered state of silence is a reflection of voicelessness. These categories mirror the journey of "coming to voice" as well as developing a sense of self.

Silence, a position in which women experience themselves as mindless and voiceless and subject to the whims of external authority;

Received knowledge, a perspective from which women conceive of themselves as capable of receiving, even reproducing, knowledge from the all-knowing external authorities but not capable of creating knowledge on their own;

Subjective knowledge, a perspective from which truth and knowledge are conceived of as personal, private, and subjectively known or intuited;

Procedural knowledge, a position in which women are invested in learning and applying objective procedures for obtaining and communicating knowledge; and

Constructed knowledge, a position in which women view all knowledge as contextual, experience themselves as creators of knowledge, and value both subjective and objective strategies for knowing (Belenky et al., 1997, p. 15).

The above list illustrates the progression from voicelessness to an awareness of voice. Note that with the development of voice, also comes a shift in the sense of authority. Finding one's voice is at the heart of an individual's exploration and expression of identity. It is the way we understand ourselves, express ourselves, and make our impact on the world. I believe that this progression is particularly true for adolescent girls.

This process reflects Freire's notion of conscientization a process by which students come to know what they know. Educator Joan Wink suggests that, "Conscientization enables students and teachers to have confidence in their own knowledge, abilities, and experiences. Often people will say that conscientization is the power we have when we recognize we *know* that we *know*" (2000, p. 37). Freire linked action to reflection and then back to action, so that those who were oppressed learned to comprehend the cause of their oppressions and then proceeded to change them. This concept is linked to the concept of coming to voice as agency, and as action—through reflection on action. Finding one's voice, then, leads to gaining this sense of knowing what one knows. The power that students in the class experienced as they recognized what they knew supported the development of their sense of identity and ability to speak for themselves. Drama allowed them to speak in ways they hadn't previously experienced, and led to the discomfort that Deborah felt as well.

Students began the project with anger and resentment, feeling they had not been heard. The work in drama allowed them to be heard and validated through their data collection in *Rules!* interviews, their dramatic exercises and later, in the development of their monologues after my sessions had ended. Deborah began the project with a discomfort and distrust of her own voice, saying things like "I'm not articulate;" "I don't know what to say;" or "I have trouble articulating what I mean." She insisted on having time to collect her thoughts and to write notes before we spoke. At the conclusion of the project she had not only

inserted her voice forcefully into the work, confronting us with her concern about getting students out of control, but also began to claim her own expertise and knowledge about theater education. She indicated that she had begun to think of the work in a more intellectual way and was looking at why she did what she did in her teaching. At the end of our project, Deborah told me she had initiated a research project of her own about how theater changes students.

Students became more vocal through the project and during the focus group they were clearly experts of their own experiences. There was a confidence about them and what they know that had not been there at the beginning of the semester. Students knew what they knew and were very interested in sharing it and having their voices heard. There was the sense that in performing their monologues they were sharing important information with their audience, and this led to a sense of agency. This “coming to voice,” the development of conscientization, was a major theme of this project for students, teacher, and for me as researcher. Drama education can create the environment to encourage the recognition of self-knowledge.

After my thirteen visits, students went on to perform their own monologues, addressing the topic of what it’s like to be a teenager in the city of Richmond, facilitated by Deborah. She noted that the students who participated in the voice project developed a strong sense of community as a group—more so than other drama students. They had the strongest ensemble. That is to say that, the students of E Block supported and expanded each others’ work in a way that other classes of students did not. Deborah said that it could have been the

impact of the research explorations in our voice project, but said she couldn't be sure.

Interviews

At two different points during the project I asked students to interview each other. The first set of interviews asked students to reflect on perceptions of voice (see Chapter Six). The second set of interviews were conducted at the end of the thirteen sessions and the questions asked them to reflect on their experiences during the project. Finally, I returned to talk with the students six weeks after our voice project officially ended to participate in a final focus group conversation. Students interviewed each other at the end of the 13 weeks considering the following points:

1. Describe one thing you did in class that you liked.
2. Describe one thing you did in class that made you think.
3. Describe one thing that made you uncomfortable or that you didn't like.

Several themes emerged: reflection, silencing, interpretation, and voicing how comfortable they were at expressing their thoughts.

Interpretation

Students noted again and again how much they enjoyed sharing their unique interpretations of things. The challenge of problem-solving, applying their individual and group creativity was exciting to them. They were fascinated by observing what other members of the class came up with creatively as well. They noted the inspiration this created "It was very hard, but once you see people thinking and doing different things you got an idea" said one student. In one

exercise, students were given a fragment of a poem by Maya Angelou and asked to “doodle” it, to play with it using the different dramatic techniques we’d explored. They rearranged the words, changed the emphasis, played with gesture and voice to evoke new meanings. Michelle said of the work “we had to find a way to change it around and...turn the words alive,” noting how embodying the poem served to bring the words to life in new ways. There was a sense of excitement from building on the creativity of the poet. “One student said “I guess it kind of let you express yourself from somebody else’s expression.” Students enjoyed discovering their own unique ways of responding to such a task. The task of coming up with their own interpretations prompted the creative process resulting in a sense of ownership.

Michelle notes,

You experienced different styles of how people think. Each of us we each had a different paper but we...didn’t have the same idea. We all had different ideas to express.

Natalie adds,

Like how they didn’t expect it I think the way we did it how we’d mixed the words up. Like the other group did...They took the literal way we went at it in a more roundabout way.

Speaking Our Minds/Voicing Our Selves

Students noted that they loved expressing themselves in different ways.

They enjoyed defining themselves as a group, and having special roles within the ensemble. Vernell noted what she loved best was:

That I was the goofy one. That I made everybody laugh and I made everybody feel comfortable in class and you know that I let everybody

speaking their mind by letting them know this wasn't a serious class that it was a class where you could be able to speak your mind.

Drama work was seen by some students as fun and involving not having to think.

This disconnect was concerning to me, but I realized that students have been taught that if you're having fun, you're not learning. There was an idea that education must be serious and not fun. In spite of this paradox—the growth of these students over three months was enormous, even though they didn't yet see the rigor of the work they had done. Lily said,

That we didn't have to—that the class was here for us to be able to say what was on our mind. And we didn't have to use our brain.

Again, there was an assumption that if they were speaking their mind and engaged, that they were not using their brain.

Collecting and voicing opinions about the rules was poignant for students.

Jackie noted,

I probably liked the most was when we had to go to do the interviews and that's, you know, that's when we got a chance to kind of voice ourselves.

Having student opinions invited into the curriculum is a powerful tool for engagement. This allows a connection to their lived experience. Several times during the course of the research, students placed family over school in terms of who has the right to have authority over them—parents do, teachers don't. Here

Michelle notes,

We take our opportunity. When we have a chance to speak out? We speak out. 'Cause we can't do it at home and home is where we're at most of the time. So we have to stay quiet. So, when we come out, we don't want people who aren't our mother, who aren't our father to tell us what to do. So if you're not my adult or you're not in charge of me—don't tell me anything cause you're not the one who raises me.

Lily noted that there are multiple ways to assert your voice, beyond speaking.

We're able to express it. We have an opportunity to voice our voice. But your voice [is] always going to be strong as it will. Just cause you're not speaking doesn't mean you're not using your voice.

Michelle talked about how this class allowed students to speak their minds in ways other classes did not.

But I think we have a lot more opportunities to use our voice in here so, so we take advantage of those opportunities. Like, in other classrooms there's a lot of sitting down, writing, no talking time. We have talking time here so we take advantage of it... This gives a chance to exercise our voices and be more articulate here since we can't be in a classroom where we're supposed to be quiet and learning.

Students were clear that they have permission and space to use their voices in the drama classroom in a way that did not occur in other places at school. This opportunity draws out their voices and allows them to flex and develop them.

Michelle's comment exposes an assumption that learning happens when students were being quiet. Throughout this study, this assumption was challenged.

In addition to discussing notions of voice students were critical of the research project and process as well. Three main areas of concern came up: too much reflection, missing voices, and being edited. Students seemed to resist reflection because it was seen as making them vulnerable by sharing their inner thoughts. Sheryl stated,

The only thing that made me uncomfortable, kind of, sort of, was all the questioning and the questions that in the beginning I was kind of shy so I really didn't feel like...speaking towards everybody.

In the quote above, Sheryl notes that the questions made her uncomfortable in the beginning. She needed to get comfortable with putting her ideas out into the

world so that her voice, and the self reflection upon which it is based, could be shared with the other students. She was not ready for claiming her voice. Reflection acted as a catalyst moving students towards using voice as agency. Interestingly, this same student chose not to perform her monologue and shared her regret during the focus group when she saw how engaging and transformative the experience was for her peers. Students both need and resist the kind of reflection that I had built into the research process. I found students were very skilled in making sense of what they've experienced; however, they were not completely comfortable with the process. They felt it revealed them and so becomes an exercise in vulnerability. Future research might explore how opportunities for reflection in education might be structured to produce relevant connections and realizations in a way that feels safe.

There was a concern about voices missing in our discussions. One student pointed out that certain students got more air-time than others. This was an astute observation and demonstrates the development of a critical awareness of who's not being included, whose voices are missing.

That a lot of people didn't get a chance to say what was on their mind. A lot of people didn't get to use the time we had faithfully and a lot of people didn't get a chance to talk. That some people talk a little bit too much and a lot of people didn't get a chance to say what they want to say as if they really wanted to.

Another concern students had was that of being edited. I worked to put closure on the Reader's Theater project, while compromising to address Deborah's concerns. I edited the script students developed so that we could move quickly to an abbreviated sharing of what we had. Students were not put

off by the reshaping of the project but, were by the fact that I edited the scripts.

Michelle says: “You ask us to get truthful voices but then edit them?”

She’s right of course. In the end I short-changed students, without meaning to, by leaving them out of the editing process. In trying to balance the needs of the students with my needs as artist and teacher and working to compromise for Deborah’s concerns, I made the choice to edit without consulting students. Jackie noted,

To be honest one thing I didn’t like was when we got our scripts back that some of the words that we put in there that were said wasn’t in there. Some of the stuff I could understand, but not cutting out...half of the statement that someone made which is kinda, you know, important I think.

Students’ voices were powerful here. In our debriefing of the situation Linda, who of course had been banned from the classroom at this point, reflected “you stepped into a directorial role for the first time in response to Deborah’s concerns and usurped their voices—editing, cutting, streamlining.”

Not being listened to was at the heart of student’s frustration/resistance. Students wanted to know they were heard. Students say of adults: “They don’t listen to kids.” I had invited student voices then edited them—which some students interpreted as silencing.

As noted above, the notion of drama classroom as an oasis for voice was a theme throughout the semester. I identified this as an important theme for probing—and used it to frame some of the discussions in the focus group. Sheryl noted there was a freedom in this classroom:

Yeah, like before we came to this class, it was like, you sit in class, you be quiet. Don't say what you want to say...But you come here, it's like speak your mind, do whatever you want.

Impact of Reflection

A key element of conscientization in this project was the reflection the research has prompted for students, for teacher, and for me as researcher. Deborah's comments about having grown more aware of paying attention to the intellectual parts of her work, and her desire to figure out why she was doing what she was doing, demonstrated to me the power of reflection. For students, the questioning I've brought to their work has prompted them to articulate their feelings about the dramatic process, as well as their stance on a variety of themes: from rules, to voice, to relationships to family. Reflection is not always comfortable. Students resisted it in different ways throughout the semester, with a few students saying that they were frustrated with "the talking" or, "I'd rather do fun games and exercises." They were unaccustomed to being asked to reflect in ways that revealed them. At the same time, when they articulated how they felt, there was an excitement about claiming their voices and they noted the power of having a place for their voices. Deborah describes this tension in a compelling way:

It almost seems like, because our voices have been so oppressed and continue to be oppressed ...that it almost creates that kind of fighting sensation—or when we have a chance to speak out we will. Because, it's like a bottle—a bottle-neck that explodes.

Deborah describes changes in her teaching due to the research process:

It's made me rather than teach emotionally, start thinking, looking at things more intellectually. To understand why I do what I do. I know I do it when I do it I know it feels right, now I guess I need to know why... My thoughts are becoming more intellectual. I've done things in the past. Why do... them that way? And that's where I'm starting to think.

Deborah began to think of herself as a researcher. She has moved toward a problem-posing approach to her work and as she became aware of her own knowledge and position on things, questions were sparked. At the same time, she began to see it was within her power to ask questions and find answers through reflection and research—a very powerful revelation. Deborah acknowledged that our work brought reflection into her work. The reflection on what she does generated the why of what she does. She framed what she does in a larger structure—and while the tape recorder still daunted her as she cautiously put her voice out there, she grew clearer about what she wants to say. She knows how her work builds on itself, how she makes choices and why and has gained a sense of the larger picture of her work. Reflection prompted these realizations in a few short weeks. I am intrigued by this shift and asked her:

It's interesting to hear you talk about realizations in your own process sparked by watching this and I wonder what did this...how does it happen?

She responded: "It's because you made me think. You said you were going to interview so I had to think." Knowing that she was going to be interviewed prompted her to reflect and this in turn increased her ability to observe. This is praxis. We spoke about teaching in learning in theory and then moved into practice.

Impact of Drama

I promised students I would return six weeks after the project to share with them some of my beginning realizations and that I would provide them with an opportunity to correct any misunderstandings that I had about them and/or their work.

I used this opportunity to explore the notion of drama classroom as an oasis which had come up as a theme throughout my time there. Students were even clearer and more articulate in retrospect about the power of this work. I posed my questions linked to voice. I took core themes that had emerged in the project, shared reflections, and posed questions about the connection with voice. There seemed to be a feeling of transformation with the students. They seemed very relaxed and sure of themselves. They expressed a sense that they had traveled as a group through a positive and transforming process together.

Students had just completed the public performance of monologues about being teenagers in Richmond and were wrapping up before the holidays. I held a focus group in which I shared my observations and preliminary findings and asked for their feedback. I asked students if working with drama changed them. They had many things to say about the work. Lois noted that the work made her more confident:

I think that drama has changed me 'cause, when I came here, I was really quiet. Now, like in my other classes, I act the fool, I'll do whatever. Last year I was so ... like—I used to care what everybody thought of you? Like this class, I learned that it don't matter what other people think. It's what you see [in] yourself.

Carol expanded on by this talking about how participation in drama has strengthened her voice in relationships outside of school:

Yeah, it has, more at home. Because now I can go to my father, I speak out to him more. Like, if he's wrong and he's trying to tell me something. Then I won't listen to him, I tell him he's wrong.

I told them, "These are huge changes you guys are talking about. What is it about this class? Is it the opportunity to talk, or particular activities?" Lois pointed to the Reader's Theater through which they were able to speak their minds.

Not only like the monologue. I think it's just when we did that interview thing. When we got to say the stuff... We was talking in the groups and stuff. I think that's what changed the voice.

I ask her to elaborate: "What was it about that?" She said: "Well we got to talk about school, what we don't like about it." Lily adds "Voice our opinion." I clarify by asking, "To talk about stuff that matters to you?" "Yeah," Lois says. Addressing issues they care about has made a difference in the impact of drama on their lives.

Another key element of the changes students have felt was the ensemble and sense of community that developed. "Everyone's real!"

Lily notes. Lois says:

Yeah! You know how far you can go, before you like going to get yourself knocked out. A lot of times, like, because the way I'm shaped and stuff? The way I'm shaped you know something might not be fitting right. And they'll be like, 'Yo! Lois, check yourself. Just need to pull it down a little bit.' Something like that. But like other people. They'll just sit there and look. It's like you guys gonna help me out? You know you're supposed to be my partner and stuff.

Students knew what they could expect from each other and how far they could go. Students had a clear sense that the group grew into something

special. They also had an understanding of what made the group so cohesive. Here, Lois talks about understanding each other's vulnerabilities and strengths as an important component of the group they have created.

Everybody know[s], everyone know[s] how everyone is in this class. Everyone knows everyone's weaknesses and strengths and stuff. Or you know what to say to get someone mad. Or you know what you could do to make someone feel happy if they like, real down.

Lily talks about how the class and teacher (Deborah) felt crazy at the beginning but now, they "get it"—that what others might dismiss as "just making fools of themselves" was actually an excellent education.

When we first came—we were all shy. And it was like let's observe everybody, what we could do and what we can't do. And the teacher started off all happy and everybody let's get up and start doing things. We were thinking what is this lady doing? Is she crazy? And now it's like, we understand completely. Like, if someone from outside comes in they're like "They're just making fools out of themselves." But now, it's like it makes us more energetic. You could have a total bad day and come into this class and it's like [everyone talks at once]. So I think it's all how we relate and how the teacher is. And I think this was the best class to take.

She noted that "it's a sign of respect how we could sit there and go word for word tell you everybody's monologue. " There was a sense of pride and ownership in all the performances, not just one's own. This ownership prompted students to find ways of supporting each other in their performances. Lily identified the fact that students in the ensemble listen for and to each other.

Like with Michelle, when she messed up, we all, we put it back together for her. We whispered her lines, and when she skipped a line, we went into the motions. So you got to have that certain connection and you gotta trust that.

A sense of ownership allowed all the parts to be embraced. There was a sense of predictability in the process and this allowed students to be there for each other. Each performer became responsible for the success of the whole.

Emerging Theory

Students acknowledged that there is exterior pressure for their voices to be softer or silent, that voice is impacted by gender and race. However they note that their voices were strong as individuals.

I questioned Carol Gilligan's theory (1982) suggesting that adolescent girls lose their voice, as this was not what my work with them had shown. They felt this theory did not describe their experience. I noted that their voices were vibrant, that the way they make connections in the work was astute and nuanced. I interrogated the theory with them, asking if they thought race/ethnicity impacts the development of voice. "Yes!" they replied emphatically. I asked if they were so very different from the students Gilligan was looking at? "Yeah!" they told me. "Extremely," they said. I returned to Gilligan's writings and find that the communities that she writes about consist mainly of white, upper middle class students. Lily explained that the theory did not pertain to this group of students:

I think that theory, it might be a good theory, but for weak-minded people. Like none of us here are weak minded. If you're weak-minded you're gonna when you grow up you're going to let things change the person that you are. But if you're a strong-minded person you know how to think, you know what to think what to think and nothing's going to change it.

Lily equates the lack of voice to weak-minded people rather than being oppressed. Her words were laced with the desire to resist being placed in a category by some researcher's theory.

Often the educational system does not honor the lived experiences of children of color (Ada cited in Greenberg-Diaz 2003, p. 2). Bilingual and students of color often do not see their culture reflected in the curriculum and are pushed to assimilate into a cultural heritage that is not their own (Greenberg-Diaz, 2003).

Stevens (1997) notes the limitations of research on voice and identity that looks merely at gender. She suggests that the African-American female

experiences a relational crisis in both racial and gender identity development. Moreover, African-American female adolescents develop skillful, unique, expressionistic, and assertive styles of relating to negotiation perceived hostile environments (pps. 2-3).

Clearly, race/ethnicity plays a salient role in the development of voice. Reflecting on race and identity, Stevens indicates that students of color are caught in a complex web of power and privilege.

In American society, race has been constructed in such a way that certain undesirable characteristics are attributed to minority racial groups based on a social hierarchy of unequal power and privilege. Structures are then created to control, constrain, or eliminate those who are racially marginalized within the power hierarchy. Consequently, the least powerful or privileged (African-Americans) commonly carry out transactions in oppressive and hostile environments (p. 4).

Stevens acknowledges that female teens experience a relational crisis as Gilligan theorizes (1998), but notes that students of color have other crises to grapple with at the same time.

To be sure, the African-American female teen experiences this normative crisis, but her developmental trajectory is confounded as she undergoes a similar crisis due to her cultural group membership. A paramount issue for African-

American female adolescents is a perceived social expectation of, or demand for, separation from family and from one's fictive kinship group. (p. 5)

In addition, "the subordination, suppression, and silencing of bilingual students' voices and their communities by the educational system has come under scrutiny during the past decade (Darder, 1991; Poplin, 1991, Walsh, 1991 as cited in Greenberg-Diaz, 2003, p. 1). This makes identity development a much more complex process for students of color as they navigate additional obstacles.

In a study conducted by Greenberg-Diaz (2003), factors that promote the silencing of voice in Latino/a high school students in schools were explored. Students' noted a range of factors silencing their voices in school including: lack of understanding on the part of teachers and administrators of students' needs and concerns; lack of understanding of cultural differences; discrimination, and authoritarianism. Greenberg-Diaz also noted the effect on students of having a sense of voice.

A sense of connectedness and an ability to listen to and nurture each other's voices were essential elements constantly observed. Engrained was a deep belief in students' ability to construct meaning from their own experiences and create knowledge. Being able to critically analyze issues of power that related to their daily lives gave the participants an opportunity to express inner feelings (2003, p. 59)

This description of having a space for voice is similar to the "oasis" students described in this study.

Educational literature calling for school reform often "depict[s] America's youth as a homogenous group composed of white, middle-class students who

live in the suburbs, thus implying that students of color living in the city have no different needs (Passow cited in Greenberg-Diaz, 2003, p. 10). Clearly, race, ethnicity, gender and socio-economic factors must come into understanding the context of a particular group of students and their needs.

As students acknowledged in the focus group, they were dealing with multiple issues connected to being women of color and teenagers. They have learned the importance of having powerful voices. Social connections to family and friends became very significant for these students.

Students acknowledge the pressure on girls to conform and how these pressures can be silencing. Lily told me "There's pressure but that doesn't mean you have to succumb to the pressure." Lois added: "It's pressure... to make your voice softer, for you not to be as loud as you are." Having a powerful voice was required for these students, because: "If we want something done we need to say what we feel and how we need to act or we're not going to get what we want.

Other researchers have found girls of color with significantly powerful voices. Stevens (1997) talks about the

boisterous, confrontational, and combative behavior" of the girls in her study. She notes "their stylistic expressions of orality, expressive individualism, and signification are characteristic of an Afro-American stylistic cultural idiom (Boykin 1983; Gate 1988). The findings suggest that high-volume activities affirm a sense of self and give the girls a way to manage their devalued race and gender status within a school setting. In short, the girls in the study were not silent girls, but were vociferous, demanding respect when they felt they were being disrespected by peers and adults (p.9).

Stevens notes that the girls in her study saw using their voices even in arguments as a way to have a “sense of power.” She sees this use of voice as evidence of resiliency and necessary to navigate “hostile racist environments” (p. 16).

The dilemma of course is that loud behavior is not approved of in schools.

It is usually interpreted as antisocial or as behavior that should result in disciplinary action. The loud behavior of the study girls often resulted in the filing of misconduct reports by school staff members. When African-American girls construct identities to defy racial/cultural devaluation, are they at the same time asserting a diverse female identity? Do they in fact voice claims of self-affirmation of their difference? These are questions that require future exploration and study (p. 16)

A picture emerges of misinterpreted voices on the part of school faculty and administrators who see students’ feisty behavior as acting out, something that needs to be controlled instead of voices that need to be supported. I see that dramatic work can allow students to express themselves in safe ways and to experiment with using voice in a variety of ways, discovering in the process what will be most effective and truthful for them.

Students talk about role models in their lives and how there is a push to be strong not just as women but as women of color. Lois told us,

It’s like, how you’re brought up cause like my grandma she was saying ... “Don’t let the white man bring you down” or something like that. Not to offend nobody, but that’s just what she relates it to. And since the majority of our family is men and all the women had to a lot to say for their self.

Students felt there was a need for resistance in order to claim what is theirs.

These girls have grown up being strongly encouraged to resist oppression.

It’s like, different time periods, and how you’re brought up and how you’re raised. Like she says, don’t let no man make you feel like you’re worth

nothing. Or make him try and bring you down. 'Cause if I'm making my money, I'm keeping my money. You ain't getting my money. What's mine is mine.

Part of their upbringing is the clear message to claim what is yours and voice is an important part of claiming their stake in life. Students were prepared for resistance. Lily states:

Everybody has their own struggle. Like, the Hispanics have their own struggle, the blacks have their own struggle. Women have had their own struggle. Now, it's 2004—you gotta look back at how everything... As a black female I got my struggles and you got to look back and you got to respect the fact that we have come so far. And we use other people as footstools to get to where we are. Like Harriet Tubman—stuff like that. You got no choice, but to be proud and outspoken, being [a] woman regardless of any man or any other obstacle... You got to do what you got to do.

Ethnicity and Cultural Identity

Each of us has an ethnic identity which impacts and informs the development of our overall identity. "Ethnicity refers to the identification of an individual with a larger social group on the basis of common ancestry, race, religion, language, or national origin" (Shibutani, & Kwan, cited in Rotheram-Borus, & Wyche, 1994, p. 63). Researchers Rotheram-Borus and Wyche (1994) believe that ethnicity plays a role in the development of adolescent identity by structuring the individual's approach to exploration. There may be strong ethnic beliefs about the role of identity, relationship to the community, and social roles that influence the individual's ability to explore options and make personal choices in the various domains. Gender roles are also different within different cultures. These beliefs and mores can impact identity because areas that link to the development of identity are influenced by such factors as occupation, religion, politics and

gender roles. In addition, one's own ideas about one's ethnic background will play a role in creating identity. In fact, connection to our ethnic groups can provide a sense of support and community that can facilitate and guide adolescent development.

Rotherham-Borus and Wyche (1994) go on to suggest that identity development for minority adolescents may be a more complex process than for the dominant culture of European-Americans. The researchers believe there are other, less linear, models for identity development, suggesting that ethnic approaches may be closer to a spiral or vary in linear and cyclical phases. In fact, they propose that these "apparent differences among ethnic groups along these dimensions challenge the universality of Erikson's model of healthy adolescent development" (1994, p. 65). A consideration of ethnic identity can be clearly important in developing a sense of self.

Stevens asserts that Erikson's view of identity in terms of race and gender are flawed.

For instance, it is reasoned that female identity is realized through spousal attachment and that African-American identity is decidedly compromised. African-Americans living in a hostile racist environment, it is argued, form negative identities. Such cultural biases make for serious problems when theorizing about African-American female adolescents. Hence, traditional theorizations of adolescent development must be modified or new models must be developed (p. 3).

Duncan asserts that "youth of color, especially black teens, are largely excluded from conventional social science and medical representations of adolescence" (Duncan, 2005).

Wong notes that:

Different theories of ethnic identity suggest that for adolescents of color, a healthy identification with one's ethnic group is a psychological buffer against prejudice and discrimination (e.g. Cross, 1991; Phinney, 1996a; Sellers, Smith, Shelton, Rowley, & Chavous, 1998)" (2003, p. 1203).

I saw students in my study finding strength in being a proud member of their ethnic group and finding support for their voice in their communities.

Adolescents of color have been misrepresented or left out of research studies, leaving skewed understandings of identity development. Not only is new research required, but an understanding that the voice and identity is deeply impacted by a variety of factors beyond gender.

Conscientization

Clearly students have come to know what they know in this experience as articulated across several themes discussed above. This shift also occurred for the classroom teacher over the course of the semester. Deborah began the project ill at ease with being interviewed or talking on tape. She was not sure what to say, and questioned the value of her input. Deborah spoke about her discomfort with words. She established that she was not comfortable with words as we sat down for an interview. She excused herself in advance for her voice/thoughts/expression during the interview.

Theater also became important for me as well as writing because words are hard for me...I don't know what is. So I gravitate towards things where you don't have to force yourself to use the words you know.... And theater is also a love of words. So anyway, when I have to find the right words it's very hard for me.

For Deborah, drama helped students as she said, “pinpoint, vocalize what it is they’re feeling, so that they could then understand it at a deeper level...Know themselves at a deeper level.” As she spoke and I drew her out through questions, it was as if she was realizing the reasons for her choices as she talked.

What I do is I start with exercises of the whole class then go to smaller groups then to pairs and then to monologues. And then from monologues I go to pairs and then to bigger scenes...And the first part is to build the personal ego. And slowly take away the security. The 2nd part is to I don’t know if I’m going to say this correctly ... (long pause)... (pointing at tape recorder) The 2nd part is to not to control the ego. I’m not sure I understand but it’s to make them realize that the product is more important than the sum of the parts... their voice has to be tempered for the good of the whole.

She grew more confident over time as she shared her observations. Over the course of our conversations she came to understand how much she knew and that what she had to say had value. She attributed this to the research process.

Well first I have to say that doing this thinking for you, has made me understand what I do more. Because I think last time we talked I told you that I did it by instinct that I have nothing written down.

At the end of the project she spoke more confidently about her work and indicated a desire to pull her ideas together in a book. She noted she wanted to:

Take all my exercises, and I have stolen them from a huge wide range over many years. And put them from low risk to higher risk ... But I’d like to actually type it out and have it maybe as a book or something.

Deborah claimed what she knew by defining her approach to the work—what she knew held value.

In our final meeting following the focus group conversation, six weeks after we spoke initially about her interest in conducting research, Deborah told me that she had been conducting research of her own. She had a series of notebooks spread around her bed at home in which she wrote about what she observed on different themes. She said she wanted to write about the significance of product/performance.

I'm doing the basic research I told you about , you know, the changes in grades and all that stuff. And this sounds pompous—but my mind doesn't work like everyone else's and I tend to see things often times other people don't. So I'm starting from the beginning and as a foundation for what I want to do. It's been a curse most of my life and I'm turning it into an asset.

Deborah was demonstrating her conscientization. She was claiming what she knew and what she wanted to know, her curiosity, and the intellectual side of the practice. There was a new confidence in her voice and in her words. She was interested in exploring her interest in performance.

I know there's a lot of drama classes out there that don't have product, and the people think that the process is the thing that makes the big difference. And I in some way would like to change that ...by writing something, because I do believe that product is very important.

She noted that she adapted my consent form for her other classes and was having students in those classes keep journals. She was interested in investigating how theater changes students. Clearly she's been sparked and changed by the research process and her own conscientization.

Process vs. Product

One major area of realization for Deborah came through in discussion of process versus product. The work I did in class, focused primarily on process

since there were not plans for an outside performance because we were working with such a short time frame. I asked her what she'd learned about the significance of performance.

I think the major shift came when we started talking about process and product. And I think I've always tried to force everybody to...tease them to be in a performance. And I think that goes back to Shakespeare & Company again where I was forced to be in one. Even though it was horrible, it was such a growth experience.

Performance was also important for students. I asked them in the focus group how they viewed performance. One student replied "Performance is the point." In my field notes in December 2003, I wrote,

I attended their performances and was so proud of them for the work they'd created and performed. Their monologues were fabulous. There were a few that needed a bit more editing but overall they are riveting—raw, emotional, heartfelt, and honest. The audience was wildly responsive commenting, cheering and yelling for the actors. The monologues covered a range of issues include: trust, friendship, betrayal, relationship, race, parents, and the stress of being a teenager. Students were clearly proud of the work they'd done. It was a dramatic culmination for the students and for my work as well seeing them performing using their voices so powerfully.

I asked Lois about her comment made earlier in the year that our Reader's Theater exploration would not matter unless it was performed. She clarified " I said ...no one's going to hear us. So it wasn't going to make a change." Students saw performance as providing a sense of agency. They shared stories about the monologues they had written and performed and the impact on them and others of the performance. Lily talked about realizing that "you are not the only one who feels like this."

As a teenager, it's like you'll be talking to someone and they'll be telling how they are, how they do something . And you'll be like, damn! I'm not

the only one. It's like I thought I was the only one who did stuff like that who thought like that. And then when you voice your opinions, you realize that you're not so different and like, you're not the only one who thinks like that you're not the only one who feels that way. It's like when you're having a personal conversation with a new friend. You'll be like—I do that same thing! I thought I was the only one who did that.

Performances allowed students to create shared understandings and explore themes. Everyone related to this kind of connection and recognition on the part of the audience and how satisfying that was. With performance comes a certain level of responsibility. Sheryl notes:

You know what I think too? Drama has a whole lot to do with maturity believe it or not. Because if you're immature and you don't take it seriously to a certain limit, you're doing it just to do it. But when you do take it seriously and sit there and hear out the people, and like, listen to every single one that someone saying, you find out more and more every day it's true. It's like Lily said, you relate more to other people than you thought.

Being Heard

Deborah noted that there was not a lot of support from administrators for attending drama. Deborah invited administrators to the performances but they didn't come. She noted there'd been six fights the day before and they had their hands full with that. The lack of support from administrators was salient in school culture. Administrators spent their time focusing on problems so that even when students used their voices in positive ways, it was not recognized. Students were savvy about this and talked about how students who act out were the ones who get attention.

Deborah invited a reporter from the local newspaper to the performance so they'd be seen. The reporter ended up being so struck by the performances after interviewing the kids about specific monologues, that she came back into

the show and stayed for the rest of it. Students were validated by the performance and by this kind of public recognition.

Deborah asked the performers to fill out a questionnaire. On the form students noted that the evening performance was their favorite performance. The evening performance was open to the community. This suggested that students preferred to perform their monologues in front of adults than peers. Students clearly wanted to be heard by adults.

Deborah told me “you got a different class,” suggesting that the students have surpassed her expectations of the project and become a strong ensemble. I looked back at my notes on earlier conversations about this class where she identified the students as typical of the classes that come through her classroom. I wondered what it would take to allow each class to move beyond “typical”.

Summary

Students and teacher alike had poignant reflections on the impact of this drama class on their lives. There had been a transformation for them which they articulated in different ways—from being able to speak their minds, to sharing the similarities and issues of teenagers in their monologues. Along the way they learned about themselves and what they have to say, and found new ways of expressing who they are and where they’re going. The transformation that had occurred over three months was significant. I entered facing disgruntled students who were frustrated at not being heard. I left a group of energized students who spoke eloquently about what they thought and had to say, how they saw the

world and how this drama classroom created a space and structure for using their voices.

An important part of voicing that takes place in drama is telling one's stories.

As the philosopher Sam Keen says, we must all learn to tell our own stories or have them told for us. Too many students presently do not realize that they have a unique story to tell, and that in the telling they can come to see something about their location with respect to power that, in a variety of ways, serves to effectively silence them (Freisinger, 1994, p. 210).

Supporting the use and development of student voices not only allows students to be active participants in their world, but also provides the opportunity for students to see how they might have a role in shaping the future. Coming to awareness that each of us has something important to say and that each of us has a right to be heard should be one of the strongest priorities of education. Developing, strengthening and empowering all of our student voices now, ultimately has the power to change the future.

Chapter Eleven: Multiple Selves/Multiple Voices

“We are all made up of all the selves we act out, all day long and every day.”
(Gibson, 1994, p. 17)

Introduction

In this chapter, I investigate the three roles I held in this project—that of artist, teacher and researcher. I consider how my understanding developed differently depending on the perspective I held in the process. Each of these roles placed me in a different position in relationship to the research and this positioning gave me particular vantage points which alternately illuminated some aspects of what was happening and blocked other aspects. I will identify the objectives of each role and present an example of how the different frames of reference allowed me to hear/see and understand what was happening in the project more fully.

We are multi-dimensional. Through this research I have become increasingly aware of my own multiple roles and consequently, multiple voices. I am mother, artist, administrator, student, teacher, sister, researcher, wife, scholar, and friend. My voice and the discourse in which I engage change with each role, as these are shaped by the circumstances and people around me. I move between discourses, constructing various subjectivities. I am bombarded by media and culture with an endless stream of voices. These voices influence the development of my voice—they become part of our many voices. bell hooks suggests that looking for a single voice that uniquely identifies us does not reflect the way we are in the world. “The insistence on finding one voice, one definitive

style of writing and reading one's poetry, fit all too neatly with a static notion of self and identity that was pervasive in university settings." (1994, p. 52).

The recognition of our multiple voices necessitates an effort to hear the multiple voices of those around us, the many voices of our students. Trimbur suggests: "If we pay the right kind of attention, we can hear the voices in the composing processes of our students, the ensemble of internalized voices, significant others, all speaking at the same time (quoted in Doherty, 1996, p. 123).

The question is then, how do we listen for the voices that are the most ourselves? How do we also listen to the many voices that emerge and develop in our students as they search for their own resonance? (Elbow, 1994) It is our task, as educators, to listen. To listen to our students and to listen to ourselves. Doherty asserts that: "On a theoretical level, there are complex, often unconscious relationships between my voice (my experience of felt, intending selfhood) and the powerful, internalized "others" woven into my voice (1996, p. 113).

It became clear in my writing that at times I was positioned "in the work" and other times I was positioned "outside of the work." Though role shifting was anticipated in my ethnographic methodology, I found the three perspectives I was shifting between shaped my understanding of the data I was immersed in on a deeper level than participant vs. observer in my methodological design. What I hadn't been able to anticipate was how these roles created emotional connections to, and distances from, the explorations being undertaken in class,

and that the perspective gained through each role could enhance or inhibit understanding of what was occurring. I found these roles were laden with objectives and assumptions about the work that served to conflict with and/or inform my emerging ideas about the research. Each role came equipped with its own voice. As well, each role gave me valuable insights that deepened my understanding of the development of voice through drama work. For example, in making sense of the interruption of the process of the *Rules!* script, I noticed I had several reactions generated from each of these roles. For example, the artist in me wanted to continue to bring the creation of the *Rules!* Reader's Theater script to completion, to trust the process and allow the script to be fully developed. I wanted students to be allowed to find their way to bring in multiple voices equitably. Most of all I wanted to provide students with a culminating dramatic work that would provide exciting evidence of the process they had gone through. I wanted students to experience the disequilibrium created by the juxtaposition of conflicting ideas in Reader's Theater. Theater director Ann Bogart (cited in Dixon, 1995), notes that disequilibrium is an important part of the creative process.

As a teacher, I wanted students to learn about the progression of the Reader's Theater process and about the significance of listening for and incorporating multiple perspectives. This juxtaposition reveals the complexity and nuances of understanding how rules are understood, perceived and enforced by different people. I was concerned about having students end the project in the middle. I was concerned about the feelings I was having regarding

what I perceived as an unspoken “turf” tug-of-war developing between the classroom teacher and me, in response to my work with her students.

Finally, as researcher, I found myself deeply interested in what was unfolding. I was curious about the resistance I was experiencing from students, from the classroom teacher, and even from myself. I wanted to know what was creating it and what the source was of this kind of response. It became clear that if I could sit with the chaos for awhile, I could gain some valuable insight that being in my other roles would block me from seeing. Being in a researcher role allowed me to navigate through this dilemma without the emotion my other roles held because of their perceived stakes in the project. I found I could watch and listen more openly when I situated myself in the researcher role.

Each of these lenses positioned me in different ways in relationship to the students, classroom teacher, the dramatic explorations, and the research about what was happening in the classroom. I began to notice differences in the way I listened as teacher, researcher, and artist. In each role I heard the emerging story differently and found different interpretations of what was happening in the research depending on my role. These roles sometimes intersected and also contradicted each other at different points in the research. Each perspective allowed me to hear different aspects of students’ voices. Once I realized the power of these roles, I began to see the potential of concentrating on how each role might expand my understanding of what was happening for me, the students and the classroom teacher.

Curiosity about these roles made me step back and contemplate my own connection to each of these positions, to question how they provided me with new lenses that could access certain understandings about what was happening in the classroom. Educator, artist and writer Elliott Eisner notes how the arts provide new lenses for us to see through, “each lens can make vivid what other lenses obscure” (Eisner, 2004).

In addition to the actual drama work and data collection, I also applied these lenses to my research. These three lenses were influencing how I understood the data and themes emerging during the coding process including: resistance, the development/flexing of voice, the issue of being heard, and the concept of the drama classroom as an oasis. In order to fully understand the potential of each role to enhance my comprehension of the research, I decided to take time to identify the objectives and approaches embedded in each particular perspective. In contemplating these three roles, I realized that for each role, the objectives created both openings and boundaries for my understanding of the work. As I continue to explore the roles I see that the borders between them are permeable, porous, and that the roles often overlap and shift into each other. Not fully distinct, these roles inform each other in process and product.

The Artist’s Perspective

As an artist, I was concerned with the use of dramatic structures to allow for the creation of a virtual or alternative reality—a safe space in which students could explore different kinds of voices, and the opportunity to discuss reactions to the work honestly. Initially, I focused on allowing students to build an ensemble

that would create a sense of trust and collaboration, a safe space in which students would feel free to take risks and put their voices out in the room. I trusted that in the creation of artistic pieces students' voices would be brought to the foreground.

I noted that the students would take more risks if the work was framed as a dramatic fiction. In addition, students' interpretation of the voices of others in a dramatic work could illuminate possible meanings. Dramatic work by its nature provides multiple formats for speaking and listening.

My artist objectives for the work included:

- Exploring a range of dramatic techniques that would build skills in performance and perception
- Sparking students' creativity and develop their imagination
- Developing original work grounded in student's lives and interests
- Creating aesthetically solid work
- Making meaning about lived experiences through dramatic exploration
- Allowing students to find their authentic voice through artistic expression, metaphor

In the role of artist I was keenly aware of the importance of artistry. I wanted students to take ownership of the work they were doing and build their performance skills so that they could fully express their ideas in vivid and compelling ways. The more I was convinced their voices were not heard, the more I felt that drama had the potential to expand their range of expression and the possibility of how their ideas were framed.

The role of performance also took on new meaning for me in light of student voices needing to be heard. Performance provided students with an audience for their ideas, allowing their ideas to be expressed and heard. Performance completed the circle of communication. Without a performance

venue, dramatic explorations were focused primarily on process and not on product, which actually mirrored what was happening to them in everyday life—they were expressing themselves, but not being heard.

As an artist, I was also interested in the creation of an aesthetic space. By this I mean a space of virtual reality, where students could create moments that felt real and yet, were safe enough for exploring possibility, for asking ‘what if?’ in new ways. An aesthetic space holds student interest and energy when rules are understood and set by participants engaged in the process of creation. As an artist, I noted that this space could not only hold this kind of intensity inherent in creation but, in fact, required it for full engagement of the students’ powerful voices. This space needed the flexibility to hold whatever students brought. The aesthetic space is a place where imagination and voices are invited to explore potential connections. The further we went in the work, the more students were able to give themselves over to their imaginations, to play and expand the possibilities in the creation and use of this safe, aesthetic space.

In the role of artist I found myself relying on the adage “trust the process.” This forced me to rely on our group as a whole, trusting that the process would be a shared responsibility between me the students, the classroom teacher and the fellow teaching artist.

The Teacher’s Perspective

As teacher, I wanted students to be fully engaged in the process, to take ownership of learning and describe their emerging understandings. I wanted them to construct their own learning built on prior knowledge and make

connections to their lives outside of schools. I wanted to be an effective teacher, finding the strategies that worked most effectively for students, that engaged them fully, that challenged them and prompted them to think.

My objectives for my work as teacher included:

- Asking students to engage in critical thinking and reflection about the work.
- Identifying and using the techniques that would spark students' growth and learning
- Having students construct meaning about the work that had application to their lived lives
- Having students engage actively and openly in the explorations undertaken
- Having students learn about dramatic techniques and consider their relationship to voice
- Having students question/consider the role of voice in their life
- Having students make connections to the work

I considered the script development process an opportunity for students to steer the direction of their learning and to create connections between their educations and their lives. I looked at our discussions and dramatic explorations as vehicles to prompt students to reflect on their work, to locate their ideas, and to take risks to explore new concepts. I was eager for students to delve into techniques, to develop skills, and to put those skills to use in solving new problems.

The Researcher's Perspective

After each class session I would move from my role as teacher and artist to that of researcher, reflecting on what had occurred and what it might mean, evaluating the progress made and identifying emerging questions about the work. The debriefing conversations I had with my teaching artist partner, Linda,

served to distance me from the work and my role in it. As I worked to make the familiar strange, I grew more curious about what was happening with emerging themes such as resistance, and the parallel arcs of voice between students, classroom teacher and researcher.

Researcher objectives for the work included:

- Being as rigorous as possible in understanding and stating my biases and assumptions
- Investigating the dynamics at work in the dramatic explorations and student/teacher reaction to the explorations in relationship to voice.
- Observing and documenting what was happening in clear and descriptive terms
- Investigating from the students' and classroom teacher's vantage point what was gained (if anything) from the dramatic work and deciphering how the work was impacting voice.
- Considering possibilities for allowing the research to affect change in the educational culture
- Identifying and probing salient themes emerging from the research

The researcher's role allowed me to be curious about the dynamics I was seeing in the classroom. I began to see resistance as a map that could lead the way to understanding students' authentic feelings and desires. Donning a research lens allowed me to be an explorer, willing and prepared to follow wherever resistance would lead. It struck, me in the midst of this process, that we are too often blocked from celebrating resistance, because of our own fears and assumptions about what resistance might suggest about us in our roles of teachers, or artists. Resistance might suggest failure for those roles with different stakes in the project. For example, student resistance might suggest students are not interested in the work, which would create a dilemma for artist or teacher,

where for the researcher it could be a point of curiosity. We tend to push back against resistance as a method of protection from undesirable information.

Being situated in the role of researcher taught me to see the moments of resistance as evidence of student voice, and perhaps more importantly, cultivated the desire in me to create spaces for resistance to occur in and to allow a conversation to happen around it. So often, we respond to the resistance of others with emotion, meeting resistance with resistance. Voices are silenced as a result.

Choosing to take on the perspective of researcher encouraged me to stand aside from my assumptions, to be curious about what was happening, to describe and interpret what I saw happening, and to consider what processes influenced voice.

It was through the researcher's role that I began to see how the roles I played allowed me access or blocked me from access to full understanding of the drama classroom I was studying. The researcher's role allowed me to see how the dramatic structures themselves provided unique strategies for uncovering and making meaning of students lived experience. These dramatic formats provided insights into the lives and perceptions of students. Dramatic work such as Reader's Theater or Forum Theater brought students' inner life to the surface.

I noted three distinct arcs of the development of voice: students testing and flexing their voices; the classroom teacher finding her voice, testing it, strengthening it and ultimately stepping into a researcher role herself; and the development of my own voice as researcher.

Intersection/Overlapping/Coordination of Roles

The intersection of these roles has allowed me to focus on the relationships between teaching and actively learning and to develop a critical pedagogy in new ways. By this I mean reflecting on my teaching to consider issues of power and privilege, how I bring students voices to the center of the curriculum and make learning relevant to their lives. Becoming aware of each role and its characteristics became a “tuning in” process that allowed me to tune into the unfolding story in a different way.

I will explain this “tuning in” using an example from the students who performed a Forum Theater scene in class. Forum Theater creates a scene that outlines a problem. The audience is invited to jump into the scene to replace the protagonist and try different strategies to influence the outcome. In this way, complex issues can be explored in a rehearsal for real-life situations. In this example, a mother and daughter were both preparing to go out for the evening. The daughter was waiting for her mother to set a curfew for her, but the mother didn't. The mother, who was also preparing to go out, was distracted and the daughter tried a variety of ploys to shock her mother by sharing the possibilities of what she might do while she was out, trying to get her mother to indicate she that cared. The daughter said that she could possibly be drinking, could end up pregnant, that the boy she was dating was years older than she, etc. The mother continued getting ready without responding to the daughter's entreaties and threats.

In debriefing, the students talked eloquently about the need for teenagers to have parents provide clear limits and boundaries in their lives as a way of communicating that adults care about their well being. Interestingly, this contrasted with their expressed frustration with too many rules and the ways they were enforced in school.

The power of the scenario they developed, the depth of their questioning, the honesty and authenticity of their responses demonstrated that the students were engaging fully in this aesthetic activity and learning about themselves and their world through it. The student actors shared their inner lives and the student audience asked thoughtful, probing questions, offering feedback to the actors. In exploring ideas for strategies, Sheryl, who played the mother suggested:

Maybe give them freedom, but ask them where they going, who they're going with, what are they going to be doing. Questions like that. Simple little questions that tell them we care. I actually do care about what they're going to be doing.

Sheryl was at once analyzing the interaction and also still in character "I actually do care." This indicated perspective sharing, the ability to take another's perspective and empathize with it. In fact, Sheryl seemed to be straddling her understanding of the overall situation and her particular perspective as mother. We spent time considering and asking of the characters what motivations they had. Carol who played the daughter said of her situation:

I felt neglected. Like she didn't really care about me. That she's just all for herself and not for me.... I just want her to pay attention to me. I say stuff like "Oh I'm going out with this person. I'm gonna go smoke, just so she'll lay down the law with me. That's what I want, I want her to lay down the law.

When the students in the audience interrogated the characters about their choices, Lindsey asked the daughter:

What makes you think she's going to lay down the law if you're doing the bad thing? Because like you said you're going to get pregnant and you're going to bring home the baby or whatever. Doing the wrong thing is not going to make it right between y'all.

Responding honestly, authentically, from her own experience, Sheryl said of the mother's reaction:

I think if she's sees me doing bad stuff, I remember how I was back then I don't want her doing this too... I don't want my daughter doing that. I'm good for her.

Sheryl suggested what might have been more effective action from the daughter was talking to her mother from her honest perspective as a daughter. Sheryl wanted the mother to hear the daughter, and she wanted the daughter's voice and her need for boundaries to be heard:

Maybe she [Carol] should come back like at a time when I'm like maybe watching TV or something but if I'm always on the go and I never have time really then maybe do what she did but instead of being more annoying just say Mom— please stop for one minute and just listen to me and let me tell you something.

The scene was reenacted using this strategy and a poignant dialogue ensued.

Carol, watched another actor try this strategy, and remarked that Vernell's words are one's that she would use in real life, "That's something like I would say.

"Don't I come first?" The role shifted, between her lived experience, her perspective as audience member and her perspective as actor in the part of the daughter. This allowed Carol to see the situation from inside and out, and to see clearly how this relates to her own life.

In debriefing the dramatic activity after it was done, Lindsey summed up the most effective strategy employed as one in which the daughter used complete honesty and found the right moment to talk to her mother:

She just told her straight out, she didn't beat around the bush like the other girls. She just told her, like, I want to be asked questions and stuff.

Sheryl said that the impact of this strategy on her, playing the role of mother, allowed her to hear her daughter more clearly.

It made me understand that she just wanted me to hear her. You know, she just wanted me to show her that I care. She did it in a better way.

As I review the Forum Theater piece that students created through the three different lenses, I noticed different things:

Artist

As an artist I was drawn to the story being told and how it shifted depending on the characters' perspective. The Forum Theater model provided an aesthetic space to explore the inner worlds of the characters very effectively. Students' honesty and vulnerability allowed the work to go deep quickly and the strategies were authentic approaches that were very revealing of the students' creative and imaginative thinking. Students are shape shifters, easily switching roles and approaches – this ability develops in dramatic activities that enable them to become adept at moving between different perspectives, trying things on. Adolescents seem to have the ability to hold many contradictory ideas at once and have a willingness to try them on for size interchangeably. This ability

should be utilized in our teaching strategies with adolescents. As I wrote this, I saw that my artist role informed my teacher role.

Teacher

As a teacher, I noticed how students had taken to this exercise, fully participating in their various roles as they articulated their realizations. It was uncomfortable for me to be so vulnerable, to not know how the exploration would unfold and what conversations we'd be brought to. At the same time, I noted how adept students were in considering a problem from different vantage points and how engaged they were in working to resolve it. They learned a most valuable lesson about seeing the views of others, appreciating the perspectives of others, and empathizing with these perspectives. The ability to see from another perspective can contribute to less conflict and more cooperation among groups of people.

Researcher

As a researcher, I found that focusing in on this Forum Theater was very much about perspective sharing — trying different approaches to investigate the change in response from the mother. I was also very attuned to what the students wanted in the interaction; in this situation, students were clear that discipline designates caring. What made the scene so powerful was that students saw a real life connection in this exploration of a complex relationship between daughter and mother. It was relevant for them. Students saw themselves in the interaction. These powerful real-life connections made learning relevant.

The focus and objectives of each role are different, yet when taken together they weave a tapestry that make each of the processes of teaching, artistry and researching stronger because they are informed by the other approaches.

Once I understood the characteristics, objectives and assumptions, of these various roles, I was able to use these lenses flexibly, by viewing the data through a particular lens highlighting specific details. I was able to see other possibilities, as a result of inhabiting a specific perspective, and often the juxtaposition of different roles moved me deeper into making sense of the data. These multiple lenses broadened my perspective on the work. They foregrounded a variety of interpretations of what was occurring which gave the work a more comprehensive context.

As seen in the example of Forum Theater, for each role there was a particular way of being curious, of listening and for noticing the work as it developed. There was also a different kind of discourse within each role; a unique language was accessed to talk about the work. Each role had its own subjectivity, prioritizing certain elements of the research which in turn blocked certain kinds of hearing, and understanding. This ever-shifting perspective both informed and complicated the practice of research and the analysis of data. I became highly attuned to the way I was shifting between roles and the access to the information and how it changed, depending on the role I was in.

In writing about this research, I also encountered this role switching, writing first as artist, then teacher, then researcher. In an attempt to further

understand these roles I began to use them intentionally, working with the coded data first through one lens and then through the next and working to be aware from which vantage point I am writing and working consciously to bring the roles together in my writing.

Summary

I have determined that my distinct roles of artist, teacher and researcher intersect and inform each other. Each role permits me to see certain aspects of a situation, and inhibits my vision in other aspects. Used in combination, these various roles contribute to a deeper understanding of the ways that these adolescent students engage in learning through theater activities in a drama classroom.

Understanding the roles one plays in a situation and how they influence the ways in which one creates meaning represents a critical element in gaining a full picture of what is happening in a research project. This understanding influenced my work by allowing me to be constantly attuned to which vantage point I am writing from and working from. I now consciously bring the roles together in my writing and work. This discovery has important implications for educators who play multiple roles, who coordinate discourses, (Diaz, 1994) and who will benefit from considering the assumptions, objectives and priorities that go with each.

Chapter Twelve: Implications

Introduction

This critical ethnography, conducted in an urban high school over the course of six weeks, looked at the development of voice and identity through drama education. Using a series of dramatic explorations, we considered issues of concern to students including their desire to be heard, their sense of being silenced, and their frustration with how rules are enforced in the school. Using Reader's Theater students collected a variety of perspectives on the rules in school. I asked students to integrate voices from their community and we considered the voices they brought in as well as the voices that were missing from the script. Using Forum Theater we looked at the relationship between a mother and daughter and how teenagers see the setting of limits as a way of caring. In a variety of dramatic techniques and exercises we developed skills and technique while creating an ensemble that could work together effectively on larger creative projects.

Implications

The research data suggest that drama education provided this group of students with many important benefits for students that are clearly are linked to the development of voice and identity. The research analysis suggests eight benefits for these particular students:

1. ***Working in an aesthetic space creates an environment in which voices are invited, heard and valued.***

Students identified the drama classroom as an oasis. When students work together to create drama and explore issues, there were many positive benefits. The virtual space of the imagination allowed students the opportunity to explore issues through dramatic exploration that had implications for real life and gave permission to create alternative solutions for issues.

2. Being heard is as important as developing strong voices.

One of the striking realizations for this researcher was finding such powerful voices in these students. This was inconsistent with what Carol Gilligan theorizes about adolescent girls and was different from my experiences in teaching white girls. Often young girls at this age question their voices and tend to be more tentative. As a result, the dramatic work served less to draw out voices, and more to provide a space where voices could be heard. There are many different discourses within a school culture. Drama education has clear potential for mediating these discourses. From the results of this research, it seemed clear that for these students to be able to listen to other people's voices, they must first be able to express their voices and know that they have been heard. Being heard was a clear need articulated by students. When they felt they have not been heard, resentment grew. This resentment blocked students' ability to understand other perspectives. As educators, we must realize that learning to listen is as necessary as developing student voices.

3. Drama allows students to steer the direction of their learning.

Because they were able to select the content of the issues they would be exploring, and because they were creating work from their own interpretation of a

particular issue or theme, students became experts about their experience and the work they created. The development of a unique artistic perspective drew on the knowledge that students brought and the gifts of who they were. Drama can trigger a process of *conscientization* or coming to know what you know; where students realize that they have expertise and important things to say.

4. *Drama education can develop a strong community of learners.*

Because drama is collaborative, the development of a group that works well together, trusts each other and is comfortable taking risks with each other, is most often an outcome. In this research, students repeatedly pointed to the community they had formed as one of the significant aspects of the “oasis” created in the drama classroom.

5. *Reflection can serve to prompt conscientization.*

Many of the changes identified as transformative by students came out in their reflections on the work. Interestingly, this was something that students initially resisted as uncomfortable, because it meant they had to reveal themselves. Building clear debriefing processes into the drama sessions drew out student voices. Students became aware of how much they knew by listening to themselves and others, making sense of their impressions of the work. By the time we held the focus group conversation, students had gotten comfortable with reflecting on their experiences. They were focused, articulate and experts on their experiences, the potential of drama education, and how voice is developed and influenced. It became clear in the process, that creating itself is an act of reflection.

6. *Performance is a vehicle for bringing student voices to agency.*

Students felt strongly that performance was an essential part of the dramatic process. It provided a culminating moment for sharing their creative work and gave them a chance to connect with others around shared topics. They appeared reassured that they were not alone, could influence others' thinking, and challenge the audience to consider other perspectives. There is significance to bringing students' voices to the larger community and students felt that if they didn't have this opportunity, their voices would not be fully heard.

7. *Drama can provide unique opportunities for students to become researchers, asking questions they are interested in finding answers for.*

Teachers are most often put in the position of being authoritarians and students are often put in the position of having to follow teachers' leads. Drama can shift students to lead the direction of their learning as they make artistic choices and implement them. The process of figuring out what choices to make, whose voices to include, and how, moves students into researchers as they figure out what they want to explore, what questions they need to ask, and to consider what's happening all the way through in the process.

Though these results are specific to this group of students, they suggest great potential for aesthetic education in schools. The learning in students' lives that occurs in dramatic education is significantly different than other areas of education because such a deep connection to creative processes is forged. Students described the connection in different ways but what they were pointing

to is the aesthetic experience. Some of the descriptions of this kind of experience noted:

- the work is engaging and allowed them to build on each other's energy
- the work generated individual interpretation and students found the creativity and uniqueness of ideas that emerged exhilarating
- the work developed valuable skills such as quick thinking and spontaneity

8. *Listening sustains the development of strong voices.*

This research in the end points to how drama education can develop students voices, and more toward the role of the drama classroom in providing a space for voices to be invited into and heard. The data urge teachers to find new ways of listening to the important things students have to say.

There is great potential in this information. This research suggests that education would benefit from integrating the arts more fully into teacher education. In addition, administrators and educators who are concerned about students' need to develop a sense of voice and identity, can consider drama a tool for intervention, providing the necessary framework for safe explorations of issues of voice and identity. Finally, teachers should be provided with the skills to become researchers in their classrooms, to develop understanding about what is happening for students and also for themselves.

Further Study

There are several areas that call for further study. The impact of race and ethnicity on the development of voice is crucial. The fact that these students were so contrary to those described in Gilligan's work on voice development, suggests that we must expand our research to move beyond gender and be more inclusive

of students of color and of diverse ethnic backgrounds to understand how voice may develop differently for different communities.

Research is also needed on the impact of drama education on the development of voice and identity over time. The changes I saw in the students over the course of a few months were striking. I wonder what impact this work will continue to have on their lives over the next year and beyond? It is also worth considering further the development of students' and teachers' voices. How do teachers' voices develop in their teaching, and what impact does this have on their students? How can we create spaces that invite and value student voices?

Critical Pedagogy

Theater has always been political and has always asked the larger questions. This work is ultimately not about students' views on the rules in school or how they feel about teachers. It is about inquiring about how we can we create a spaces in our schools in which everybody is respected; where education is equitable, regardless of your gender or your color. This work is not a consideration of who should wear what; it's investigating how and why we judge each other. It's about understanding how we limit students' success when our assumptions about who students are and what they can do limit their possibilities.

Deborah empowered students and at the same time unintentionally oppressed them. She created an oasis where they felt they were heard, and yet her assumptions about who they were and what they could achieve limited them. I too found myself silencing students even as I worked actively to empower their

voices. Oppression is a complex thing. We assume we empower students and yet we are oppressors as well—we assume we are one and not the other, but the lines are blurred and flexible, impacted by the power structures we live within our assumptions, our belief systems and ideas about how things should be.

The forces within the school make a true democratic classroom, impossible and yet, the work develops as a spiral. One can continue moving towards what one imagines as a democratic classroom moving ever closer.

I seek to develop a critical pedagogy so that I am constantly evaluating my choices and considering how I might readjust to aim more truly toward those democratic ideals. There is no black and white, where one person is wrong and one right; where one practice works and the other doesn't. The world is a complex place. We need to help students think in complex ways rather than with binary vision.

Marilyn Cochran Smith argues that teachers are “responsible for constructing pedagogy and curriculum with the explicit intention of reconstructing the system for social justice” (1988, p. 561).

Implications For My Own Teaching

Through the process of the research my own practice of teaching has changed. I have continued to pay attention to my separate roles in this research and the different discourses between students, teachers and administrators. As a result of this research, I have developed a critical pedagogy that has shifted the way in which I teach. Shortly after completing my research I ran into a dilemma in my own teaching in which I noticed that I was continuing to use my

understanding of these three roles to check my own assumptions about my decisions in class.

Teaching a course in Drama and Learning as part of a masters program in Creative Arts in Learning through Lesley University, I worked with a group of 23 teachers in Olympia, WA. The course was offered in an intensive weekend format in which we meet for 23 hours each weekend. At the end of the first weekend, I sensed some unspoken tension in the group—a resistance to the way I was approaching the course and it made me wonder how what I had learned about resistance in my research could help me in my own teaching.

I found myself noting that I should listen/wait for more clues about the resistance to emerge. A comment came shortly after I made this decision from a kindergarten teacher who noted that what were most useful for her to learn in class were exercises she could use immediately. I hesitated. I sensed that I could choose to stop the flow of action, or invite conversation about this comment, which in all likelihood would open up a flood of other comments. This could be useful in addressing the concerns that were clearly there, but I was also aware that it could create a meltdown in our process with frustrations being vented and no sure way of ending on a positive note. I also had the sense that I felt protective of my own teaching strategies and there was my own resistance to discussing whether my pedagogical strategies were effective with the group. It would be easier to move on through the work that day, to ask students to do a mid-way evaluation where I could collect students' thoughts, and allow myself the time in between course meetings to regroup. I was aware of my artist

perspective, noting an inner insistence that I was offering an important approach to understanding drama which revealed both the power of the work and access to technique and skill development. At the same time, from my researcher self, there was a clear curiosity about and need to understand the resistance to the way I was teaching the class. As I contemplated what to do, I realized in this frozen moment that my research and my awareness of these three distinct lenses were coming to bear on my own teaching. "Let's talk about this," I heard myself say to the class and an intense and productive discussion ensued.

The students concerns made me step back and reconsider my goals for the work I'm bringing to teachers. What is it students want to learn? Where are the gaps in what I am teaching and what they are receiving? How might those gaps be bridged?

The second weekend of the course arrived a few weeks later and I shared my written reflections with the students of the Olympia cohort. I wanted them to know I had thought deeply about what they had said, that I had been challenged to meet them halfway, and that I in turn, would ask them to meet me halfway in considering why I had constructed the course in a particular way. Palms sweating, I read my thoughts aloud, telling them they had been willing to take a risk by sharing their concerns, that I'd take one as well by sharing my heartfelt response. I read the following piece which I have named:

Trusting the Process

Teaching Drama and Learning in Olympia has made me step back and reconsider my goals for the work I'm bringing to teachers. What is it I

hope to impart? What is it students want to learn? Where are the gaps and intersections of these questions? How might those gaps be bridged?

My philosophy in considering how drama might be used in the curriculum is to provide an experiential journey in which teachers immerse themselves in the techniques of drama and consider their own points of connection, creativity, questions, discomforts, and growing edges. I want them to consider what is gained and what is risked from participating in drama work.

- How does an aesthetic space change conversations, and perspectives?
- What can drama offer that is different than other teaching techniques?
- What might it mean to understand a story, a problem, and a character from the inside out?
- What is it like to be someone other than yourself?
- How is embodied learning, or creating in the moment, meaningful for education?
- How can different interpretations of a theme tell us about the world we live in and problem solving?
- What does empathy have to do with curriculum?

I want teachers to wrestle with these questions while we focus on the techniques that are shared. Together we consider how drama can deepen learning and enhance our human experience. Once teachers have bumped up against these questions and others we turn to the objectives of their curriculum and consider how their learning goals for their students might be achieved in a deeper way by integrating drama.

The teachers in this group have requested more activities that they can bring in as they are—adding them in to enhance curriculum. They feel they don't always have the time to explore the longer dramatic process in their work. They want to see more curriculum connections modeled.

So I leave with my ideas about teaching shaken and ask myself: Why is it important to highlight the process of drama, making connections to curriculum along the way but focusing first on the art form, the technique and holding off the direct “best practices” or tried and true exercises, the “quickies” as fellow artist educator Linda Eppel calls them.

Why not create a series of recipes that I take the group through one after another? Is this the right direction? Shouldn't I respond to the needs they are voicing?

I mull this over for the weeks between weekends. I wake up in the middle of the night. I talk to fellow faculty members about it. I talk to myself in inner dialogues going back and forth during my commute. And finally,

35,000 feet up flying to Olympia I am grading a paper written by a teacher from another cohort and suddenly I understand what I am going for. She has taken the techniques we worked with and created a unit on insects that brings to life the make up of insects, their characteristics, and their unique types. She builds her unit integrating links to math (number, perspective), to science (world of an insect) to literature (story links and sequencing). The objectives of her work are met in the most innovative and engaging way.

But what feels most striking is her mastery in using drama techniques to achieve her objectives. And it strikes me that in the end—the process, if you trust it, can bring you full circle. The shift I see in her work feels to me like a plane taking off. She begins with techniques I recognize from our class explorations but she has made them her own. And in a way that is more on target, more creative than any sample exercise I could give her. And I am not sure she would have been as masterful with the techniques if I had guided her through these specific exercises.

I want my teaching to give the teachers what they need. I want to hear their voices and honor their feelings. But I also have a clear philosophy about my work and I want to challenge them to consider this work from the vantage point of what I want for them.

I teach through the process of drama because I want the teachers I work with to fall in love with the art form of drama. I want them to see the drama in their lives and in their worlds **as well as** for its potential in their classroom. I want them to forget the push of the content and the curriculum for just a bit and feel the magic. I want them to strap in for the adventure and ride the roller coaster and appreciate it for all it brings—the unpredictability, the need to leap into the void, relying only on themselves and their group, with the only requirement that they “trust the process.” I want them to feel the risk, the sense of adventure and exploration, the adaptability and the flexibility of the art form **first**. I want them to see the art for what it is before it becomes a tool.

I want them to **wrestle** with the millions of choices that they will need to make to complete a dramatization, sensing along the way that they are taking ownership of the story they are exploring, they are becoming translators and interpreters of the world they are immersed in. I want them to be transformed in the same way they are transforming the information they are working with.

I am hesitant to show a series of tried and true exercises or even examples that might suggest best practices, because I honestly believe that teachers are some of the most creative, inspired people on earth. It is proven to me time and again as I work with them across the country.

They often are not aware of it and want to grab on to the practice that they can begin to implement immediately. They have no time. They have lots of pressures. They can learn better by examples.

Perhaps it's an ulterior motive on my part that I want them to explore themselves as artists first. I want them to give themselves over for at least the first weekend to experience drama in all its risks, thrills and challenges. And then, and only then, when they have had the chance to see it as an art form do we shift into drama's use as a tool.

There is always a time in my teaching where like fledging birds, my students question their ability to "get it." I'm not sure I know enough, or I don't have enough exercises. I can't make the leap. And yet, they do in the end and with the integration project they complete comes a click—that they are an authority in their own right. That they can translate, transform the tools to use them for their own unique work in the classroom. But only because they have lived inside these techniques and explored the art form.

There are things I can do to meet them half way for sure. A grid with the techniques we've employed, objectives in doing the work and theory that supports it is developed to make the bridge between my process and their curriculum more visible. Also—a list of ideas across curricular areas that have been developed by the teachers I have worked with may spark ideas and confirm that yes, it is possible to make the successful translations. There is clearly more bridge building I can do and I am excited to consider the possibilities. At the same time, I wish to challenge this group to consider the advantages of exploring the process of drama first and creating "tools" and "best practices" as a secondary layer.

Best of all, I feel lucky to have been challenged by this particular group of dynamos to articulate why I proceed as I do and to consider how I can be true to my philosophy and yet at the same time work harder to meet their needs.

The students listened intently and we all sat with the thoughts shared on both sides. I decided to include more activities that teachers can put to immediate use while maintaining my commitment to make my goals more transparent for inviting students on an exploratory journey of the art form of drama. I could see that the students were also reflecting on the ideas I shared.

At the end of the course we created a circle and shared final thoughts that felt important. One teacher thanked me for being vulnerable. She said that because I allowed myself to be vulnerable she found herself in a teaching situation in her classroom where she felt able to do the same thing with one of her students. I am amazed that where I had thought I was communicating about processes for learning about how to integrate drama, what they had learned was that it's okay, even beneficial, to be vulnerable for the sake of your students.

Other students noted that it was amazing to hear that they had a voice—that I would shift the direction of my teaching to accommodate their needs and how gratifying that had felt. Another said that I had modeled good teaching. Later in evaluations students noted that they felt I had listened to them and worked hard to meet their needs.

These comments took me back to the students in my dissertation study commenting on the drama room as an oasis for their voices, as opposed to commenting on the power of the actual work. It is clear that we as teachers may focus on the content that we are teaching, and identifying strategies for bolstering student learning in the particular content. But, other things are happening in the classroom that are of equal and sometimes of more importance. Students need to know that their voices matter, that what they want and what they need is understood and valued, and that their perceived needs are an important part of the equation of successful teaching.

For me, the ability to tune into student needs and voices has become a significant focus in my teaching. Understanding the many lenses I have available

to me in my teaching has helped me to listen to learning on many levels. The students were placing me in a role of master teacher who modeled teaching as well as shared content. Their understanding of my role layered new ways for me to understand the impact of my teaching on their learning. This dictated the way in which they heard what I had to say. Clearly understanding our perception of the roles we take and the roles of others place us in has a crucial bearing on teaching and learning. Being aware of ourselves in these roles, and the challenges and assumptions each brings is an important step in developing a critical pedagogy.

Conclusion

The results of this research suggest that drama can be a useful tool for intervention for students who are desperately in need of knowing who they are and who need to understand how to express themselves. In a time of a 30% national dropout rate, it is time to ask ourselves what is missing in education. What do students need to make school life more meaningful and relevant to their lives?

I believe this research holds several salient considerations for educators. Students need to be heard in order for them to effectively be able to hear others, or to experience multiple perspectives. The drama classroom offers a potential oasis to students—on in which their voices are invited, valued, and heard. In addition, the creation of an aesthetic space, where students can explore their own interpretations and creations, allows for ownership, the development of voice and the exploration of possibilities. The research recommends that

educators move toward the development of a critical pedagogy—a tuning in to one’s teaching to promote social justice in order to support optimal student development.

I choose to use dramatic exercises that dig deeply into students’ life experiences, activate students’ thinking and connection to their voices, and bring their voices into the open. Student voices are encouraged to be inquisitive, to challenge and to be pulled into life circumstances and situations that feel real and relevant. My intention is not to train actors. I am guiding students to an opportunity to imagine that they have the power to change the world. Along the way they see themselves creating change. They transform the world by influencing their small chunks of it. These students will be the ones who will design the shape of the future.

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Appendix

Dissertation Protocol #1: Peer-to-Peer Interviews

Interviews were conducted during the first week of class

1. What does your voice sound like?
2. How would someone else describe your voice?
3. What do you think your voice says about you?
4. What's one thing you think about being back at school but would never say out loud?
5. Have you ever changed your voice to get something? When? How?
6. Did you ever feel like you've worn a "social mask"—a facial expression that wasn't really you but you put it on because it fit the situation? When? Please describe the experience.
7. What kind of voice went with that "mask"?
8. Can you show me? Demonstrate what you mean?

Dissertation Protocol #2: Peer-to Peer Interviews

Interviews were conducted the final week of class. Interview Prompts included:

1. Describe one thing you did in class that you liked.
2. Describe one thing you did in class that made you think.
3. Describe one thing that made you uncomfortable or that you didn't like.

Research Consent Form

As a doctoral student at Lesley University I am researching how theater education influences the development of voice and identity in teenagers. This research will be used for my doctoral dissertation. I am working with Drama Teacher _____ and teaching artist _____ in _____ High School and am inviting students in Drama 1 to participate in this research project.

Your participation is strictly voluntary. Any material taken from the research collected will be confidential and the identities will be changed in my dissertation. Any material used for grant applications, articles, or further research will be similarly protected.

Participant's Name _____ Date _____

Address _____

Phone _____ E-mail Address _____

Date of Birth _____

School _____ Address _____

Participation in the research will include:

- participating fully in class which will be videotaped
- exploring a range of dramatic exercises
- completing assignments for the creation of a Reader's Theater piece
- completing 4 writings that will be handed in

The research will be conducted between September 5th and December 5th 2003.

I have discussed the above procedures with _____. I have asked whether any questions remain and have answered these questions to the best of my ability. I will share results of this research with the participants and their feedback will become part of the research.

Date Researcher's signature

The nature and purpose of this research have been satisfactorily explained to me and I agree to become a participant in the study as described above. I understand that I am free to discontinue participation at any time if I so choose, and that the investigator will gladly answer any questions that arise during the course of the research.

Date Student Signature

Date Parent's Signature

Material for *Rules!* Script

Italicized text is from teachers' interviews
Regular text is from students' interviews
Bolded text is from police officer interviews

Dress Code

That ain't got nothing to do with your education. You can learn.....
Butt naked.

*I think it's stupid because I ..I
Think that's one issue that uhmmmm
Should be maintained by people's parents
Um I don't like um looking at people's clothes that are
Three times too small so they should have a little bit more taste
But I would imagine
that if you're old enough to have children
Old enough to have a job
Then you should be old enough to be able to choose
what it is that you want to
Wear*

You should be appropriate for schools
Yup I see girls all the time
I think the pregnant girls they shouldn't let
Them have them little shorts or stomach all out
And girls with real short shirts that are not appropriate
You don't need to be having skirts that if you bend over
you can see all your butt

Women violate the rules the most
Because they think they're gonna get away with it
How you dress is restricted by the rules
I'm respectable and I dress respectable
I think there shouldn't be no dress code but there's some things that's too short
But as
For anything else
I think there is nothing that shouldn't be worn to school
Clothes are clothes
Some rules are to keep us safe. Some rules are just...

Because that's what they feel will help the problem and it's not really helping anything

As long as it's not too low

As long as their butt ain't hanging out and boxers all hanging out then it shouldn't be a problem

That's style...

When students get to wear whatever they want to express themselves

Girls that's walking around here half naked...

Girl—I don't think they should be able to walk around with little tube tops and bras and see through stuff on

But how come girls can't wear short skirts

but guys can wear whatever the hell they want?

They never yell at guys for freaking wearing baggy pants

All falling off and shit

It a free country you can wear what you want

I feel the dress code is fair because

by people regulating what you can and cannot wear

it takes away from.....

the amount of attention you get.

If everyone was to come to school dressed what they wanted with...

what they wanted to wear

every single day

there would be so much attention focused on

what that person is wearing that it would take away from academics

which is the main focus of any school....

Sometimes being able to wear what you want to ...

is not necessarily a good thing. Also...

by having a dress code everyone can feel equal

because someone is not judged by their appearance

if

by what they are wearing.

Hats

I think it's whacked cuz

I wanna wear a hat

I think that rule is bullshit

Because if your hair is jacked up

You should be able to wear a hat

You need to cover that shit up

*See I think the hat rule is ah
Maybe little too strict,
I think the kids should be able to wear the hats in the hallways
but not in*

They should take them off in class

*I would agree that they should
Take them off in class*

It's cool cause you
Showing respect when you take off your hat

Well you know what I'm saying
No hat rule ain't really feelin it
cause it's not really good for the hood
For the school community
you know
I do it for the hood
Yeah but um anyways
Like I was saying about the hat rule
Nah we ain't trying to have that no longer
You know I'm saying we gonna have a little um petition on that

Uniforms

uniforms?...uh no, no, no

***Well as far as uniforms are concerned I'm totally against uniforms
Because I feel it takes away from the individuality of each student
I feel as long as the clothing they wear
is not offensive to any other group or religion or is not obscene it's ok to
wear.***

Enforcement

***Well we enforce the school rules by ...
Instructing all students to apply to these rules and regulations
Set down by the school committee***

Attendance

*if you have a family
Emergency are you going to be absent...?
If you're in the middle of having ...giving birth
Are you going to be absent?
If somebody dies are you going to be absent?
I think that should be based upon the excuse
each and every incident*

*I think if you respect kids and give them enough trust
Then they can be trusted
But if you're not going to respect them
And you don't trust them then you're going to set them
Up to fail*

I find the attendance policy not fair
cause there's no telling what's going on
In that's child's life
for them to only get three absences or
And they fail for the whole marking period
And then they want you to go to school
even though you're failing
What is the point of you going to school
if you're going to fail?

They don't they don't
Understand
These teachers don't understand
because they drive here what about people that catch buses
They're late because of the bus or something
And it shouldn't be held against them
I walked into class
I came in school the bell rung
And I walked into class and said I was late
cause the bell already rung
I wasn't already in the class when the bell rung so she said I was late
If they let me in the school at the beginning why would I be late?
To class it was still 7:35 but the bell rang so I was late.
That's ridiculous

Because some of us it hard for us to get
To school in the morning time and
some of us have to wait for our parents to get money

and some of us have to wait for the PVPA
and the PVPA isn't a very dependable thing.
I'm late every day
I have to wait for my mom to come home from work
At like 7 something and then I haven't got money and then
I have to go to school late every day and they
They say three tardies is a absent and I don't think this is fair.

Someone can be very sick and need to go to the hospital
and it
they're in the hospital for over three days
they've already failed with or without a pass. So there's really no point in the
attendance policy

Hallway

You gotta rush to class and shit
You can't even stop to talk

No it's gonna cause a fight
Because people be pushing people and shit
Yup people get mad

*if you ever stand over there between B block
and I mean the B building and the A building
uh there's no way that you are ever going to get
Didn't I have you last year ?
...There's no way that that you can get through
you
Need about five minutes to
go to your locker
Go to the bathroom
Say hi to your friends
And get to class.*

I can't I can't
I think it's not um.. um
I don't think there is enough time in the hallways because the hallways be
packed there be a lot of students walking around using their cellphones and stuff
so I think there should be more time

*Um
I think the kids also need maybe a little more
Passing time between classes they should be allowed
A little more*

*It's very tough to get through that
Airwalk between classes*

Group 3

White Tees

Why can't we wear like white tees?
Like cuz like
It'll be worst like if we was walking round with like nasty comments
On or shirts or pictures or whatever
But they just plain
like white tee shirts
I mean
I don't see
I don't see nothing wrong with that at all

Yeah...some people are down with gangs
You know

Can't ban the white tee rule
you know what I'm sayin especially can't ban it from me
Cause I ain't gonna stop wearing them anyways
Know what I mean?
It's addictive
But I'm outta here
Holla at ya boy taleband street team

Not personally cuz I don't wear white tees
But you know
if I wanted to wear it
I would cuz you know they would be on my back about wearing something
that you know
Something I chose to wear and they trying to say it's wrong and
I don't think it's wrong at all

In a gang
I think that's a stereotype
That's a stereotype
That don't mean you in a gang cuz
You wear certain shit you know what I'm saying

If it's gang related they need to find the people that
Doing all that gang stuff and put them aside

***No I don't think it will make a difference because uh
You're uh
Enforcing the wrong thing
You should target the gang activity itself
Not what the individual gangs are known to wear.***

that's like telling me I can't wear a red tee shirt
Or a black tee shirt
I don't think they should ban that
but as for short skirts
And stuff like that
That shouldn't be
You shouldn't come to school
Looking a hot mess

White tees is not gang related you know what I'm sayin
Listen put it to you like this
Once they see one of the kids
coming through the door with the icy white tee that makes a girl's day
You know what' I'm saying
we don't wanna take that way from ya females

They're expressing their selves
Well OK
I'm not saying gang related clothes but they should be
They shouldn't be in school because
We'll have lots of lots of shootings and stuff like that
if they come in here repin' what clique they're from

I mean they had their styles back in their day
You know and this is our style

Leaving Grounds

Lunches that they serve here now cause the lunches that they serve now are
nasty
Some of them are alright but some
Of it is just nasty!
My mom has two kids
No father
Neither one of us have a father
She has to do everything by herself and they still won't give us free lunch
because she makes 300 and something

She makes good pocket change but after she pays the bills she don't have the
money to give us a dollar fifty for lunch
For a dollar fifty for lunch
I might as well pay for nachos or a juice

Yes, I think that we should be able to since we are grown
Well we're becoming grown up
I think we should have the privilege to go to other places and
well be mature enough to come back

People should uh
Should
Wait up I'll think of it
Oh OK I got it
People should be able to leave cause this
Is high school, and we're adults
And um
We should freakin be treated like one dammit
If we're responsible enough to go to school then we could come back and leave
I mean leave and then come back

When I used to live in Puerto Rico
cuz I just moved out here,
school was way better
because you can leave for lunch and then come back...
and we used to be responsible with that
because if you left
and you didn't come back
then the teacher would see if you were in your other classes
and if you have
they would call your house and let your parents know that
for that...
you weren't in school for that class and if you don't bring an excuse you won't be
accepted in class until you do.

But hey what do you expect from this school anyway?

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