

**PLAYING WITH POSSIBILITIES:
Facilitation of Theatre Collective Creation for Social Justice in the
Secondary Drama Classroom**

By

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Dedication

For my family first, who inspire me with the reality of unconditional love:
my husband, Chris,
who loved me through two pregnancies and the birth of a thesis,
my son, Renaud,
who showed me who I really am and what is most important,
and my unborn child,
I can't wait to meet you and be fully present.

For my students as well, who inspire me when I least expect it and need it most.

Abstract

The purpose of this study was to inform and improve the practice of a secondary drama teacher using Theatre Collective Creation (TCC) in her classroom, particularly TCC as a means of exploring/experiencing social justice. The guiding questions were:

- How can the experience of facilitating a Theatre Collective with female Internationally Educated Teachers inform and improve my practice as a secondary drama teacher?
- What are the ways that teachers can best facilitate Theatre Collective for social justice in their classrooms?

A crucial aspect of the research project was to use the process of TCC to develop a play with a group of female Internationally Educated Teachers, and to then draw parallels between that experience of theatre collective facilitation and the teacher's previous theatre collective facilitation in the secondary drama classroom with students. There are two scripts included in this thesis: one was co-written throughout the research project by the researcher and the group of female Internationally Educated Teachers, and the other was written by the researcher herself, as a creative means of representing the thesis conclusions.

To the drama teacher involved, the study both informed and improved her teaching practice and revealed the ways in which her facilitation of TCC for social justice functioned effectively and how it might be improved. These discoveries in the data (Chapter Four) are explored in terms of moments of confirmation (building relationships and a safe, creative atmosphere) and difficult discoveries (organization, personal expectation/ influence on the process, acknowledging cultural difference and

silences within the process and among participants). The researcher concluded that while some authority is required for safety and productivity in the TCC process, the facilitator must also recognize the fluidity of power relations between facilitator and participants.

This study drew on Arts-based Research (ABR), particularly Drama and TCC as a form of ABR and was influenced by Cross-Cultural Research and Feminist Participatory Action Research.

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Chapter One: An Introduction

In my first year of teaching, I encountered a young woman in Grade Nine who consistently failed to complete her homework. As a new teacher, I felt this was unacceptable, and when I confronted ‘Courtney’ (not her actual name) about it, her reaction was memorable. Her face got very red, and her eyes crinkled around the corners. I think she was holding back tears. Very angrily, she explained that dealing with a crying one-year-old was her main concern when she was home, and if I cared to come over and take care of her child, she would happily do her homework. ‘Miss, I am just trying to survive.’ Her reality was very different from my own as a young woman, and, thanks to her candour, I realized early in my career that all students have personal life experiences that greatly influence their ‘school selves.’ As my teaching career continued, I realized that Courtney’s experience was not unusual. Anyone who has spent a significant amount of time in a public school knows that many students are not getting what they need to be able to do their best in school. The reality is that school cannot be a priority for someone who is struggling to make it through the day, every day.

As a secondary drama teacher, I saw that something very special was happening as my students learned and practiced the art form of theatre. As students stepped into various roles, they began to learn about and live (at least momentarily) the lives of people very different from themselves. They began to ask questions about what motivated people and how individual decisions affected others. I used this curiosity to address the differences among people, particularly those who were sometimes alienated or misunderstood.

Additional experiences with playwriting and performance in my Drama 11 classes opened my eyes to the possible use of group playwriting as a means of exploring social justice. One collective was particularly powerful as students created a transgendered character and depicted the story of her and her family coming to terms with the process of gender transformation.

I've always felt that there was more to the theatre than making art. Yes - the works that moved me had brilliant performances, unique set designs and creative interpretations of character or situation, and they often inspired me on a personal level. What I deemed to be good theatre caused me to question myself and my roles and actions in the world. But often their influence stopped there – yes, these works made me think, but unfortunately, they did not call me to act, to make change in my life and my world. I found myself asking: Is it possible to make theatre that transforms the actors and the audience? Can theatre re-imagine and re-shape the world? And if so, how can I use it in the classroom with high school students? How can my students and I co-create such theatre of possibilities?

Finally, participation on my school's Social Justice Committee, a committee supervised by teachers, but made up of students interested in creating and leading change within our school, was the final piece of the puzzle. This group identified areas of social oppression among students, and after a wide-spread episode where Grade Ten female students were verbally abused by Grade Twelve female students, the Social Justice Committee decided that the social oppression they wanted to tackle was gossip and rumours. The combination of these events, and a passion for all things theatrical, have made me aware of the educational issue that is of interest to me – the use of a

creative performance process known as Theatre Collective Creation (TCC) as a means of exploring social justice issues.

In this thesis, I will discuss a research project with which I was involved where I acted as facilitator for Theatre Collective Creation. As a researcher I have been influenced by those using drama in their own research, primarily Canadian researchers such as Kathleen Gallagher, Diane Conrad, and Joe Norris; I will discuss the ways in which drama and theatre are being used as a form of research. As a teacher, I have been influenced by the work of Augusto Boal; in addition to my passion for the process of collective creation. I have found that Theatre Collective Creation (TCC) combined with techniques from Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) used in the drama classroom affords students and teachers the opportunity to explore social justice in a creative and safe environment. This thesis will explore that technique of developing a Theatre Collective Creation as well as what I have learned about facilitation of Theatre Collective Creation.

The research project with which I was involved and to which I refer above is a SSHRC funded project with Susan Walsh and Susan Brigham at Mount Saint Vincent University (MSVU). As research assistant, I facilitated the use of TCC with a group of female internationally educated teachers (IETs¹) who have had difficulty successfully gaining employment in Atlantic Canadian schools. Our goal was to co-create a performance piece to be presented to at least one audience, possibly several audiences, made up of members with an interest in our topic. In this thesis I will make connections

¹ "Internationally Educated Teachers" is a term increasingly used in the Canadian context to describe people who have immigrated to Canada, who have completed post secondary education outside of Canada and whose teaching experience is international and/or Canadian. See Walsh & Brigham (2008, p. 6) for further discussion about this term.

between the use of drama for social justice with this group and the use of drama for social justice with high school students. I will discuss this in more detail in Chapter Four. I am posing these questions to guide my research:

- How can the experience of facilitating a Theatre Collective with female Internationally Educated Teachers inform and improve my practice as a secondary drama teacher?
- What are the ways that teachers can best facilitate Theatre Collective for social justice in their classrooms?

In the remainder of this introduction, I will discuss some of the terminology used when discussing this kind of theatre work and clarify how I am defining social justice.

Contextualizing the Collective

In this proposal I use several theatrical terms. *Theatre Collective Creation* (hereafter *TCC*) is the term I use to refer to the process of a group creation of a dramatic product. Such dramatic products can include traditional scripts and performances as well as skeletal scripts that lead to rehearsed scenes with improvised dialogue. (A more detailed discussion of TCC can be found in Chapter Three.) It is important to note that the term *collective* is a shortened form of TCC but refers to the same process. I first encountered the idea of TCC in the Nova Scotia Drama 10 and Drama 11 curriculum document, where it was framed using the term *collective creation* (1999, pgs 38, 46, 48, 64, 66, 81, 129-181). *Collective work* is a broader term that can be used in any context where a group collectively works on a project or product. In this proposal, I use the term *collective work* to refer to the non-theatrical products that come from TCC such as the

relationships between participants, ideas or strategies to make social change and/ or any written work.

What sets TCC apart from other playwriting methods is the role of the facilitator and the role of the playwrights/ actors in the group. Though the facilitator guides the process, ideally each person contributes to the process and the performance product. The role of leader is constantly being negotiated by the entire group. In my early experiences using TCC with high school students, I saw the power in the process as an object, power as centralized in a person who could give it away or have it taken from her. More recently, and a result of the TCC associated with this research, I am beginning to conceptualize power as located in the relationship between people, or groups, where it exists in the way in which one person acts upon the actions of others (Foucault, 2000).

Foucault writes:

Power must be analysed as something which circulates, or rather as something which only functions in the form of a chain. It is never localised here or there, never in anybody's hands, never appropriated as a commodity or piece of wealth. Power is employed and exercised through a net-like organisation. And not only do individuals circulate between its threads; they are always in the position of simultaneously undergoing and exercising this power. They are not only its inert or consenting target; they are always also the elements of its articulation. In other words, individuals are the vehicles of power, not its point of application. (1980, p. 98)

As these vehicles of power, we use our relationships, as a site of resistance between she who guides and those who create, and one is never solely a creator or leader but always both at once. It is important to note that each group that uses TCC has its own unique dynamics. Sometimes, as facilitator, I have more responsibility than other times; sometimes I bring my experience and talents to the table, and they are welcomed and used, and other times they are noted but the direction of the work takes on a life of its own with the creators. The purpose of the facilitator is to help the work take shape, to

pull in multiple thoughts and ideas and weave a fabric that tells a captivating story approved by the group. For that reason, I have enjoyed my many collective experiences; they are varied and yet similar, and the power to create a world on stage is shared by all who participate.

It is my assertion that Theatre of the Oppressed (TO), defined more clearly in Chapter Three, can be combined with TCC to investigate social justice and transform ourselves, our students and our schools.

Defining Social (In)justice

As I continue to read the literature about social justice, particularly in an educational context, I am confronted with the reality that defining this term is impossible. It seems to be ever evolving, like a lava lamp, and just when a definition has taken shape for me, it floats away, only to alter itself again.

Henry Giroux (2007) describes critical pedagogy for social justice as the message that “all citizens, old and young, are equally entitled, if not equally empowered, to shape the society in which they live” (p.198) He takes this idea a step further when he suggests that educators

need to provide the opportunities for students to learn that the relationship between knowledge and power can be emancipatory, that their histories and experiences matter, and that what they say and do counts in their struggle to unlearn dominating privileges, productively reconstruct their relations with others, and transform, when necessary, the world around them. (p.198)

Denzin and Lincoln (2005) suggest that social justice is the most forceful professional ethics issue engaging qualitative researchers today. They define social injustice as “the coupling of historically reified structures of oppression with unjust

distribution of social goods and services,” the impact of which has been felt in both developing and developed nations (p. 1117).

Critical educator Sherry Ramrattan Smith (2006) describes social injustice as the way “we interact with one another and function within our societies [to] automatically privilege some groups of people while disadvantaging others” (p.50).

Social injustice can be characterized by an act of oppression upon the actions of another or upon the actions of others. In their discussion of intersectionality, the interrelatedness of systems of oppression (for example, the intersection of gender, race and class), Andersen and Hill-Collins identify power as “the ability to influence and dominate others” (2007, p.77). Thus power is “built into the very structure of society” (p.61), inherited and usually maintained by those in more powerful social situations. But there is possibility for change! Andersen and Hill-Collins write:

There is a key difference. As we have seen, in a model that focuses solely on difference and one that focuses on the matrix of domination. That is, the matrix of domination forces you to look at social structures, while models of difference often dissolve into individual or group identities. Finally, neither race, nor class, nor gender is a fixed category. Because they are social constructions, their form – and their interrelationship – changes over time. This also means that social change is possible. (p.63)

One possibility of social change might include the act of storytelling. In her book *Decolonizing Methodologies*, Linda Tuhwai-Smith (1999) notes that social justice is not possible for those who have been excluded, marginalized, or ‘Othered’ until they can tell their stories from the past, reclaim the past, and give testimony to the injustices of the past (p.34-35). Though she primarily advocates for Indigenous research by Indigenous researchers, I take note that her notion of social justice includes the telling of stories by those who have experienced injustice, something this research certainly sought to do.

I am taking into account these ideas and my own (and of course, acknowledging how this work has helped me to see my very advantaged perspective and privileges as an academically educated, white, middle class, heterosexual woman) as I define social justice for myself and the reader. In this work, social justice will be considered the acknowledgement of one's privilege in order to challenge the oppression created by this privilege. Part of this acknowledgement of privilege should result in some form of change, either in the transformation of the individual or a facet of society. I return to Courtney's story... the Grade Nine student who never finished her homework. Her incredible honesty taught me a valuable lesson about privilege: in that situation I had it and she didn't. As her teacher, I had the option to defend traditional educational expectations, regardless of her home life. But how much richer our relationship, her learning... no, our learning and my teaching became when she spoke up against me and then pulled me to her side as a partner. I often wonder where she is now, almost ten years later, how her son is doing and more than anything, I dream of thanking her for sending me in the direction of social justice.

I amplify the definition above with these thoughts. Privilege is the unearned advantage of one social group over another. These unearned advantages create socially constructed differences which exist to maintain power relations between and among groups of people. Difference can include but is not limited to gender, race, class, religion, education level, language, ethnicity, literacy, and sexual orientation. Furthermore, these differences are similarly structured and as per Andersen & Hill-Collins' (2007) discussion of intersectionality create a sort of complexity of difference where a person or persons can be acted upon based on not one but multiple differences (for example, a African-Canadian woman who is also homosexual). As a member of a

dominant group, it is not enough that I simply acknowledge difference but rather I cease to ignore it and choose to acknowledge my own locations of privilege. After all of this, a person must engage in action, social change, both personal and public, through listening, questioning, and acting in partnership with others who seek change. Action is the most important part of this process, the *raison d'être* for those who seek social justice of any kind. I suggest that my research will demonstrate that the practice of TCC in drama classrooms is in fact using theatre as a tool for social justice.

Before ending the introductory chapter, I'd like to outline the remaining chapters of this thesis. In Chapter Two, I present a review of the literature that influenced my thinking about Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, the use of drama for social justice, Theatre Collective Creation, arts-based research and more specifically, drama and Theatre Collective Creation as forms of research. Chapter Three begins with an overview of how I am approaching this cross-cultural research and the many locations of power found when using TCC as a form of research. I then situate this work within Feminist Participatory Action Research and explain why I feel it is a suitable way to situate what we have done as a collective. Finally I outline the research project and my role as facilitator of the drama work. In Chapter Four I discuss my approach to data analysis as well as my findings; this includes a discussion of personal discoveries about my own practice of facilitation of Theatre Collective Creation. I close with Chapter Five where I discuss the implications of my findings in the form of a One-Act play. These implications are mainly for my own teaching practice but do include some suggestions for drama teachers and facilitators of Theatre Collective Creation for social justice

Chapter Two: Literature Review

More research than ever before addresses drama and theatre as a tool for social justice; however, very little of that research makes a connection between Theatre Collective Creation (TCC) and social justice in partnership as I have proposed. This chapter of my thesis is organized into two sections: A) Drama for Social Justice and B) Arts-Based Research. In section A, I present my reading of Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed (TO) and how it can operate as part of the development of TCC, followed by a discussion of those who critique Boal's work and other researchers using drama for the purpose of social justice. In section B, I offer an examination of arts-based research, followed by a discussion of drama as research and finally an overview of the process of TCC, including how I use it in my own classroom and how it can be used as a form of research.

Drama for Social Justice

Boal and theatre of the oppressed (TO)

Augusto Boal created Theatre of the Oppressed for use in Latin America in the 1970s. Influenced by the work of fellow Brazilian, Paulo Freire², Boal developed TO as a form of "people's" theatre with communities facing oppression, so that those being oppressed might enact on stage possible solutions to their oppression.

Boal was an influential writer and director who worked with Arena Theatre in Brazil from the 1950s through to the 1970s. From Boal's perspective, the Brazilian

² Hernan Flores writes about meeting Boal in her article "From Freire to Boal" (2003) where Boal "admitted that Freire's book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970) plays an important role in his own work" (p. 41). Freire argued that education cannot be neutral while Boal argues that theatre cannot be neutral. Both say that education and theatre are always politically invested.

government was using traditional theatre to enforce and maintain the country's systems and institutions that oppressed certain groups of people. He found his own race and class (white, middle class, well-educated) posed a problem as he attempted to use educational theatre to inspire impoverished and minority groups to seek education and stand against racial and class inequality. It was not until he created TO, where the minority groups used theatre to rebel and rehearse for revolution, that these groups came up with their own ideas to create and establish social transformation.

The essence of TO is that “all theatre is necessarily political” and “a weapon for liberation” (Boal, 1985, p.ix). The ruling classes have tried to monopolize the theatre and use it as a means of maintaining oppression. Boals' TO is a series of theatre techniques that disrupt the barrier between actor and spectator, creating a world (both on stage and in reality) where “all must act, all must be protagonists in the necessary transformations of society” (p.ix). The action on ‘stage’ is influenced and altered by the audience who move from “passive beings in the theatrical phenomenon – into subjects, into actors, transformers of the dramatic action” (p.122). They become spect-actors.

TO is intended to be theatre for actors and non-actors alike, and can be summarized through the following four stages:

First stage - Knowing the body: “The exercises of this first stage are designed to ‘undo’ the muscular structure of the participants... so that each worker, each peasant understands, sees, feels to what point his body is governed by his work” (p.128). In this way, the ‘actor’ can move beyond his or her own movement vocabulary and be able to create or physically interpret characters from other professions and social classes, characters different from oneself.

Second stage - Making the body expressive: Simply put, ‘actors’ are invited into dramatic play to develop the expressive ability of their bodies (p.130).

Third stage - The theatre as a language: This stage focuses on the theme or topic chosen by the working group and “furthers the transition from passivity to action” (p. 132). In this stage, specific TO techniques (Simultaneous Dramaturgy, Image Theatre, Forum Theatre³) are used to draw the ‘actor’ further into participation in the development of theatre and expression of opinion on the theme or topic. The topic chosen should be an oppression experienced by the actors themselves as well as the intended audience.

People who do not identify themselves with the oppressed who have created these images can also gain from them, but at a distance – they will never be able to apply to their real lives these experiences realised in an imaginary life. But the oppressed themselves, they will be able to practise, to train for action, they will be able to act within the imaginary life of the theatre forum, so that afterwards, catalysed, they can immediately apply this new energy to their real lives, since the oppressed are part of both worlds. (Boal, 2002, p.276)

Fourth stage - The theatre as a discourse: It is in this final stage that the working group begins to develop and shape a more finished form of theatre. Prior to this, participants are practicing what Boal calls a rehearsal-theatre, and in this stage they move into spectacle-theatre. The type of spectacle-theatre chosen (several are suggested by Boal) is determined by the ‘actors’ and must be a good vehicle of expression for their theme or topic (Boal, 1985, p.142). Fourth stage performances vary in terms of

³ A brief explanation of these three TO techniques: **Simultaneous Dramaturgy** is where a group of participants present a prepared, improvised scene based on someone’s personal experience, then ask for audience (made of other TO participants) help in developing a solution. The scene is re-played to try out different strategies. **Image Theatre** is created in small groups and contains a variety of possible exercises. One example is where participants create three sculptures or 3D images based on a common theme or experience among participants (the actual, the ideal, and the transformational) in order to analyze the achievability of change in the given situation (see footnote #12 for another example). **Forum Theatre** is a presentation of a rehearsed 10-15 minute scene based on a theme to an audience of other TO participants. These spectator-actors intervene in multiple re-plays of the scene in an attempt to rehearse for change in the real world.

production. Boal wrote about one group who introduced elements of spectacle into their performances, and another group who limited the length of spect-actor interventions. Boal himself produced TO for small audiences such as a group of Peruvian Indigenous people and poor peasants in India as well as for large audiences capable of filling a 3000 seat stadium. He asks:

Should the presentation of the forum tend towards the theatrical? Should one seek to produce good theatre, even after the presentation of the model, or should one, on the contrary, aim to stimulate reflection, argument, action? I think that this depends on the objectives of the show and the conditions in which it is being enacted. It depends on the number of participants and on concrete givens, such as place, subject matter, nature of stage, etc. (2002, p. 262)

It is important to note that Boal's development of theatre for revolution did not stop with TO. *The Rainbow of Desire* (1995) is another form of people's theatre that evolved while Boal was exiled from Brazil and living in Europe. *The Rainbow of Desire* (1995), sometimes abbreviated to RD, is intended for use in a different social context, with individuals who experience both privilege and oppression simultaneously. This form of theatre is meant to identify and break down internalized oppressions (such as body image issues), along with systemic ones (such as classism). Boal felt many individuals in industrialized communities experienced internalized oppressions, what he called "the cop in the head," including loneliness, alienation and discrimination. Leigh Ann Howard writes:

Like TO, RD focuses on action and analysis. Group members enact an individual's oppression, and the individual uses the orchestration to explore multiple perspectives that influence his/her "cop in the head." (2004, p.221) ⁴

⁴ RD centers on physical and dramatic strategies that bring out the "cop in the head" of Western participants, mainly internalized oppressions created by systemic ones such as capitalism, materialism and individualism.

As well he developed *Legislative Theatre* (1998), a series of theatrical strategies and techniques involved in using theatre as a means of cultural activism.

Despite the fact that Boal did not use the term social justice when writing about or discussing TO (and its subsequent forms), it appears that he was in fact fighting for just that: "...it [theatre] should help us learn about ourselves and our times. We should know the world we live in, the better to change it. Theatre is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society" (2002, p.16). Boal asserts that traditional theatre maintains the status quo, that it silences those not directly connected to lines of power or authority. Where traditional theatre comments on social problems and points out that a solution is needed (for example, a play depicting domestic abuse that creates awareness of the issue), TO brainstorms possible answers to the problem being explored (for example, a play depicting domestic abuse where the audience is invited by a facilitating actor to intervene, take on the main characters and re-write the plot). This may be because Boal's work began in the early 1970s in Brazil where there was little, if any, awareness of a North American movement termed social justice. In addition, the phrase 'social justice,' is one often used by researchers, activists and educators. As far as I know, Boal has not referred to his work as such, he considered himself to be an actor and an artist. In *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, he entitles a postscript with the phrase: "Actors and non-actors - we are all human, we are all artists, we are all actors!" (2002, p.17). He defined artists as "witnesses of their own times" and responsible for "giving their testimony, delivering to us the product of their art and their craft, they should help others to stimulate inside themselves the artists that lie within, undeveloped and timid as they may be" (p.17). Boal took pride in defining himself as an artist teaching others to use art to create revolution.

Still, researchers and educators are using TO in their work. For example, author and researcher Qwo-Li Driskill (2003) describes how the use of TO can help First Nations peoples confront the history of shame and fear that is associated with speaking their mother tongue. Driskill used TO in a workshop format as her research instrument. Subjects were asked to participate in TO techniques to examine how patriarchy and colonization were interwoven with acts of violence committed against Aboriginal populations. Driskill believes that a return to the Mother Tongue could help repair the damage (emotionally, spiritually, psychologically, etc.) to Aboriginal perceptions of their language and themselves. One of the activities in the workshop focused on creating human sculptures that depicted each person's relationship to their ancestral language.

The drama work that came out of the session contained a wide selection of personal stories. Subjects were able to identify and articulate, through theatre games, the deeper complexities of their relationship to their languages. Participants who once had trouble giving voice to their fears, concerns and shame in simple discussions, were now enabled to combine their body and voice as a unique tool of expression: using Boal's Image Theatre, "One woman sculpted the pain she felt as someone who doesn't know her language by sculpting herself with her hand over her mouth" (p.159).

TO allowed participants to safely connect to and confront language loss because it encouraged practical use of the mother tongue while acknowledging memory and emotion. "TO is an exceptional tool to help create social change, because it so often challenges our assumptions of the possible and helps us imagine non-oppressive realities" (p.156).

Critiques of Boal

Most of the literature I have read that concerns itself with the use of theatre as a tool for social justice suggests that those who participate in the process have positive experiences and sense a need for personal or social change (Colton & Sorenson, 2007; Conrad, 2004, 2002; Driskill, 2003; Gallagher, 2000, 2004, 2007; Lash, 2006; Norris, 2000, 2010; Österlind, 2008). Boal's TO is often endorsed as a successful tool for social transformation. For example, Österlind (2008) notes:

TO has the potential to make social structures, hierarchies, and power relations and personal habitus⁵ visible – allowing an integrated approach to simultaneous work on individual, group and social levels – and at the same time provide tools to prepare change, which involves body, feelings and thoughts, and are quite close to action. TO has the potential to promote social change. (p. 80)

However, some researchers have identified some limitations to Boal's methods and techniques. Performance presentations of Boal's Forum Theatre are facilitated by a character known as "The Joker." S/he guides audience involvement and participation as spect-actors and uses her/ his position to open discussion, aid audience interventions on stage and debrief performances. Paul Dwyer's (2004) case study of the creation and presentation of a Forum Theatre production by *Headlines Theatre Company* in Vancouver, Canada, suggests that the ideological basis for this type of theatre (identifying injustice, confronting oppression/ oppressors, and then finding possible solutions) can be undermined by dramaturgical decisions and style of facilitation. His research found that the way the character of "The Joker" is trained and rehearsed can largely impact what the audience as spect-actors take away from and give to the

⁵ Pierre Bourdieu uses the concept of habitus to explain social reproduction of ideas and actions and lack of social change. Habitus, he claims, is located in traditions and lifestyle, internalized mentally and expressed through the body in how we move and carry ourselves. Habitus is very resistant to change. (paraphrased from Österlind, 2008).

dramatic presentation. “The Joker” should be prepared to think, act, and speak explicitly when in role; otherwise, one risks creation of “a discourse in which oppressors are never named as such and their actions rarely scrutinized” (Dwyer, 2004, p.205). Creators of and participants in Forum Theatre (FT) have no evidence of social transformation, no hard data to prove that FT (as part of TO) even works. Dwyer’s findings suggest that a well-trained “Joker” is crucial to facilitate a discursive struggle between audience and stage and may be one indicator that FT begins a process of social change for participants.

Upon reflection about a series of Forum Theatre workshops with high school students, a proponent of Boal, Johnny Saldaña (1999), finds further limitations of TO. A chance division of students found Saldaña leading FT workshops with two groups of high school students; one group from diverse ethnic backgrounds and lower- to lower-middle class families and another group from upper middle- to upper class White families. He observed that “participants from inner-city areas chose and improvised scenes based on adolescent to adolescent hostility” while the students from affluent, predominantly White suburbs shared “material reminiscent of television sketch comedy and theatre sports” (p.17). The performances of the upper-class students denied and ignored serious social issues and more specifically, suggested that members of the working class are an annoyance needing to be erased. How is this a limitation for those of us using TO in middle-class and upper-class contexts? Saldaña suggests that drama teachers and theatre practitioners working with such populations have the difficult task of “gaining entry to the perspectives and ethos of young people living in the culture of privilege” (p. 18). I would add, drama teachers also have the challenge of examining our own privilege or lack thereof. Despite its complexity, Saldaña believes that this task is

one we must attempt in order to develop socially just citizens who recognize their privileged social positions and take action to address social injustice.

Others using drama for social justice

Many people use drama for social justice, though only a few frame it in those exact terms. The use of drama for social justice ranges from theatre practitioner to the academic researcher to the classroom teacher.

Professional and community theatre companies from across Canada for example, are combining theatre and social justice in their production work. As previously mentioned, *Headlines Theatre Company* in Vancouver, is a major producer of what they call “Theatre for Living,” a version of Boal’s TO (www.headlinestheatre.com). The Canadian Centre for Victims of Torture (CCVT), whose services include art therapy,⁶ use collective theatre making to develop plays based on experiences living as and working with refugees (www.ccvvt.org).

Canadian researcher Diane Conrad (2002, 2004) uses popular theatre as a means to explore social issues with youth; “making use of drama as both pedagogy and research” (2002, p.2). She writes: “My socially critical drama work strives to give voice to those most often silenced by our society” (p.2), such as those she works with - at-risk and incarcerated youth. Another Canadian researcher, Kathleen Gallagher (2000, 2007) uses drama as a tool for empowerment with young women and marginalized youth. She suggests that drama in the classroom is concerned with the following:

⁶ Art therapy is used with children and adults as a way to become self-aware and deal with emotional and psychological issues through a collaborative process using simple art materials such as chalk, paint or pastels. Through this process the art-therapist encourages a client’s non-verbal and verbal expression and helps to identify thematic expression appearing in the artwork (<http://www.tati.on.ca/>). Drama therapy is a form of art therapy that uses dramatic processes to the same end (<http://therapytoronto.ca>).

To see anew, understand ourselves more fully, expand our thinking, and understand how that thinking has been shaped by our social positions. It is an opening up process that must, at all costs, leave open the possibilities of alternative ways to see or hear or live the story. It can be explicitly concerned with the deconstructing and reconstructing process when we alienate representations of gender, class, and race. It is one means of dismantling seductive, stereotypical images, of resisting the limited and limiting discursive and aesthetic representations of self/ other. (2000, pp. 82-83)

Researcher Joe Norris (2010) uses Playbuilding (his version of TCC) to raise awareness of issues important to those he is working with, be they teachers, students or otherwise. This process concludes with audience members reworking scenes from the performance, Norris' version of Boal's Forum Theatre and Simultaneous Dramaturgy.

As previously noted, Johnny Saldaña (1999), researcher from ASU (Arizona State University), uses theatre to explore social class and social consciousness with high school students. Saldaña states that "FT [Forum Theatre] is not entertainment but pedagogical exploration. FT is rehearsal for reality – opportunities to find solutions to our oppressions, change our actions, and thus change the world" (p.14).

At Thetford Academy in Vermont, improvised scene work is used annually to create a play that promotes social justice in the school. Together Darri Colton (specializing in improvisational drama) and Barbara Sorensen (with a literature background) team teach the class (Colton & Sorensen, 2007). Using selected pieces of literature or text that connect to the personal experiences of the student participants, a theme for performance is found. As students explore themes of social justice through drama, they gain insight into what it is like to be the other, or they are 'publishing' their own experience of otherness for an audience to rethink and consider. This junction between learning about oneself and learning about the world makes drama the perfect location to work through social justice ideas. "We know we've made a difference when

people who've seen the performance approach us to tell their stories about justice and identity and tolerance – when they too raise their voices about the issue we've brought forward” (Colton & Sorenson, 2007, p.3).

Within the Halifax Regional School Board, a handful of drama teachers regularly use Boal's techniques in their classrooms, and also explore social justice issues through student-developed theatre productions. As previously mentioned, I use Boal's Forum Theatre with my Drama 10 classes and adapt some of Boal's TO techniques for use within the TCC process with my Drama 11 students. Cole Harbour High School students annually present what they deem “an issues-based student collective” at the Nova Scotia High School Drama Fest, and students at Dartmouth High School have used variations on Forum Theatre to develop plays in Drama class.

The power of exploring social justice issues via drama lies in its ability to present a world like our own, but one where the actor can play and re-play actions in order to learn from the various possible solutions. To understand this in another light, Fels & Belliveau (2008) state that drama participants “may develop an understanding of the multiple perspectives, experiences, and choices of action and response among individuals and within diverse communities in particular situations” (p.35).

However, “the social intercourse in drama is about more than being sensitive to others; it is about being sensitized by the actions and words of others,” writes Gallagher (2000, p.43). Exploring social justice in the drama classroom is more than learning to empathize with someone who is different from you. At the heart of drama for social justice there must be the desire to understand and recreate ourselves (and our reactions and interactions with others) as well as the institutional structures and systemic

inequalities that continue to generate privilege and injustice. This goal to recreate one's self and world is defined by taking action to make change happen.

Arts-based Research

TCC used in academic research can be classified as arts-based research (ABR). Earlier phases of the research project with IETs conducted by Walsh and Brigham, prior to my involvement, used arts-based research methods to explore research questions with participants and also to (re)present their findings: IETs sculpted with clay, built with blocks and drew pictures that showed their feelings and experiences of being 'Othered' (Walsh & Brigham, 2005, 2007, Brigham & Walsh 2006, 2012). In the phase of research I have been involved with, we used TCC to explore issues of importance to the women (participant stories) and make sense of what arose from this exploration (development of a script based upon/ inspired by participant stories). The performance of the script is one way that results were publicly disseminated.

But what is arts-based research?⁷ Eisner (2005), whose work has supported arts-based research for over three decades writes:

The distinguishing feature of arts-based research is that it uses aesthetic qualities to shed light on the educational situations we care about. Arts based research is not simply the application of a variety of loose methods; it is the result of artistically crafting the description of the situation so that it can be seen from another angle. (p.12)

Stephen K. Levine (2005) reflects on the same question in reference to arts-based research in arts therapy: "We must have faith that the imagination can inform us, that art is not non-cognitive but that it binds together both feeling and form in a way that can

⁷ According to Barone (2006), arts-based research is also referred to as "aesthetically-based research, a/r/tography, arts-inspired research, arts practice as research."

reveal truth” (np). Arts-based research, like all other types of research, is a search for knowledge. Unlike other types of research, Levine gives permission for that knowledge to be located in the feelings, experiences and imaginations of those participating. “Such an uncovering demands that we enter into a dialogic relationship with that which we seek to understand, a relationship in which not only the being of the thing we study, but also our own being comes into question” (np,

<http://www.lesley.edu/journals/jppp/9/Levine.html>). Springgay and Carpenter II (2007) suggest that ABR is:

an open interconnective field, where engagement is one of cultural participation rather than a form of reification, representation, or aesthetic constructs. The arts or arts based research understood as collectivity seeks out an alternative set of responses derived from speech and action. (p.12)

Displaying another angle? Revealing new truths? Alternative responses? The common ground among arts-based researchers is its ability to shed new light, to create new perspectives, something Fels & Irwin (2008) called the “a-ha moment”: “This is when the reader, viewer, listener, and mover, holistically experience something so deeply that their views of the world change instantly” (p.3). When one understands what is and what is possible, she is moved to action: “Arts based educational research can contribute significantly to a re-visioning of education” (Eisner, 2005, p.21). So TCC as a research form is not merely a means of data collection, but an activity which enables participants and researchers to go beyond interpreting the data and move forward to empowerment and social change (Finley, 2005).

Considered a founder of the ABR methodology (according to Barone, 2006), Eisner (2005) recognizes the tensions found within:

First the tension between using open forms that yield diverse interpretations and forms that yield common understandings is one such tension. A second is the tension between the particular and the general. We want our single case research to extend beyond the single subject studied. A third tension is between the desire to aesthetically craft form and the desire to tell it like it is [...] A fourth tension is between the desire to pursue new questions and puzzlements and the need in the practical world for answers. Finally, there is the tension for arts based research to seek what is novel or creative and the need to create work that has verisimilitude to the furniture of the world. (p.19)

Eisner believes that ABR can provide “ideas [that] might broaden our perspective regarding what is worth teaching and learning and through a broadened perspective change the scope of the curriculum and enrich the practices that teachers employ to promote student growth” (p.21).

ABR is unique because of its emphasis on both the process and product of research. As well, it promotes inquiry on a very personal, creative and social level. Perhaps most important is that arts-based research has highlighted the idea that the process of doing research is just as important as research findings. “Each of us can be engaged in our own questioning and questing, individually and in communities of inquiry. Through the arts, we creatively, appreciatively, and critically engage with our lives in meaningful ways” (Fels & Irwin, 2008, p.3).

Drama as a form of arts-based research

Drama, in the form of script writing, Readers’ Theatre⁸ and staged productions, is commonly used and accepted as a medium to present the results and interpretations of

⁸ Reader’s theater is minimal theater in support of literature and reading. There are many styles, but nearly all share these features:

- Narration serves as the framework of dramatic presentation.
- No full stage sets. If used at all, sets are simple and suggestive.
- No full costumes. If used at all, costumes are partial and suggestive, or neutral and uniform.
- No full memorization. Scripts are used openly in performance.

academic research. Examples of this can be found in the publications of Walsh and Brigham (2007) who used a performative text format to present their data about IETs (see my footnote, p. 8), Joe Norris (2000, 2010) who has used script format to present findings from several research projects, and Johnny Saldaña (2008) who used autoethnodrama⁹ to explore the feelings of a marginalized individual in conventional society. These researchers did not necessarily limit their use of the arts to the presentation of their findings (for example, Walsh and Brigham (2007) have used the arts as part of their research process as well) but I cite their use of drama to represent findings as an example of how drama is most often used in the research process.

The researchers mentioned above and others have begun to favor drama as a research method itself. Canadian researchers Kathleen Gallagher (2000, 2004, 2007), Diane Conrad (2002, 2004) and Joe Norris (2000, 2010), use drama as a means to explore various issues with their research participants. Gallagher uses educational drama in a drama classroom setting. She is interested in student stories and collaboration and is particularly curious about young women and violence; she uses educational drama and theatre as a means of empowering young people to depict and discuss the various types of violence they encounter in their lives (2000, 2004, 2007). In *Theatre of the Urban* (2008), she describes her own work as a “porous methodology” and a “situated ethnography” (p.7), stating that her goal was “listening to the plural voices of those

Reader's theater was developed as an efficient and effective way to present literature in dramatic form. Today as well, most scripts are literary adaptations, though others are original dramatic works. (<http://www.aaronshp.com/rt/whatis.html>)

⁹ Ethnodrama, the written script of ethnotheatre, consists of dramatized selections of narrative collected by the researcher through interviews, journal entries, participant observation notes and/ or print and media artifacts such as diaries, newspaper articles, etc. Ethnodrama is a way of dramatizing research data through narrative inquiry. Autoethnodrama is based primarily on the writer's personal experiences and memories and is formatted as a monologue for performance (Saldana, 2008).

normally Othered, and hearing them as constructors, agents, and disseminators of knowledge” (p.8). Conrad works with “at-risk” populations of high school drama students using Popular Theatre to generate data. She characterizes her research as a participatory arts-based approach interpreted from a socially critical post-modern perspective (2002, 2004). Norris uses Collective Creation as a means of data dissemination as well as a tool for data collection and analysis (2000). His work centres on an arts-based and collaborative research model, using a modified version of Boal’s Theatre of the Oppressed (in addition to working with those who have experienced oppression, he also works with those who have perpetrated it through observation or ignorance) and describes his theatre company, “Mirror Theatre” as a social issues theatre (2010, p.3). Arts-based inquiry of this kind, such as that of Gallagher, Conrad and Norris, is meant to move people to action, to create change and transformation.

Theatre Collective Creation (TCC)

I was introduced to TCC as a high school drama student. As a Drama 11 final exam project, we were asked to work in small groups to write a 15-20 minute piece. I worked in a group of four, with three girls who had become my best friends since our time together in Drama 10. We had a million ideas and were huge fans of the well-known sketch comedy show *Saturday Night Live*, so we co-created a spoof of *The Tonight Show* where we each played a guest to be interviewed. I still remember how much fun we had brainstorming, writing and rehearsing the script, not to mention the joy of presenting our own piece to an eager audience. It was terrifying to put our work ‘out there,’ but exhilarating when it was well received.

In my own classroom, I have used TCC many times and in many different ways. After 2 or 3 class-wide collectives, I realized the potential of this type of student-devised theatre: students were able to write performance pieces about topics of interest to them, which were inevitably topics of interest to their peers. In their 'how-to' teacher's guide, Berry and Reinbold (n.d.) write:

A Collective Creation is a play researched and written by a group of actor-writers, in this case, by teens. Collective Creation as a theatre form has been likened to a prism, reflecting the experiences, the knowledge, the research and the insights of its participants. It is a form that is as valuable in its process as it is for its product. It is a potential curriculum tool for the teacher of teens and pre-teens, providing a vehicle for exploration of personal and social problems and issues through acting and role-playing. (p.5)

The Nova Scotia Drama 10 and 11 curriculum document (1999), suggests that the process of TCC meets multiple Drama 11 Specific Curriculum Outcomes, including but not limited to:

- build[ing] on the ideas of others (p.38).
- select[ing] and combin[ing] dramatic forms of expression to interpret meaning and to communicate that meaning in a theatrical context (p.46).
- mak[ing] informed responses to their own work and others' work (p.48).
- us[ing] a broad range of dramatic forms to create text that gives meaning to cultural and historical events (p.64).
- exhibit[ing] and celebrat[ing] through their dramatic work an awareness of the universal connections between themselves and others (p.66).

In my work as a drama teacher, the use of TCC has allowed my students and I to meet curriculum outcomes and use our 'ethical imagination,' the ability to imagine "how the world could be different and what our lives would be like if we acted in different ways" (Edmiston, 2000, p.67). Specifically, I think of TCCs produced by my students on the topics of psychosis, trans-gender, identity and cyber-bullying.

In order to inspire young people to make change in their behaviour and the world, they must see themselves (meaning their race, their heritage, their gender, their

sexual orientation, their experience, etc.) in the art and literature that they study/ create. As the drama teacher, this can be hard to do when so often the resources and materials available on-site are plays written by ‘dead, white guys.’ In my own school, the plays made available to me in the form of a class set include *Take Ten*, a One-Act play anthology (over 25 years old, containing the works of mostly White, mostly male playwrights,) and almost anything by Shakespeare. Mary-Wynne Ashford (1997) echoes this experience in her own research regarding school violence among First Nations populations in British Columbia. One Band’s suggestion for addressing this issue was as follows:

At the first meeting with the Band, the Native leaders raised the possibility of a project involving drama or role play as a tool to decrease racism.... A drama project could be a rich source of meaning for both Native and non-Native students. It has the potential to build close relationships, to increase pride in personal heritage, a sense of belonging to something outside oneself, a sense of meaning in the suffering experienced in racial injustice, an understanding of Native Spirituality and a creative outlet for all participants. (Ashford, 1997, p.52)

Here we can see the need for a theatrical device that helps young people depict themselves in a performance piece, and TCC can be just that.

Heather Cousins (2000) recommends, among other types of script writing, student-devised theatre (similar to TCC) as a viable option since students are then ‘closer’ to the chosen material. She states in her article *Upholding mainstream culture:*

The tradition of the American high school play:

The Broadway musical is worth studying and exploring as one genre of theatre. However, the problem occurs when it provides the only dramatic experience for students. Many high schools maintain the rigid tradition each year of Shakespeare in the Autumn and a musical in the Spring (or vice versa). This not only offers a narrow view of drama but also upholds white, American culture and excludes others. (p. 88)

TCC offers young theatre artists the chance to perform their experiences of privilege and otherness as well as their ideas about social justice. Cousins asks “How can they know theatre’s capacity to cause social change when they are confined to mainstream theatre?” (p.91). Collective work or student-devised theatre, such as Boal’s Forum Theatre or TCC, allows students to learn to make intelligent choices about what they want to say and how to say it. It is student-centered education for the drama classroom.

TCC as a form of research

As a Masters student, I saw a connection between the research methods I was learning about and TCC. The entire process of TCC is a kind of research and discovery. As a group, we work together to collect, organize, analyze and finally, disseminate data. To those of us working in the drama classroom, it is not a new idea to connect drama with research; in fact, most TCCs I have worked on have had some component of research to inform our performance piece. TCC can serve research not only as means of data dissemination but also within the research process since each TCC involves drawing upon the participants as sites of inquiry themselves. “Much of what we do in process drama helps us to re-look at content to draw insights and make new meanings; this act can be considered a research tool” (Norris, 2000, p.44). In the process of TCC, the co-researchers/ participants/ actors share their experiences/ tell what they know about the topic (data collection), frame that experience/ knowledge using the process of TCC (data analysis), and present it to an audience (data dissemination). This cycle is repeated on a smaller scale within the process itself. For example, when the group is deciding which scenes to keep (and/ or cut), they take collected data (each scene),

analyse its usefulness for the overall message of the piece and then make it part of the final form of disseminated data (in this case, the script, whatever form that may take).

TCC as a form of research involves the participants as co-researchers. Members of a group or community come together to work along side the researcher and as such “can make research accessible to those who are not conversant in the language of research.” (Norris, 2000, p.49) I explore the idea of TCC as research in more detail in Chapter Three where I make connections between it and Feminist Participatory Action Research.

Chapter Three: Research Process

In this chapter, I will first describe the research process I have completed with TCC within the broader SSHRC project, then I will place it in the context of drama as Cross Cultural Research (CCR) and Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR).

The Research Process

As a MAEd student since January 2008, I had been refining my area of interest for my thesis, knowing that I was curious about drama education and how it might be used for social justice in the classroom. In Spring 2009, I began working as a research assistant with Susan Walsh and Susan Brigham on Phase Two of a SSHRC funded project using arts-based inquiry to explore the experiences of internationally educated female teachers in Atlantic Canada. Initially I was asked to facilitate drama sessions with the participants, in order to use the processes of drama as a means of gathering and re-telling the stories and experiences of the women. Shortly after accepting this role, I realized that involvement in this project was also an opportunity for me to employ TCC for the purpose of social justice. This project seemed like a good vehicle for my own research as well, despite the fact that it was not classroom based. Though the questions I am now asking are different from those posed by myself and Susan Walsh at the onset of Phase II,¹⁰ the design of the project itself allows each of us to use the data for our own research purposes.

¹⁰ Questions being posed by Walsh & Brigham are 1) What are the ways in which theatre collective creation can be used for social justice? and 2) In what ways can artistic processes such as theatre collective creation help us to explore the experiences of female Internationally Educated Teachers?

In Phase One of this study, Susan Walsh and Susan Brigham used an arts-based research process (Brigham & Walsh, 2012, 2006; Walsh & Brigham, 2005, 2007) that employed storytelling and writing as a way of sharing experiences. Participants responded to one another's stories using various visual arts practices. One result was a Readers Theatre script that voiced the experiences of many female IETs and the obstacles they face securing a teaching position once in Canada because of various systemic, social and general obstacles (Walsh & Brigham, 2007).

In my research, I have employed the process of TCC (using some of the techniques of Augusto Boal's TO) both as a research method and as a tool for social justice, posing these questions:

- How can the experience of facilitating a Theatre Collective with female Internationally Educated Teachers inform and improve my practice as a secondary drama teacher?
- What are the ways that teachers can best facilitate Theatre Collective for social justice in their classrooms?

After submitting an ethics application in Fall 2008, we received approval for Phase Two of this study from the MSVU Ethics Approval Board (see Appendix I). We began to organize through a telephone conference call with participants in February 2009, followed by our first session in March 2009. I will discuss some details of our sessions later on.

As facilitator of Phase Two of this study, I collaborated with a group of eleven female newcomers who have taught in their home country and/ or who are now teaching here in Canada. These women have immigrated to the Maritimes from all over the

world, including the Middle East, Africa, Asia, Europe and a country in the Commonwealth Nations. Though all the participants are female, they differ in teaching experience, country of origin and ethnicity, race, first language, religion, sexual orientation, and age. Using TCC, including improvisational drama, collective drama, and some of Boal's TO techniques, the women in this project re-enacted some of the oppressive experiences they have had and then re-imagined new possibilities for those situations. The aim of the project was a performance piece to present to an audience (agreed upon by the group) to create a space of consideration, discussion and change with regard to the issues raised by the women.

We held three exploratory sessions with the participants in 2009 - one in March, April, and May, each four hours long. Prior to the May session, we shared ideas via another telephone conference call. Participants then expressed a desire to continue collaborating together on a performance piece and workshop, so we were granted an extension of our original project by the MSVU Ethics Approval Board. Writers' meetings were held in June, November and December of 2009 and February and March of 2010, each lasting two hours. Once the group agreed upon presenting the work to delegates at the International Cultural Research Network (ICRN) conference, we held 3 rehearsals followed by the performance itself at the conference on May 2, 2010.

Session One (March) served as an introduction, learning to self-express through drama. In this session, participants as co-researchers got to know one another, shared narratives about their experiences as immigrants and teachers in Nova Scotia, eased into drama as a vehicle of expression and identified a common desire to 'publish' their stories in order to make change for themselves and future newcomer teachers. After an energizing warm up, we played some basic improv games that focused on giving and

accepting offers in scene work. We played trust games that brought us together physically and emotionally, followed by a series of drama games based on the idea of control, including *Colombian Hypnosis*¹¹ (Boal, 2002, p.51). Though not planned, we spent a considerable amount of time in discussion during this session, simply because the desire to share their stories *out loud* was an imperative I could not deny the participants. Tears were shed as some women recounted moments where they felt controlled, disrespected and dehumanized.

In **Session Two** (April) we explored the common goal of ‘publication’ through Forum Theatre (see footnote #4) pieces (a convention of Boal, 2002). After another warm-up and a review of giving and accepting offers in scene work, we began with leader/ follower games. These games focus on the concept of a leader who instructs her follower in a series of physical movements. Leader/follower games segue easily into Boal’s *Forum Theatre*, which we explored with *Image Theatre*¹² (Boal, 2002, p.174) and *Breaking the Oppression*¹³ (Boal, 2002, p.220) hoping that some dialogue or a prominent storyline would emerge for the creation of a performance piece. Two very strong scenes came out of this session; these have been prominent in the collective work

¹¹ *Colombian Hypnosis* is played in partners, where Player A controls the direction of Player B’s movement forward, backward, up and down. This involves having Player B focus on the palm of Player A’s hand, making sure the tip of Player B’s nose is always approximately 12 inches away from Player A’s hand.

¹² *Image Theatre* involves a number of possible exercises – Boal emphasizes that these exercises can be done together or in isolation, each containing the totality of the process. Generally, Image Theatre involves creating static images using actors’ bodies, the purpose being to use images as a language. We used a specific technique called *Image of the word: illustrating a subject with your body* (p. 176). Actors were asked to use their bodies to create an image of the word “student”, followed by the word “teacher”, followed by the term “school administrator”. What is important in this image construction exercise is to “find out how the oppressed see the oppressors” (Boal, 2002, p. 181).

¹³ In *Breaking the Oppression*, the actor tries to remember a time in her life when she was the object of oppression. She plays herself while others in the scene try to play the people and actions described by the actor. The exercise is done in three phases: 1) A scene is played out which reproduces the event as it happened. 2) The scene is replayed where the protagonist does not accept the oppression. 3) The scene is replayed where the actors change roles and play their opposites

since that time. One scene depicted a Muslim woman encountering opposition from administration while trying to enroll her son in school. The other depicted an Asian teacher candidate experiencing intimidation and domination from both her cooperating teacher and her supervisor from the university.

In **Session Three** (May), after a warm-up and some improv, we returned to the two scenes noted above and began to replay the forms of oppression found within each and reinvent possible outcomes for the main characters (*Forum Theatre* – see footnote #4). In discussion afterwards, we reiterated our common goal of working toward some form of performance-based action and decided to hold future sessions.

Session Four took place in June. As a smaller group, we spent two hours in discussion, brainstorming ideas and directions for a collective script. A basic theme and plot was outlined along with suggestions for specific scenes, characters, costumes and set designs.

Session Five took place in November, where we began to write the script collaboratively. At this time we had an introductory scene for the performance piece.

Session Six and **Seven** took place in December 2009 and February 2010 respectively, where we continued to select stories from our collective and adapt them to the main character being developed in the script. Scenes were written by the entire group, sometimes by smaller groups within the larger group as well as by individuals.

Session Eight took place in March 2010 and involved the first draft of the script. Roles were assigned for a read-through, and suggestions were made for changes to the first draft. I made the suggested changes and sent copies to participants.

Sessions Nine and Ten (May 2010) were 2 two-hours rehearsals and **Session Eleven** (later in May 2010) was another rehearsal followed by the performance itself. (See Appendix II for the script we co-authored and performed.)

Though this piece is no longer in rehearsal or development, the collective has agreed to continue to look for opportunities for performance to teachers and administrators.

Data in the form of video/ audio recordings, participant writing and field notes were collected; I transcribed the audio recordings. In Chapter Four, I present my analysis of the transcripts where I looked for moments of insight from this facilitation experience that address my practice as a TCC facilitator and drama teacher. (See Chapter Four for more details on data analysis and classroom application.)

Drama as Cross-Cultural Research

As a collaborator with female internationally educated teachers (IETs) from around the world, I had the challenge of working across a variety of cultures and ethnicities. Kamler & Threadgold argue that “for any cross-cultural intervention, there are a whole complex set of issues around cultural difference, difference within cultural groups and culturalist assumptions that need to be anticipated and built into the research methodology” (2003, p.146).

When I consider my own location as a researcher, I am reminded of the fact that regardless of how hard I try to be an organic part of the TCC process, I will always be to some degree, an outsider. I have asked myself and continue to ask myself these questions: How has my presence (as a graduate student researcher who is a White, Canadian born, middle-class woman and drama teacher) influenced the contributions

from participants? Who am I to conduct this research? What, if any, experiences of oppression have I experienced? How have I imprinted myself upon the data? How did my personal bias impact the creative process? What are the limitations of the research results? How do I acknowledge the privilege and power that I have taken for granted or ignored? Is acknowledgement enough – how do I disrupt these systems of normativity? How do I address social injustices as a member of a privileged group? How can I be sure that I am not being ‘falsely generous’ (Freire, 1993), that this research does not further dehumanize these women?

Carl E. James (2007) addresses some of these issues:

Ultimately, if racism [or social injustice of all kinds] is to be addressed, and indeed eliminated, the consistent, concerted and sustained efforts and actions of White [privileged] people are necessary. It means recognizing (i.e. admitting to) “White privilege,” dealing with the resulting personal or internal discomfort, tensions and conflicts, and challenging the very system or structures that contribute to the privilege. (p. 129)

There are many things we talked about as a group. I felt most connected to the women when our discussions involve teaching and learning, experiences that we all shared as teachers and students. Some of us have related on the topics of marriage and motherhood, a bond I have enjoyed sharing with many of the women. Often I was aware that our commonalities ended there. Though we are the same in the previously mentioned ways, we are very different. Our backgrounds, our beliefs, our loves and losses, our languages, our incomes, our security. The women themselves have come from a variety of countries worldwide... it is these differences that brought us together in a space of inquiry and yet, it is these differences that have separated us as well.

I have found myself in a very messy place when thinking about the locations of power in this research: I am at once a member of a privileged group (White, Canadian,

middle-class, educated, employed, married with children) and, as Freire termed it, the “convert” (1993, p.42) who has, with anguish, recognized her role in preventing others from becoming fully human. I am the “revolutionary leader” (p.49), using my experience in the theatre to lead the sessions and to give shape to our time together so that we might be productive and move toward action. And yet, I am a follower of threads, of ideas, of stories and thoughts that sometimes seem to pull me to a place of human emotion and connectedness. There have been delightfully rare moments when I belong to this group of women, when I am a mother and wife, and I share that reality with the participants. And sadly, despite months of working together, I still felt distanced from them when they re-enacted some of the scenes from their lives. I am both insider and outsider (Tuhwai-Smith, 1999) and still, neither one. Perhaps in this research, as in life I suppose, I must play in the space between the lines, where definitions of power are smudged, unclear, shifting, and hope that some clarity can be found as we, this dynamic group of women from around the world, collaborate in dramatic and relational ways, in ways that the world can examine and repeat on a grander scale for itself.

Gaventa and Cornwall (2001) write, “the control of knowledge as a way of influencing consciousness is critical to the exercise of power” (p.71). It is important for me to ask myself whether or not this research created a space of shared authority. How do I use my authority as a White, Canadian researcher? How do I use power relations to act upon others? How are others operating within power relations? Am I authentically creating a place for change or am I simply duplicating a dominant discourse? Is it possible to share authority without being condescending or losing control? And, what do

the terms authority and power mean in this context¹⁴? For me, these are important questions; questions that I must ask within the context of my teaching practice, questions that are crucial to a Feminist Participatory Action Research influenced process which I will discuss later in this chapter.

The strategies used in this form of research are meant to build awareness, to develop critical consciousness, to overcome internalized oppression and to develop indigenous or popular knowledge (p.71). We used drama games and storytelling to create an awareness of the shared and diverse experiences of being a female IET, we used Boal's TO techniques to examine and question these experiences, as well as to re-play them and reinvent/ redefine ourselves in relation to those experiences.

Finally, the scripting process resulted in a written account of these experiences/ knowledges to be performed and shared. This group of women had the courage to share their personal stories and more than that, to perform them through character on stage. I believe a process like this can make these women more than a resource to be consumed by the academy, that through TCC they maintain control of their experiences, "making it possible for participants to create a social space in which they can share experiences and information, create common meanings and forge concerted actions together" (Park, 2001, p.81). Their stories have not simply been reduced to being 'data' because they decided how that data became part of a performance piece. They co-authored the play that summarizes their combined experiences and in this way, I hope, did not lose the individual feelings associated with those experiences. As an academic, I write about my perspective as facilitator and interpreter of those feelings/ experiences (both mine and

¹⁴ See *Chapter Five: This Much I Know*, for a discussion of this question and its implications for drama teachers and facilitators of TCC for social justice.

the participant women), and they will be altered to some degree because I become a filter.

Working together has created more than a researcher-participant relationship, more than a co-researcher relationship even; I have gotten to know these women, and they have gotten to know each other and me. As we worked and shared, laughed and cried, as we created, all the while researching, we built relationships. Park (2001) suggested that relational knowledge is what helps people to feel part of something bigger that connects them to one another. “This is the power of solidarity,” he wrote (p.87). I went into this work suspecting that my position as a white, Canadian-born teacher, facilitator and researcher had the potential to dominate this process and the social relations within it. However, equipped with this understanding, I chose a research method and creative process that when used for such a purpose, can allow inquiry and exploration for each member of the group, and for me. I know that together we researched the experiences of female IETs, that we took the data and created a story with it, that we spoke out loud, and that this story has been told.

(Feminist) Participatory Action Research

As mentioned in the sections “TCC as research” (Chapter Two) and “Drama as Cross-Cultural research” (Chapter Three), my work is connected to Participatory Action Research (PAR) and more specifically, Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR). In this section I will discuss FPAR’s roots in PAR and Feminist Research then discuss how TCC as a research method is a form of FPAR.

In comparing MacTaggart (1991), Small (1995) and Gatenby & Humphries (2000), I found that PAR and FR both purport to be politicized, consciousness raising

and reflexive in nature. They both promote the act of co-researching and shared ownership of knowledge produced, they seek to directly benefit and empower participants, and they have the goal of future action and change for a just society. Because of the many aspects that these two methodologies have in common, they are often conflated and known as FPAR. FR has traditionally been focused on the empowerment and emancipation of women, though it now extends to overcoming oppression of all types (i.e. gender, race, class, religion, sexual orientation, etc.) and transforming society. PAR and FR rely heavily upon dialogue with and among participants and flexible researchers who allow the process to evolve and change as needed. When concepts from PAR and FR are applied as a research methodology, the resulting research is Feminist Participatory Action Research (FPAR).

FPAR is defined by what I have already outlined as common practices. Additionally it is sometimes characterized by an initial project design by researchers, as is the case in this research project. Co-researchers (the participants) are often given the task of revising the project proposal as well as participating in data interpretation (Gatenby & Humphries, 2000). FPAR can be practiced in an endless number of ways since co-researching is an integral and ever-evolving part of the process. Participants in role as co-researchers make it such that the knowledge produced belongs to both the academy and the participants themselves. Denzin and Lincoln (2005) write that co-researching with the public is both possible and useful, and that researchers can no longer simply “insert themselves into the context to study what and when they will” (p.1120). Researchers do not own the generated data; “they must negotiate for that knowledge and respect the forms in which the ‘owners’ may wish to have it presented or re-presented” (p.1120).

PAR and FR both require a critical research practice that leads to action or change and this was a goal for both myself as researcher and the participants involved with the IET project. Critical thinking and feminisms have informed and grounded action research through focus on gender, interlocking oppressions, voice and silence, everyday experience and power. Using the terms “feminist-grounded action research” and “feminist action research” interchangeably, as well as noting that the term action research includes participatory action research (Maguire, 2001, p.66), Maguire writes that this type of research “considers how the complexities and diversities of both women and men’s gendered identities and experiences influence its practice and practitioners” (p.62). Feminist-grounded action research, she continues, is “not limited to a struggle against gender oppression alone, as gender oppression is structured and experienced in the web of other oppressions” (p.62), sometimes referred to as intersectionality (Andersen & Hill-Collins, 2007). The metaphor of voice, Maguire says, is central to feminist and action research because “the telling of, listening to, affirmation of, reflecting on, and analysis of personal stories and experiences ‘from the ground up’ are potentially empowering action research strategies” (p.62). And finally, Maguire notes that feminist action research seeks to “unsettle and change the power relations, structures and mechanisms of the social world and social science research” (p.65).

Archibald and Crnkovich (1995), feminist researchers working in a participatory cross-cultural context, suggest that the point of research is to generate knowledge that challenges the status quo. “Action cannot be viewed as a separate phase of a research project but must be ongoing and woven into the project” (p.121). Similarly, Conrad and Campbell, researchers using popular theatre as a form of participatory research with incarcerated youth, write: “In a sense, participatory research is a social action in itself –

a site for speaking out in resistance and struggle” (2008, p.255). One hope for this project was that the research might translate into action and change, into an opportunity for these women to perform their stories. This hope was realized in a small way when a group of participants co-wrote and presented a paper with Susan Walsh and I at Canadian Society for the Study of Education (CSSE) Conference in May 2009. Another opportunity followed, when participants presented a performance of the scripted play itself at the International Cultural Research Network (ICRN) Conference in May 2010. (See Appendix II for a copy of the collectively developed script.)

The challenge we face as researchers is that of “employing our power and privilege in a way that is positive and does not exploit” (Archibald & Crnkovich, 1995, p.113). Freire explains it like this:

Discovering himself to be an oppressor may cause considerable anguish, but it does not necessarily lead to solidarity with the oppressed... true solidarity with the oppressed means fighting at their side to transform the objective reality which has made them these “beings for another.” (1993, p.31)

As facilitator of FPAR, the researcher must recognize that her role cannot be neutral, rather with action research she has taken on the responsibility of making and supporting social change (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005). As members of the collective, participants commit themselves to three things: 1) becoming researchers 2) who explore their own emotions and reactions to a social situation 3) resulting in an aspect of personal political agency (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p.517). TCC as a form of FPAR, provides a potentially respectful context for reshaping the relationships among “participants” and “researchers,” particularly when they differ in terms of race, ethnicity, first language, religion, and so on, because we are involved in shared creative control of the performance piece.

Theatre Collective Creation combined with Theatre of the Oppressed, as a form of FPAR, becomes a process for action and change for those involved, “a social process of collaborative learning realized by groups of people who join together in changing the practices through which they interact in a shared social world” (Kemmis & McTaggart, 2005, p. 563). TCC as research employs the critical and self-reflective cycles so commonly practiced within FPAR because the process is designed to be collaborative.

Heron and Reason, co-operative inquirers (a form of action research), suggest the cycle between reflection and action be repeated several times.

Six to ten cycles may take place over a short workshop, or may extend over a year or more... These cycles ideally balance divergence over several aspects of the inquiry topic, with convergence on specific aspects, so that there is a refined grasp of both the whole and its parts... repeat cycling enhances the validity of the findings. (2001, p.180-181)

This process of reflection and action is enacted over and over again. In the research project, Sessions One through Seven (storytelling, drama games and collective script writing) involved individual writing and group discussion as debriefing activities. Session Eight, Nine and Ten (rehearsal) involved group discussion and feedback via the rehearsal process and the Session Ten performance was followed by a feedback discussion with our audience. In this way we have observed the critical and self-reflective cycles central to changing theory and practice through FPAR.

Lastly, the development of relationships between co-researchers is central to the process of FPAR. This relational component fosters openness, honesty, a willingness to share personal experiences and engage in the emotions and experiences of others. The question I ask myself is this: How does one develop the rapport necessary for this work without influencing the actions of others? It is a complex issue because leadership is needed to get things done: create a framework for each session, lead activities and drama

games, facilitate script-writing etc., particularly when working with a group who has little to no TCC experience.

TCC facilitation is a form of “expert power” (French & Raven, 1959 as cited in Prolifroni, 2010, p. 9) defined as “the possession of knowledge that few others have or knowing what needs to be done at a specific moment in time” (p. 9). There are often times in the TCC process when, despite the facilitator’s best efforts at group consensus, the group will still defer to her. At this point, the facilitator knows that she must make a decision for the group in order to move forward in the creative process. This can be difficult since sharing the decision-making is crucial to success. For example, in my classroom practice I facilitated a TCC with a Drama 11 class who could not make decisions as a group. For the final two weeks of rehearsal and preparation, I removed myself from the collective while two student-selected facilitators led rehearsals. After removing who they saw as the expert or having expert power, the students began to make decisions as a group. The lesson here is that the facilitator does have authority within the process, that is a reality that one needs to work with when leading TCC, but as facilitator she needs to act responsibly and know when to defer to and/ or leave a decision in the participants’ hands.

The issue of power in the TCC process and specifically in relation to the role of the facilitator is something I plan to consider further, specifically in Chapter Five where I look at the implications of this research. What does power mean in the TCC process? What does it mean to have authority in the process? Are they the same? How can I check in with myself as I facilitate this kind of work? What purposes and uses does this power/ authority have? Is there a difference between shared creative control and shared power/ authority? Can power/ authority be shared?

Chapter Four: Discoveries in the Data

In Chapter Four of my thesis, I explore some broad themes and discoveries made while analyzing the transcripts of the audio recordings of the TCC sessions. As mentioned earlier, data in the form of video/ audio recordings, participant writing and field notes were collected; the audio recordings were transcribed. My analysis began by returning to my guiding questions:

- How can the experience of facilitating a Theatre Collective with female Internationally Educated Teachers inform and improve my practice as a secondary drama teacher?
- What are the ways that teachers can best facilitate Theatre Collective for social justice in their classrooms?

This helped me to re-identify what I was looking for: I wanted this “captured” experience of facilitating a TCC for social justice to improve my practice as a drama teacher and a TCC facilitator. I wanted to locate the moments of confirmation and difficult discoveries in my facilitation.

Next I began to read through the transcripts and agendas I had created for each session, seeking these moments, highlighting them in the text and then taking notes as I discovered them. Notes included remembered feelings from those moments in the sessions, new insights and/ or connections to these moments as well as suggestions of things I might do differently in the future.

I approached the data with the intent of easily identifying areas of strength and areas needing improvement in my facilitation. Instead I found a mess of moments which weren't as easy to identify or categorize as I had hoped, the ones where I learned something about the facilitation and/or the potential purposes or uses of TCC for the secondary drama teacher and for action research.

I noted that there are many moments in the process of TCC that are not impacted or influenced by the facilitator. Many factors determine the direction and life of a piece of collective theatre. For example, the mood and/ or attitude of participants involved, the weather that day or the air temperature, the combination of personalities that make up the group of participants, and so on. It is the facilitator's response to these factors that influence the creative process. What follows is a list of reflective discoveries from this facilitation experience in the interest of improving myself as a facilitator of TCC for social justice and thereby concurrently improving my teaching practice in the secondary drama classroom.

Moments of Confirmation

As it turns out, the things I feel I did well aren't as interesting to me as the areas requiring further consideration, reflection and possibly some change in practice. But I will take time to highlight a few positive discoveries or moments of confirmation that I feel are important to mention because of the crossover between this project and my classroom: mainly the importance of a safe creative atmosphere and building relationships.

Safe, creative atmosphere

Each facilitator will have her own style and procedure for working through the TCC process, but my experience has been that developing a creative atmosphere is important for every person involved. Creative atmosphere refers to the development of a safe space to share and create. This space is not geographical but located more often between and among people. A safe, creative atmosphere is an important part of the collaborative process and is initially established by the facilitator; how she presents herself and the text or the activity, how she eases the concerns and worries of participants, how she encourages people to get involved and create/perform. If the facilitator has been effective, the creative atmosphere soon gets taken up and propagated by the participants themselves, who then set the guidelines for things like attendance, levels of participation, depth of sharing and commitment to one another and the project, and most importantly, ways to resolve and work through conflict and negotiation as a text comes to life. By our second session, this group had successfully established expectations for and of one another (such as the use of a hand up in order to interrupt game play for questions/ concerns) as well as the capacity to play in front of one another with seemingly no concern for judgement.

Identifying a safe creative atmosphere is a tricky thing, mostly subjective, and of course, is more often about knowing when it does **not** exist. I can only write from my own perspective and experience, but what I saw and felt was a creative safe-spot happening amongst the members of the group. It began with intensely personal introductions in our first session, flourished during the introductory drama and improv games where having fun and letting go was easier than usual due to the confidential information we already knew about each other. Finally, it took root in the theatre games

and scene work where we trusted one another to create and re-create on stage some of the most personally oppressive moments experienced by members of the group.

A facilitator spends a lot of time asking if the group feels safe to create together. What more can I do or bring to the process to help these people feel safe enough to be themselves, to bring the honesty, vulnerability, discomfort or pain required to create a truthful moment onstage? The only answer I have ever been comfortable with myself, is to bring my own honesty or pain to the group, to experience what they are experiencing in that creative moment, that fear of sharing something so ultimately personal that you just might die of embarrassment or fear. In my classroom, I find it easy to connect creatively, simply because I have been in high school. I have lived or known someone going through almost any given high school experience. I had few experiences like the women in this group, particularly in relation to having my education and teaching experiences validated professionally in a different cultural context, those experiences being what originally brought us together and gave the project its momentum.

I believe this was the reason I worked so very hard to do what I could to develop a safe, creative atmosphere - because I didn't feel like I was creatively vulnerable... until the second session. We were replaying a scene where an immigrant woman was having difficulty enrolling her son in school, difficulty because the principal seemed to be giving her a bit of a run around. I was watching the piece, trying to connect with it, to recognize something of myself onstage, and when I did, I felt a little bit sick. I realized I wasn't the principal; obviously I wasn't the hijab-wearing Muslim mother... I was the secretary, the indirect oppressor, who knew exactly what was happening but lowered her head and continued with her work: the one who lets oppression exist because she doesn't stand up against it. This was probably the most significant personal discovery I

made about myself within this project. And there was my moment of vulnerability, the painful truth I had to share through this work. Now, I had my own reason for being part of this group and for nurturing a safe, creative atmosphere... because I had become, as Boal predicted, a protagonist with a story to tell as well and hopes for change in myself and others (1985).

Building relationships

As you might imagine, building relationship is linked to the development of a safe, creative atmosphere; one cannot exist without the other. Trustworthy, creative relationships need a safe, creative atmosphere to grow and flourish. Building relationships simultaneously occurs between the facilitator and the group, between the facilitator and each individual member of the group and among the group participants as well. At its best, relationships within a TCC allow facilitator and participants to co-create, where the needs, or ideas of one do not surpass the needs or ideas of another. When a group is collectively creating theatre, the power within the collaborative process circulates among and through each relationship, like a chain with “individuals simultaneously undergoing and exercising power” (Foucault, 1980, p.98) as they foster relationships and build community.

When it occurs, this transformation into a community alters the group’s consciousness and solidifies its purpose. In her work using TO with incarcerated youth, Conrad has experience the impact of affirmative relationships. She writes: “We also noticed that the overall work on this project displayed very positive relationships and much support for one another, a sense of community” (2010, p.135). I recently experienced one of these with a Drama 12 class where we were collectively developing

a puppet show script for an audience of 5-7 year olds. Early on in the scripting process we sat down to write a song together as part of the puppet show. The act of sitting around a piano with scripted scenes in hand and figuring out a way that music and lyrics might blend the scenes and characters made us feel connected. We came together, and everyone brought something to the script, a lyric, a dance move, a thought about being on tour, a line of dialogue or narration. And later, the experience of being on tour, walking from school to school, setting up and tearing down the puppet stage, singing, dancing and warming up together and performing through puppets solidified the fact that each of us was part of the process. That collective experience of developing, rehearsing and performing on tour created a sense of pride in one another, that we could create something together that was entertaining, interesting, and unique! That class was one of the closest Drama 12 classes I have had the pleasure of teaching. They looked out for another, defended the performing arts, and held each other accountable. Building relationships like these is the hopeful foundation for these extraordinary moments where individuals feel like they belong to the collective and the glimpse of a single vision comes briefly into view.

There are two moments from this IET project that, for me, confirm the importance of building relationships within a TCC: the very first session when we abandoned the agenda to exchange personal stories, to voice experiences and find common moments as teachers, women and theatre makers, and the day we shared a meal together in the middle of the third session.

In that first session, I began by introducing myself and explaining how I had gotten involved as facilitator on the project. I asked the women to do the same – I had allotted 15 minutes on the agenda for this activity, but within a few minutes the women

were no longer simply introducing themselves, they were telling their stories, very personal tales of moving to Nova Scotia and trying to teach/ work/ study. They had a very captive, engaged audience.

Admittedly, I had moments where I felt the session was getting away from me... I remember sitting in circle in a plastic chair listening to the stories being told and thinking/feeling two things: one) fear, I had lost control of the session, the first of many, the first of which would be a foundation for my thesis, things were not going as I had planned, then two) relief, I had lost control of the session, the first where it is usually difficult to get participants to talk, share, express, the first where the facilitator lays the relational groundwork for storytelling, things were not going as I had planned, and it was great! Looking back, that first session, the openness of the participants and my ability to let go of plans, it allowed us to become a creative unit. We cared about each other... and we cared about the work, but I think we cared about each other more, and the work was a vehicle for staying connected, for maintaining those developing relationships.

It is moments like this one, that have led me to connect this work with that of Michel Foucault. The relationships developed in TCC are paramount to its success, as is the way power circulates within these relationships. As briefly mentioned in Chapter One, this work has changed my view of power as it relates to TCC. I have increasingly found connections between his ideas and my own TCC experiences. To summarize (as I currently understand it), Foucault did not see power as an object to be given or taken, rather he saw power as a part of human relationships, power relations, where the human being was the subject of power. Foucault uses the word “conduct” to describe the way power designates relationships (2000, p. 341). To exercise power is to use a relationship

to conduct or govern others, to manage or structure the possible actions of others. The moment recounted above is ripe with this concept – my first response, fear, is because the members of the collective were not following my agenda, they were not behaving as I had planned. My second response was relief, the women in the collective had rebelled... they had taken over the direction of the work, I was no longer solely responsible, and the power had shifted in our partnership as collaborators within the TCC process. Foucault writes that “freedom must exist for power to be exerted” (342). There is no exercise of power without the possibility of “insubordination.” They had demonstrated the possibility of flight or escape and had altered the partnerships within our collective.

For the third session, we had decided to book time to discuss the work to date over a shared meal, an international potluck, where we not only discussed the research project and its future, but music we liked, our religious views, parenting, dating and marriage. It was a social time more than a time of research, but it fed us creatively/ socially as much as it filled our bellies too. It was in that session that I committed myself to the project beyond the scheduled four sessions/ four months: “In an unanticipated way I have become very attached to all of you and to this work” (Session 3, p. 25). And later: “These are amazing women! I just want to be around these women! So, uh, I am committed to whatever action you want to pursue. If my Master’s thesis comes and goes, and we’re still working, I’m ok with that” (Session 3, p. 25). We did not have a working script, but I wanted to continue work on this as did several of the participants. And to be honest, I’m not sure it was about the script for any of us, but about the way the project brought us together in this supportive, creative community of storytellers. The women

had stories to tell, and I had become passionate about those stories. They had become interested in theatre and each other, and we wanted to keep up the friendships.

These relationships allow participants to become part of a shared community, the kind of belonging that creates solidarity and encourages action and change. Morwenna Griffiths (2006) writes about how “arts-based work in schools has helped disadvantaged and/ or disaffected children engage in activities (both arts-based and others), and be able to lay the ground work for exercising voice and agency as they did so” (p.352). Drama can be an empowering encounter for anyone who may not feel successful in aspects of his/her life. “For collective action to get started, for voice to be exercised, there needs to be a public space in which people can come together” (Griffiths, 2006, p.358). A drama class or a collective performance piece is one of those public spaces, employed and shared by everyone when the facilitator can properly develop relationships of trust and openness.

Like the shared experience of a Drama class, the IET women share a similar life experience and now the expressive experience of this collective. The relationships developed as we work through this creative process enable us to support one another in our various challenges, both within and without the research. This support mechanism and the relationships developed create a sense of community among the women, simply knowing that others have had similar experiences and have a desire to create change, creates a sense of solidarity within the group. For example, the women shared in the disappointment and exasperation experienced by one of our members who had ongoing issues with her immigration status for a few years. When she was told she had to return to her country of origin while waiting for paperwork to be processed, this woman made a point of saying goodbye to the group and asking us to continue to move forward with

our work. Despite not sharing their experiences as immigrants, in the same way that as teacher I cannot share every student experience, I share this creative course of action with them, and as such become part of the community standing in solidarity against injustice.

Difficult Discoveries

It is painful to hold a mirror to one's teaching practice, and that is what this work has become. However, I know that the discomfort signals potential for growth and possibly that I am in fact a 'convert' as Freire put it, beginning to recognize my role in preventing others from becoming fully human (1993, p.42). So I forge on to embrace where I can improve both as a TCC facilitator and as a teacher.

I have identified many moments where opportunities were missed and have created four categories to organize my thoughts about the limitations in TCC facilitation: organization, personal expectations and/or influence, acknowledging cultural difference, and finally, recognizing silences within the process and among participants.

Organization

I am suitably organized both as a person and a professional; in the case of this TCC, I came to each session with an agenda of potential activities and the tools required to perform those activities. However, in looking back at the data, I can see areas where better organization would have maximized the process, specifically journaling, timing and transitions. It is not coincidence that these are areas where I am seeking improvement in my teaching practice as well.

I know journaling to be an important part of this process, but my approach to journaling doesn't support that. My questions are often simplistic and unimaginative, and though journaling was included on each session agenda, completion of the task of journaling was not given priority within the sessions.

As I neared the end of Session 1 (transcript, p. 18), I had a perfect opportunity to leave out a drama activity in order to give participants time to record their thoughts. With only fifteen minutes left in the session, I should have rescheduled the Puppetmaster game and closed the day with a focus on quiet writing and reflection. In their book, *Applied Theatre* (2009), Prendergast and Saxton support the act of reflection in this kind of theatre work: "When there is not time for reflection, the opportunity is lost and at the same time, we lose our ability to see ourselves and our actions in relations to our community and the environment" (p. 202).

In my own life, I value time to write and reflect, yet I did not make it a priority for the participants. As a result, most of the reflective writings completed by the women have not yielded much information, possibly because of the fact that I rushed participants and did not give them enough time to respond in depth. This happens in my classroom sometimes – I want students to think about what they are experiencing or learning, but I don't consistently create an environment where they can do that. I forgot to bring journals for the second session, which I confessed to the women as I introduced the agenda for that day (transcript, p. 1), and I skipped journaling entirely in Session 3 despite its inclusion in the agenda. These are unfortunate oversights that suggest I don't value reflection, when I know the TCC process requires personal insight from the participants through individual writing and group discussion: "The act of simply thinking about something with other people can enable insights that were not apparent

while inside the experience; when reflection happens together, shared insights deepen and extend that experience” (Prendergast and Saxton, 2009, p.202).

Additionally, I should have emphasized the unimportance of proper spelling, grammar and punctuation since that seemed to be a concern for some participants (transcript, p. 20), particularly given the fact that most were using English as an additional language. As well, I might have suggested the women respond in the language of their choice to facilitate personal expression through writing. Like students, the women in the TCC worried about the impression their mistakes would make, when I am only interested in the ideas and experiences they are recording. I should have clarified that point.

As well, I can see problems with timing and transitions, two areas of great importance as a facilitator and teacher. One must know when to stop an activity and when to let it run its course, despite what is scheduled. The same goes for discussion, sometimes the group needs to talk at length, and sometimes people are ready for action.

There are multiple times in the data, where moments of dialogue are lost because so many people are talking at the same time (for example, Session 2, p. 6, 14, 16 & 21). In my classroom I would request the use of “hands up,” and then I would call upon each student in turn, but that didn’t feel like an option since I saw these women as colleagues not students. In Session Two, (transcript, p. 14-15), there is a moment where everyone is talking at once, and it is impossible to decipher what is being said by whom: Speaker unknown - “It’s interesting that we see administration and their relationship to students in a very... (several people talking). We don’t have principal, vice principal that work in clubs or coaches, or – its always about business.” I should have brought a “talking stick”, an item which when held gives the holder the right to speak, a tool often used in

my drama classroom to direct discussions among participants. In retrospect, such a tool might have organized the verbal sharing and made it easier for everyone to hear and be heard.

In Session Three, we returned to scenes we had created using Boal's *Breaking the Oppression* (transcript, p. 5); unfortunately some participants who had performed in these scenes in Session Two were absent. Whenever possible, improvised scene work should be completed before the end of a session – it takes time and causes confusion when impromptu scenes need to be refreshed and re-staged with different performers. The facilitator should always plan and execute with absences in mind so that time is used appropriately.

Personal influence/ expectations

The theme of Personal Influence/ Expectations can be troublesome in TCC– the facilitator must expect something, otherwise the creative process could not exist. However, that expectation must be open-ended and be easily remodelled by the participants as co-creation occurs. I think I begin every collective with a very open mind, but there is inevitably a moment where something specific begins to take shape in my imagination - this is why I have entitled this section personal expectations/ influence. I have great difficulty not sharing those ideas with the group, especially in the case of this project, since I felt most of the ideas coming to me were theatrically important, and came from more theatrical experience than some of the participants.¹⁵

¹⁵ For example, as the group came to consensus around the theme of board game for the structure of their script, I had an onslaught of ideas about how that might look or be staged: a character called the board master who controlled the movement of the player and was bathed in spotlight upstage right, a pair of

Perhaps it is my role as a drama teacher that makes me feel that the participants in TCC need to come to most conclusions on their own. Regardless, when I share too much or too often I feel like I have inappropriately affected the process. For example, in Session One (transcript, p. 6-7), as I moved from introductions to warm ups, I talked too much. I went over the agenda, talked about my expectations for the session (“Well, what I had down in my plan book is very different from what’s happening, but the reality of collective work is that you have to let it evolve.” p. 6), listed what I wanted to accomplish (“...but at the same time you want to make sure we accomplish some things” then I list off and describe various activities such as warm up, drama activities and journaling, p. 6), making it all too clear that, in my opinion, success for the day was built on how far we got through the agenda. This kind of list-making can be a distraction for participants who track progress via a checklist and it suggests there is no room for spontaneity or diversion.

In my classroom, I am much better at being like Alice and following the white rabbit to discover the unexpected. In this experience, I felt the pressure of being a first-time researcher using an arts-based research method that some of my peers felt unsure of, all the while compelled to impress my thesis advisor who was supervising the project. I didn’t feel like the expert despite the fact that everyone kept referring to me as such.

Later in Session One, I led an activity by assuming everyone felt comfortable enough to break down physical barriers by working in partners (transcript, p. 9). Then in Session Two, I do some name-dropping by crediting Boal with the development of an

enormous dice that the player would physically struggle to pick up and toss, a pathway on the stage that would mimic the blocks followed around the board by a player’s piece, etc.

activity we are about to do, without even briefly explaining who Boal is and how he is influencing the project (transcript, p. 1): “And then we’re going to do something today called Image Theatre... This is another Boal technique.”

In Session Three, I interrupt scene work to teach a couple of theatre conventions: facing the audience and beginning and ending with curtain or scene (transcript, p. 11). In this case, the conventions are helpful but not necessary to create the scenes. If theatre conventions become important to the work (particularly work intended for an audience), then they should be taught prior to scene work and not used as a means to interrupt the creative flow of the work.

As well, I have a habit of projecting my opinion onto an activity. Reading the transcripts has made me realize I often do this, both within this project and in TCC in my classroom. After a game of “*Yes!*”¹⁶ in Session Two, I asked “How many of you get a little anxious when the person starts walking toward you? Anybody? Why do you think...” (transcript, p. 6). I followed the participant responses with my own thoughts: “Do you think it has to do with, I don’t know – do you think it has to do with um, being a woman?” I know this is a result of connections I am making in my own mind as the games play out, but I’m not sure there’s a place for my connections at this time, in this work. If another member of the circle had brought this up, I would have felt completely fine with it, but I’m not sure it’s appropriate for me to be making observations at this point, maybe once everyone else has shared first.

¹⁶ *Yes!* is an improv warm up where participants stand in a circle and make eye contact in order to communicate a location switch. Player 1 makes eye contact with Player 2, silently requesting her spot in the circle. Player 2 responds with the word Yes. Once Player 1 receives affirmation, she begins to move toward Player 2, who is now looking to make eye contact with a third player, now requesting that spot in the circle. Once Player 3 says Yes!, Player 2 begins to move toward Player 3, and so on. Goals are to communicate using eye contact, develop a rhythm of speech and movement, practice giving and receiving offers and have all players actively engaged.

Another example of allowing personal opinions and thoughts to interfere was in Session Four when we began writing a script and planning a workshop with our research materials. I come from an improv background, and one of the main tenets of that philosophy is to “always say yes”; to say no is to block the offer of another player and to prevent the story from advancing. This is a concept that is meant to be part of the improviser’s day to day experiences as much as her stage experiences. In Session Four, as we discuss options for combining a performance with a workshop, someone suggests a return to Forum Theatre, a technique we had used earlier in the project during Sessions Two and Three:

Speaker 1: But I remember the other day, like you come (?) audience join, jump in, make a change like (...).

Aren: Yeah. That’s a whole, that’s a whole ‘nother kettle of fish, if you want to write a (?) theatre piece. You know how we did the scenes with (?)’s story, where uh Marlah stepped out of the audience and changed things? We could totally use that. But that’s, up to this point, that’s not really what we talked about. There’s no reason we couldn’t have an audience member step in and replay some of those scenes.

Speaker 2: You know when it would be interesting to have that, though, would be after the workshops.

Aren: *(to Speaker 1)* Yes. In the smaller, you mean in the small workshops.

I am incredibly embarrassed by my response; it feels rude and disenfranchising. It is not up to me to decide what goes and what stays in the process. It is up to the group as a whole. And in this moment, as I voiced my thoughts on the suggestion, I was not open to the offer being made by the “other player,” rather I blocked her creativity, her contribution because I was already beginning to envision something physical for the script. I used my authority to my advantage because I preferred the suggestions made prior to this one. I had become exactly what these women were fighting against: people

who were saying no, denying their professional expertise, implying they weren't good enough.

It's so important that I recognize this tendency and figure out how to avoid making it again. How can I resist using my authority to get what I want? Even if that desire is only a better script or performance? Who decides what's better anyway? This is something I will continue to consider in order to clarify the facilitator's purpose and develop strategies for more unbiased facilitation of TCC.

In Session Three, I discovered that the participants were really concerned with how this project fit into my thesis. We had reached a point in our work where the scheduled sessions were over, but there was the potential of more work to be done. For example, to take the discoveries we had made through improv and Boal techniques and move towards action by collectively creating a piece about their shared experiences. This had been part of the project's initial design but was abandoned when participants showed greater interest in scene work and discussion. When discussing this at the end of Session Three (transcript, p. 25-26), one of the first questions to come up was: "Would that be different from your Master's work?" My response was: "Not necessarily, but it might be. It might diverge but I'm still willing to do it." Another participant asked: "What is your timeline, in terms of your Masters? If we do things after it, is that going to be ok? Are you still going to be involved, even if your Master's is over?" My answer then and now is yes.

In an unanticipated way, I had become very attached to the work and the women. I wanted to be part of a process that told their collective tale. The fact that they were entertaining further work on this project was thrilling, but one thing did bother me. They seemed to think that they needed me to move forward, that they weren't telling their

stories for their own purposes. By Session Four, I was actively writing the script on my own. They gave their input, helped to edit and frame what was going into the script, but my words were telling the story of their lives, and this bothered me on a number of levels: What were they afraid of? Who was I to take responsibility for telling their collective story? What gave me the right to do so? Though I felt connected to these women, my experience of teaching had been sheltered and naïve. And why weren't they taking ownership of the project? Was I not giving them enough of a sense of empowerment? Was I controlling too much? Why did they feel they needed my leadership when it was their stories and experiences they wished to be seen and heard?

A clue came from dialogue found in the transcript from Session Three. One participant said: "People would usually love it when somebody takes the lead" (p. 26). Another said: "You still have a few techniques to be more efficient in bringing the stories... in terms of voice projection or how to put our bodies – you know how you, in terms of, ok this is better, being mindful of if we do have an audience. Like those kinds of techniques that would help making the scene, all scenes, more efficient" (p. 27). They had given me French & Raven's "expert power" (1959, as cited in Prolifroni, 2010, p. 9) because we were working in an area where they felt inexperienced. Could I/ should I use my experience to help them publish their experiences? Isn't that too a case of power and authority? What might my agenda be for doing so? Wasn't it assumptive to believe that I could use my privilege to help? Might it be a hindrance?

I'm still struggling with those questions. Even now with a performance of the final script at the ICRN conference and the presentation of a paper at CSSE behind us, and some very useful and positive feedback from the audience, I'm still not sure it was my place to be part of the work. Did I love it? Absolutely! I believe in the creative

process so strongly, particularly TCC, that I believe it can effect change. But somehow, I feel like my involvement in the telling of these stories made me seem like a benefactor, like someone who took pity on these women and agreed to “help” them. They didn’t need my help.... I needed them to have a subject for my thesis. And so I struggle with who helped whom? I now have a thesis and some important personal insights. What did these women get out of their time and effort? Certainly not the changes they had hoped for, such as more ethical and equal hiring practices for international teachers. At most, they got to commiserate, perform their stories and be part of a shared community. And don’t get me wrong, those are good things, but are they enough?

Acknowledging cultural difference

In addition to questioning my involvement, I discovered moments where I had trouble acknowledging the cultural differences among us, typically differences in language/ speech, social practices and sometimes, food.

I remember being very aware of my language and word choice in the first session - I had not yet developed familiarity or a relationship with these women and the differences that separated us seemed enormous. Looking back on the transcripts from Session One, I was using language that was casual/ sarcastic in an effort to make the women feel safe and comfortable. Instead of saying “you may want to trade spots in the circle”, I chose “if you get sick of your partner” or the very sexist “you guys” instead of “folks” (which is what I use in my classroom in order make boys and girls feel equally addressed).

Often the language difference was not what I said but how I used my words to share an idea, such as negativity or sarcasm. Pessimism pervades my language at times

as well, such as a discussion about eye contact where I refer to cultural codes associated with eye contact as “baggage” or “rules,” such a negative selection of terms.. In Session Two, I facilitate discussion of Image Theatre pieces by asking “Is there anything wrong, anything missing?” Framing the conversation with these questions suggests there is a correct way to create these scenes and in fact, there is no single way to approach any of Boal’s techniques. Later on in that session, I locate a better selection of words for facilitating discussion of Image Theatre, asking “Is there anything you would add or change?”

All of these examples remind me of what Kamler & Threadgold (2003) suggest: the researcher should anticipate and plan for the complexity of cultural difference and cultural assumptions (p.146). Within this research project (and in my current and future classroom practice), I should have taken more time to think about my use of language, choosing more neutral words and phrases to make all participants comfortable and open to the activities. I have no sense that those involved were uncomfortable or had trouble understanding my instructions, but it is the facilitator’s responsibility to make all participants feel like they are a welcome part of the collective.

Silences within the process and among participants

To my own surprise, the data revealed moments of silence within the collective, blind spots where a topic seemed to be avoided or a question never asked. When this idea was brought to my attention, I was caught off guard, truly surprised by this observation, since the relationships within the collective seemed to function so well. There was a genuine sense that we cared for one another, and I still believe that to be actual. However, in retrospect, I can see that although we brought gender and origin into

the discussion, we neglected sexual orientation and religion (and perhaps other topics I have not yet identified), and that often conversation was dominated by the more competent English speakers in the group.

While brainstorming character ideas for the script, one participant had this to say:

Whether it's only a spouse but, or they also have kids, it means you're not on your own. You actually have people depending on you. So you also have that, you know what I mean? There's a difference in going to another country on your own and going with spouse – like, a spouse could possibly help you, which is great. But if you're also responsible for children, in a sense, quite often it's the mother who has more responsibility in terms of the upbringing of the children. Not to say that I agree or disagree with it, um but traditionally in terms of how society's been divided, a lot of time, women are taking care a lot of their children. (transcript, Session 4, p. 11)

In this series of statements, there's an assumption that all the participants are heterosexual and that among those who are, the women are responsible for childcare. No one among us speaks up to add that some participants might have same sex partners to care for; no one mentions that some fathers are responsible for childcare. In retrospect, this is particularly disturbing since not all of the participants were heterosexual, and my own husband was caring for our infant son while I attended these sessions.

As well, almost all discussion is dominated by the most competent English speakers, a participant from Europe, another from a country in the Commonwealth Nations, and of course, myself. Most of what I share is instruction or personal thought/opinion, the former being necessary while the latter being shared perhaps too often (as previously discussed). However, for the other two participants, there are no objections when they appear to speak on behalf of the group.

Another moment where the diversity of these women is ignored takes place in Session Four; we brainstormed around the concept of board games as a structure for the

emerging script. Here we focused on what are seemingly North American games such as Monopoly, PayDay, Trouble, Snakes & Ladders, The Game of Life, and so on. As you can imagine, this conversation is dominated by fluent English speakers and those who have been in Canada the longest. There is an effort to explain the rules or purpose of games unfamiliar to some members of the group (transcript, Session Four, p. 11-18) and a few questions about popular games from various countries, but the fact remains: despite the popularity of the concept of a board game among the participants, it appears to be an incredibly North American frame of reference for a performance meant to represent a wide array of cultures.

As discussed in the sections above, the opportunity to analyse my own performance as a TCC facilitator has given two wonderful tools with which I can approach future TCC facilitation in my secondary drama classroom: 1) I have a clearer picture of my strengths and weaknesses as a facilitator. I feel I am very good at developing a safe, creative atmosphere where participants feel able to build relationships and thus, publish their stories and experiences on stage. But I need to locate and implement some new structures into my TCC facilitation to improve its overall delivery and effectiveness if I intend to continue to use it as an exploration of social justice. 2) I will never be an unbiased TCC facilitator and the authority located in the TCC process can never be truly shared equally among participants. Regardless of how aware I am of my own background, biases and life experiences, regardless of how I try to share the authority equally with those involved, there is still a struggle around leadership within the process (sometimes this can mean the participants want more or the facilitator wants less - there is constant disequilibrium). This means I must persistently examine my

thoughts and actions as I continue to facilitate TCC in my classroom. In this way, I hope to continue to move towards a teaching practice that uses theatre to explore and create possibilities for social justice for my students and their community.

Chapter Five: This Much I Know

A One-Act play by Aren A. Morris

Character list:

Female voice

Teacher

Parent

Principal

Woman 1

Woman 2

Woman 3

Silhouettes: Figure 1 (principal)
Figure 2 (woman wearing hijab)
Figure 3 (boy)
Figure 4 (secretary)

The stage is in darkness, a voice is heard.

Female voice: This began because I had something to prove - (*Three spotlights fade in as a female figure enters, the teacher. The voice continues.*) mostly to the people I worked with, some teachers and administrators who discounted the impact or importance of what I was teaching... (*the figure enters the first circle of light and looks up wistfully, the speaker pauses*), in some ways to the parents of the community I taught in who didn't understand why I took my classroom and its content so seriously... (*the figure enters the second circle of light and looks straight ahead with determination, the speaker pauses*) but also to myself. I saw young men and women changing everyday in my classroom, (*the figure enters the third and final circle of light, she continues to look forward with a small smile on her face*) growing, opening up their minds to the experiences of others... playing with possibilities. (*She drops the smile and looks at her feet*) I knew I was doing good things in my classroom, my students knew it too... why couldn't the others – admin, teachers, parents- why couldn't they see it? (*Lights out*)

Interviews

A second actor enters with two chairs. They sit in profile to the audience but facing each other. Lights on.

Parent: So you're the drama teacher? My son is really enjoying your class. In fact, yours is the only class he talks about when we ask him how school is going.

Teacher: Oh, well, I'm glad he's enjoying it. He's doing well.

Parent: To be honest, I'm surprised. I never thought something like this would interest him. He's always been more interested in sports – he's played basketball and volleyball since junior high.

Teacher: Well, they're not exclusive, athletics and dramatics. It may be the team atmosphere that he enjoys most. Many athletes find that the trust and commitment required in the theatre parallels what required in team sports. Plus I think he's showing immense personal growth in his ability to self-express.

Parent: Umhmmmm. We are happy to support his budding interest in performance, so long as it doesn't interfere with his academic and athletic endeavours.

Teacher: I assure you this course is taught as diligently as any other in the school. It is considered an academic course, sir, and the students work very hard to do well.

Parent: The problem now is that our son would rather go to theatre camp than basketball camp this summer.

Teacher: That's great. There are several I can suggest.

Parent: Hold on a minute, we haven't agreed to it just yet.

Teacher: I'm sure the cost is comparable to sports camps.

Parent: It is, yes, but we can't see investing in something as frivolous as an acting camp. We both know he is not going to be an actor. What are the odds of making it in the entertainment business? At least he can use his athletic skills for the rest of his life. We were hoping you might be able to speak with him about this and dissuade him from going any further with this acting business.

Teacher: I don't think your son wants to act professionally... he's mentioned working with the elderly, some sort of recreational therapy. He's also talked about teaching English or History. But it doesn't matter what career he chooses, his experiences as part of a creative collective in Drama class will give him skills to work with others for the rest of his life: to communicate better, to negotiate and handle conflict in positive ways, to share ideas and incorporate the ideas of others, to listen, to present, to give and receive constructive criticism. Regardless of where life takes him, he can use these skills.

Parent: So, you won't speak with him then?

Teacher: I don't think it's my place to have that conversation with your son. My heart wouldn't be in it. I think he's learning a lot about himself right now, and I'd love to see that continue. He's a good kid and he's just trying to figure himself out. He's soaking up life's options. I think it's alright to give him some leeway for now.

Parent: Well, Miss, he's not your son. I appreciate your interest in him, but he won't be continuing with the Drama program next year, and he will not be trying out for the musical. Thank you for your time. (*exits*)

Teacher: (*sadly*) My pleasure. (*she stands to face the audience*)

This Much I Know

Teacher: I started using Collective Creation in my second year of teaching drama. My early attempts were lucky at best. I copied the styles of other teachers and theatre companies who used collective to develop scripts. It took me some time to develop a system that worked for me, and in the end my approach to Collective Creation blended improvisation and Boalean drama games. After several successful pieces, including a bilingual piece about identity, one about a student experience with psychosis and another about being a trans-gendered teenager, I felt confident I had developed a system that worked; a process of creation that allowed students to make theatre and experience social justice at the same time. (*she takes a seat in the other chair, another character enters, clearly her principal, and takes the other seat*)

A World of No

Principal: What's this about taking a play to the junior highs?

Teacher: Well, the students have written and produced a play about trans-gender... specifically about the experience of a Grade Twelve girl who decides to live and dress as a boy for a year in order to determine if she truly wants sexual reconstructive surgery. The students are really excited about the piece.

Principal: Uh huh. Sounds complicated. Are you sure this topic is something that junior high students can handle?

Teacher: That was just one possibility. I mean, yes, I think it's an important topic for the Grade Nines to consider. We have two trans-gendered individuals in our community and development of the play has really opened up channels of communication and understanding for our students. We'd like it to continue to make an impact. Maybe presentation at a school assembly for our students?

Principal: Well, I'll have to think about it. It seems like an awful chance to take... opening a can of worms like that. What if students or parents are offended?

Teacher: I've emailed you a copy of the script. I assure you it is very sensitive... all of your questions are questions we have had too. The students have some really good solutions. Perhaps you could come to a class and open up dialogue about your concerns...

Principal: No, I think not. It's best the adults make these kinds of decisions and right now, I'm not convinced it's a good time to take this outside school walls. You and your

students can present the piece as an evening event in the school cafeteria, 50 seats, friends and families of students by invitation.

Teacher: Well, thank you... but we were hoping to take it to a much broader audience. The students want to share what they have learned, how they've grown.

Principal: Not right now. I appreciate your argument, but my decision is final. Thank you Miss.

Teacher: *(standing with uncertainty, speaking hesitantly)* Thank you. *(Lights out, Principal exits with a chair)*

Female voice: *(in the dark)* Yes, I admit, it all began for selfish reasons but it continued because of the project... *(Lights on)*

Invitation

Teacher: Once a MAEd student, I was invited to facilitate a research project where the process of Theatre Collective Creation was used to develop a play with a group of female internationally educated teachers from around the world who now lived in Nova Scotia. Of course, I accepted the opportunity to try this process in a different context, knowing that I would be able to use the experience as fodder for my thesis. I knew the process of a theatre collective would give these women the opportunity to share their stories in a public forum. I accepted eagerly, and our work together began.

Expertise

Several women enter, each carrying a chair which they place in a semi-circle. The teacher sits in the empty chair.

Teacher: And so, I'd like to know where you want to go next? Our time together for this research project is over, but I feel like there is momentum in the group that remains unexplored. Do you want to keep working on this script and find an audience?

Woman 1: Do you? I think that is the actual question. How will this fit into your thesis if we continue? How will future work factor into your thesis?

Woman 2: Can you? I mean to say, that we are very good with coming up with ideas but we need you to help bring them to life theatrically. These are our stories but we need a storyteller who understands the medium and that is you.

Woman 3: Will you?

Teacher: I am happy to continue working with you on this project. I have grown attached to this play and to each of you, and I want to see your stories told... but you don't need me. These are your experiences, and I am so far from almost all of them.

Your lives are building this script; your words are bringing the protagonist to life¹⁷. I would love to keep working with you but not because you need me. You are intelligent, capable women... I would like to keep working on this script because I need you... without you I cannot tell this story with any truth.

Woman 3: Will you help us write it?

Teacher: (*hanging her head, it's clear the point has been missed.*) Yes. Of course, I will help you write it. (*She smiles at the women, lights out.*)

Female voice: (*in the dark*) I expected the process to impact these women. I knew amazing things were happening in my classroom: students' lives and opinions were being changed through the collective creation of theatre. I knew it could do something positive for this group of women too. What I didn't know was how I would be impacted as well.

Memoirs

The three women return. One is carrying a large book. In huge font it reads: MY THESIS. She passes it to the teacher who stands up and approaches the audience. They stand around her.

Teacher: (*opening the text and reading a passage*) Regardless, I believe that one result of this project is that TCC is a means of exploring and gaining insight about privilege, both from a first person point of view (the lived experience of the participant actors) as well as from a third person perspective (being part of the drama where the participant actor in role experiences oppression and/ or the participant audience observe oppressive situations); both experiences are a vital part of drama education for high school students and initial steps towards transformation of individuals and society. (*She closes the book with satisfaction*)

Woman 1: We were asked to share our experiences of oppression in educational settings, to develop a scene depicting that experience, enact the scene then re-enact it in a way that gave a sense of resolution or power.

Woman 2: One woman's scene was about enrolling her son in school. The first time we ran the scene, the principal refused to enrol her son, and she backed off without recourse. We ran the scene a few times and anyone who wanted to take on this woman's character and find a solution was encouraged to do so. Finally, the woman who had originally contributed this scene reassumed her role and this time respectfully stood up to the principal, articulating her suspicions that the only reason he refused to enrol her son was because she was Muslim and wearing a hijab.

¹⁷ See Appendix II to read the script, collectively developed by the IET women, entitled *The Name of the Game*.

Woman 3: “Perhaps I am reading too much into her reaction, but it felt to me as though this method of exploring our experiences touched on something that we have been stripped of during our efforts to assimilate into a predominantly White culture – our sense of worth, our sense of power” (Morris, Nemorin, Amin, Walsh & Abaga, 2009, p.1).

Each woman shares a moment of departure with the teacher, then collects her chair as she exits. Lights fade out, leaving the teacher bathed in a spotlight downstage center. She looks out into the audience.

Replay

A scrim upstage is lit from behind revealing a series of figures who act out the teacher’s story.

Teacher: Same scene. My experience... (*Actors behind scrim break out into action, separating themselves then exiting the scrim*) Mother trying to enrol her son in high school. She wears a hijab.

A woman and her son enter from stage right.

She had encountered some problems with the principal once he met her in person

A man enters from stage left, shakes hands with the woman then turns his back on her.

We were replaying the scene, giving the woman who had this experience the opportunity to handle things differently. She was struggling to get what she wanted (*the woman gestures angrily towards the principal*). It was in the middle of another replay that I found my connection to the scene.

Another woman enters and places herself in profile between the woman and the principal with apologetic body language.

I had never had an oppressive experience like this woman (*the woman and her son exit stage right*), nor had I been the direct oppressor like the principal (*he exits stage left*).

But I recognized myself in the school secretary (*she turns to face audience, feet hip width apart, arms at her side*)... she was doing exactly what the principal asked of her, despite knowing it was wrong... (*the teacher also faces audience, feet hip width apart, arms at her side*).

The teacher and the silhouetted woman react in tandem during the following:

...and as such (*pose of surprise*) she was part of the oppression (*pose of guilt*). Even if it felt wrong (*pose of anguish, the silhouetted woman freezes*).

For the first time, despite thinking of myself as a fair, open-minded person, I was made aware of my implicit involvement in biased behaviour. I'm not sure why this was made clear to me... perhaps the immediacy of improvised theatre, the raw emotion displayed by the woman in scene, the defining nature of this moment, who knows? But my mind had begun to replay curious moments in my classroom, casting some shadows I had not previously noticed. (*Lights out behind the scrim*)

This Much I Know III

Teacher: Here is what I learned... here is the gem I want to share with other drama teachers, makers of theatre, pursuers of social justice... (*she pulls her chair into the circle of light but does not take a seat*) as facilitator, you will face the complications of power within this process... you will face the challenges of authority. There is no collective creation without these two stimuli. It took me a while to accept this. *No, no*, I thought, *the location of power in this process is something I can give up, share, pass on to others.*

But examining my previous collective experiences as well as the collective created with the IETs has shown me that invariably, there exists in this process both power and authority, however, I no longer believe them to be the same thing. Here is how I am beginning to see the process of collective creation:

As facilitator of TCC, I have authority within the process. In fact, I must, so the work can move forward. As a teacher in my classroom, I have more authority than my students, and once again, I need this authority to maintain a safe, learning environment. In these situations, authority must exist for everyone's benefit.

Of course, power exists in these scenarios too, however I no longer see it as a tangible object, given and taken away at the whim of the beholder. I am beginning to believe that it lives within the messiness of human relationships, continually in motion, it surfs relationships like waves, using the constant negotiation among and between people as a means to change, evolve and act. Relational power can be abused... I can act upon another person and influence their actions via our relationship, meaning that power exists within our relationship and our actions upon one another.

This understanding of authority and power is crucial to future best practice as a drama teacher. Accept your authority and use it carefully. Acknowledge that as part of the process, you will use your relationships to influence the piece, but so will the others you work with... (*She slowly accepts this idea, then takes a seat in the chair*) by accepting where you sit in the process you open it up for others to pull a chair up to the table as well. (*She relaxes in the chair and smiles.*)

Female voice: (*as teacher exits, the chair remains empty*) And that was how it ended... I had gone from a young teacher with an axe to grind to an experienced educator who had nothing to prove to others, merely comfort in the knowledge that this process effects change... in my students, in the women who were part of the project, and surely most of all, within me.

Lights fade to black. Exeunt.

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Appendix I

Ethics Certificate



University Research Ethics Board

UNIVERSITY RESEARCH ETHICS BOARD

Certificate of Research Ethics Clearance


[Renewal]

Title of project: *A Collective Creation*
Researcher(s): Susan Walsh
Supervisor (if applicable): n/a
Co-Investigators: Susan Brigham, Aren Morris

File #: 2008-039

The University Research Ethics Board (UREB) has reviewed the above named proposal and confirms that it respects the *Tri-Council Policy Statement* and the *MSPU Policies and Procedures: Ethics Review of Research Involving Humans* regarding the ethics of research involving human participants.

This certificate of approval is valid one year from the date of issue. Renewals are available for up to two years in addition to the initial year and are contingent upon an annual submission to the UREB of a written request for renewal accompanied by a satisfactory annual ethics report thirty days prior to the expiry date as listed below. A final report is required within 30 days of expiry. Researchers are reminded that any changes to approved protocol must be reviewed and approved by the UREB prior to their implementation.


Dr. Michelle Eskritt, Chair
University Research Ethics Board (UREB)

October 11, 2011
Effective Date

[Expires: November 11, 2012]

Renewal is contingent upon submission to the UREB of a written request for renewal accompanied by a satisfactory annual ethics report thirty days prior to expiry.

Appendix II

The Name of the Game Internationally Educated Teachers Collective

Character list:

Board Master, she who controls everything, including the game

Mei Lee, our protagonist, at first timid but grows more determined with each trial

Counsellor, thinks she is helping Mei Li

Teacher One, sarcastic

Teacher Two, sympathetic

Teacher Three, angry

Student, with a poor attitude

Vice Principal, makes excuses

Principal, noncommittal and ambiguous

Scholar, a bit of a know-it-all

Player Two, Bissie, male IET from Zimbabwe

Player Three, Aniela, a female IET from Poland

The stage is dark and appears to be empty with the exception of a low lit podium USL. A well-dressed woman steps up to the podium. She picks up a head mic and puts it on.

BOARD MASTER: Welcome to another round of “The Name of the Game,” where we put you, the player, through a series of challenging life events in order to see if you will achieve your dream. I am your BOARD MASTER, in charge and in control of all you see here. Join with me to welcome today’s player, selected from our studio audience (*reaches into a large hat, drawing a random name, reading from the card*). She comes to us from China, where she was a high school English teacher. Recently immigrated to Nova Scotia with her husband and daughter, she finds herself looking for a job in our school board. She likes gardening and a good cup of hot tea. Please welcome, Mei Li (*a hanging APPLAUSE sign lights up USC*).

Lights off on BM. Lights come up DSR where MEI LI stands upon a large mat that says START.

ML: (*timidly*) Hello.

BM: (*as if the voice of God*) Hello Mei. Are you ready?

ML: Ready for what?

BM: Ready to play “The Name of the Game.” What is your dream?

ML: I have many dreams, some are for my family and others are for myself.

BM: What do you dream for yourself, Mei?

ML: In China, I used to be a teacher... I loved my job and my students. And now, well, I was told that I cannot teach here in Nova Scotia. I feel lost.

BM: Mmmmmhmmmm. Let's check in with the vital stats board.

A projection appears on the US wall displaying a mildly fluctuating bar graph. There are 4 bars; the first three are labelled finances, relationships and self-perception. All three of these are high. The last bar is mysteriously unlabelled but is relatively low compared to the others.

ML: Vital stats? What do you mean?

BM: This graph represents you, Mei Lee, and your current health. Your finances are in good standing, your relationships with family, friends, co-workers, all seem to be doing well... and you feel good about yourself, don't you?

ML: Sure... but what is the last bar? What does it measure?

BM: Oh, we don't want to talk about that one, do we?

ML: Why not? It's the lowest one. I'm curious.

BM: Rest assured it won't be low for long. What are your dreams?

ML: I dream of standing in front of students again. I dream of teaching.

BM: Well then, I suggest you roll the die.

A huge die is lit from above at CS. Mei walks slowly to the die. She struggles to pick it up and toss it.

BM: Having a hard time?

Mei nods.

BM: Allow me to help you. *(BM appears behind the die. She simply picks up the die and rotates it so it lands on a 4.)* Move forward 4 spaces.

ML hops 4 spaces forward. There is an envelope attached to this space. ML kneels down and picks it up.

ML: Is this for me?

BM: You bet it is. Open it up and read aloud what you find inside.

ML: *(pulling a card out of the letter and reading aloud)* Take a Chance.

BM: That's right Mei. You've landed on Take a Chance. What does the back of your card say?

ML: (*flipping over the card and reading aloud*) Wanna teach? Take a chance and return to school in order to upgrade. Move forward 6 spaces to the Masters of Education program at I.O.U.U. Remain in school for one year and miss a turn.

A school desk DSL is lit from above. BM passes a heavy bookbag to ML who puts it on, almost collapsing from the weight. She takes a seat in the chair. Lights flicker and briefly cut out. When they return we see ML in a career counsellor's office.

COUNSELLOR: (*seated across from ML*) How can I help you today?

ML: I do need some help. I find myself in a difficult situation.

COUNSELLOR: Yes, go on.

ML: I have begun to question myself as a teacher.

COUNSELLOR: Why?

ML: Recently, there was an incident with a student in my class. Her parents came to see my principal and wanted to transfer their daughter to another class simply because the other teacher is white.

COUNSELLOR: Do you think you are as good as the other teacher?

ML: I believed that I was as good, before... but now I have started to doubt myself.

COUNSELLOR: Do you think you know as much as the other teacher, in terms of education theory and teaching methodology?

ML: I think so. I got my Masters degree here in Canada. I got very good grades.

COUNSELLOR: Then why are you uncertain now?

ML: It seems that the students or their parents do not like me as much as they like the other teachers.

COUNSELLOR: What other teachers?

ML: Teachers from here.

COUNSELLOR: Were you a good teacher in China? Did you ever question yourself in China?

ML: I didn't. I was one of the best teachers in my school. Actually the students were very sad when I had to leave them.

COUNSELLOR: Do you think you were a better teacher in China?

ML: Yes. I felt better about myself. I was very confident and happy.

COUNSELLOR: Then why did you come to Canada?

ML: I heard many good things about Canada, that it was a peaceful place where they embraced diverse cultures. I heard of the immigration policy; that it supported integration and settlement. I wanted to have a better life.

COUNSELLOR: But you are not happy here. Do you think you would ever be as happy as when you were in China?

ML: I'm not sure.

COUNSELLOR: Then why not go back to China?

ML: I don't know. It took so much work to get here. I knew there would be obstacles but now I feel lost.

COUNSELLOR: Maybe you'd like to consider doing something else? (*handing her a voluminous text entitled with "Very big list of jobs of Canada"*)

SCHOLAR: (*enters quickly*) Immigrants in both the family class and independent (economic) categories possess levels of educational attainment above the average of Canadianborn men and women (Lochhead & Mackenzie, 2005). Yet, immigrants' credentials and work experience obtained outside Canada are valued less than credentials and experience of comparable Canadian-born people (Brigham, 1995, 1997; Brigham & Bernadino, 2003; Man, 2004; Phillion, 2003; Mojab, 1999), and their professional identities are undermined, a situation that can affect psychological and physical health. In addition, not all foreign credentials are assessed equally (Sweetman, 2003).¹⁸ (*he exits*)

ML: (*taking the book sadly*) I'll think about it. (*She leafs through the book as the lights go out*)

During lights out the vital stats projection appears on the US wall, showing an increase in bar four and a decrease in the bars labelled finances, relationships and self-

¹⁸ Walsh, S. & Brigham, S. (2008). Internationally educated teachers and teacher education programs in Canada: Current practices, p.10. Retrieved August 11, 2009 from http://www.atlantic.metropolis.net/research_policy_e.html

perception. Projections disappears. Small spotlight on DSL. A large bell flies in USL to DSL. BM steps in from the left wings and rings the bell.

BM: Lunch break! (*spotlight out*)

A lunch table and four chairs, CS, are lit. One by one, three white Canadian teachers bring their lunches to the table and sit down. They begin to eat their lunch.

T1: Did you hear about the Chinese teacher called in to sub for Higgins?

ML walks in from USR holding her lunch bag. When she realizes they are talking about her, she pauses.

T2: Yeah, she's in the class right next to mine.

T3: What does a Chinese woman know about Canadian History?

ML hugs her lunch bag and takes a step back into the darkness.

T1: It's not like she was born here.

T3: I agree. They should *not* have called her in.

T2: Well, from what I'm seeing everything seems to be under control.

T3: Pfffft! Higgins probably left her a bunch of worksheets. It's not like she could teach them anything.

T1: She's just babysitting.

T2: Or, she's like any other sub, just not from here. Maybe she'll bring a different perspective to the classroom.

ML drops her lunch bag in shock. Hearing this, the three teachers at the table turn toward her and gasp. ML grabs her lunch bag and runs offstage. Lights flicker and briefly cut out again. When they return Mei stands on a mat US of the desk that reads "Take it or leave it".

BM: Well Mei, good for you. You studied hard and got your Masters of Education. You've even been doing some substitute teaching. What's next?

ML: I'm not sure. Some days I don't feel like I am able to fight this battle.

BM: Why not let fate decide? Time to roll the die, my dear.

ML: (*sighing*) Again?

BM: Yes, again.

ML approaches the large die. With a groan, she picks it up and tosses it.

BM: Hmmm, not what I wanted. Roll again.

ML tosses the die again.

BM: Closer but not what I am looking for.

ML rolls her eyes.

ML: Why don't you roll the die then?

BM: I thought you'd never ask. *(picks up the die, rotating it until a 5 faces the audience)*
Oh my, a 2. Perfect!

ML: That's a 5.

BM: *(insistently)* From where I'm standing, it looks like a 2.

ML: What now?

BM: Move forward 2 spaces.

ML hops forward 2 spaces. When she lands she reads aloud the space.

ML: Move back 3 spaces *(she sighs with irritation)*. I'm just starting to get ahead and you want me to move back.

BM: It's just a game dear, nothing personal.

Angrily ML moves back 3 spaces. Disco ball lights circle the stage and a siren starts to ring. The theme song from 'Rocky' plays quietly in the background. BM passes ML a helmet and a foam joust. DSR a low balance beam is lit. On one end of the beam stands a student, helmet on and foam joust in hand. ML takes her end of the beam and at the BM's signal, a brief battle begins. The student is victorious. Lights cut out and return to show ML and the student lit USL. The student is frozen. DS a student desk sits empty.

ML: I'm going to pass out the worksheet that Mrs. White left for you. You can work quietly with a partner for the next thirty minutes.

STUDENT: *(unfreezes and enter 'classroom')* Miss, are you the teacher?

ML: Yes. Your name?

STUDENT: Where is she?

ML: She's away.

STUDENT: Where did she go?

ML: I can't provide that kind of information.

STUDENT: How long is she going to be away?

ML: Six weeks.

STUDENT: Are you going to be the teacher for that whole time?

ML: Yes.

With attitude, the student turns and exits. ML turns her back to the audience to write on an imaginary board. Shortly the student returns and sits down.

ML: *(turning to the student)* Please be quiet and pay attention.

STUDENT: *(under her breath)* There's no point in listening. I can't understand a word you are saying.

VICE PRINCIPAL: *(appearing at the 'door')* Can I speak with you in the hall, Ms. Lee?

ML nods. Student has a smug look on her face. She leans in, eavesdropping.

ML: What can I do for you, sir?

VP: One of the students has filed a complaint against you. I thought you should know.

ML: *(looks towards the student)* Mmmhmmm.

VP: You have to understand where these students are coming from...

ML: What do you mean?

VP: Mrs. White is our Race Relations, Cross Cultural Understanding & Human Rights liaison. These students come from broken homes, they have experienced racism at every turn... even from their teachers, so they rely on Mrs. White to advocate for them.

ML: I can relate to that but I'm here to do a job...

VP: *(interrupting)* Well, I have to refer this complaint to the FIB, the Future Investigations of the Board. It's not you, *(pause)* it's just procedure but once they have it on file it's out of my hands. You understand?

ML: Yes sir. (*VP leaves*) I suppose I do.

Lights off briefly. Lights up. ML stands CS on a mat that read "The Doors".

ML: Hello? Board Master? This space says 'The Doors'. What does that mean?

BM: (*as if from God*) Behind you there are three doors. (*three doors are lit from above*) Which will you choose?

ML: How do I choose?

BM: Are you familiar with 'Eenie, meenie, mynnie, mo?'

ML: No.

BM: 'My mother and your mother were sitting round the fire?'

ML: No.

BM: Just pick.

ML: Um, ok. Door Three.

BM: Door Three it is. (*the door opens revealing the BM behind it*) Step in to meet the Principal who gives you your first term teaching position, Grade Nine math.

ML walks through Door Three. Lights flicker briefly as she enters the Principal's office. He sits at his desk, speaking quietly on the phone.

ML: Oh, I can come back later.

He shakes his head and indicates she should wait. Soon he hangs up the phone.

P: Mei, thank you for coming to see me.

ML: Oh no problem. What's going on?

P: I want to talk about a child in your class. His parents have requested that he be moved to another class because he is struggling too much in yours.

ML: Who is the student?

P: (*Ignoring her*) He was a resource student last year. His parents feel that if he stays in your class, there is a chance he will have to go back to resource, and we all want to avoid that, don't we?

ML: (*trying a new strategy*) I understand the parents are concerned but I always use at least 3 ways to introduce a new topic. I also use videos, notes, PowerPoint presentations and I'm available for help at lunch time. But no one has come so far. (*frustrated*) So, who is the student?

P: Well, the parents sent a note mentioning that the reason their son is having difficulty is because of your accent. (*beat*) He cannot understand you.

ML: Are you going to tell me which student it is?

P: No, I'm not going to tell you at this point. But I wanted you to be aware of the issue.

ML: No students have complained so far. They all seem to understand me, and no parents have contacted me about it either. I'm not sure my accent is the real issue. Maybe the student is struggling with something else. It seems a bit odd that only one student would complain and not the others. (*scene freezes*)

SCHOLAR: (*Pops up from under the principal's desk*) Research on listening and accented speech suggests that "the listener's attitudes, experience and knowledge affect his or her perception of accented speech. Comprehension of accented speech can be improved both through increasing awareness of issues related to accent, and through listening practice."¹⁹ (*Laughs to himself and ducks back under the desk*)

P: (*scene resumes*) Actually, you do speak very fast. Maybe you could try to slow down. (*Mei nods*) I won't move him for now and we'll see how it works out.

ML: (*crossing her arms to show her displeasure*) Ok, I'll try to speak slower. In any case, I'm pleased there's only one of them challenged by my accent. It would really help if I could know who the student is... (*irked*) otherwise I can't help him.

P: Why are you so defensive? (*Mei turns to the audience and sighs in frustration.*)

Lights out. Lights up. Board Master stands CS with the large hat. ML stands DSC.

BM: You've already met Contestant number 1, Mei Li from China. We've been following her progress around the board. Let's check in with her vital stats. (*BM sweeps her arm US indicating the vital stats projection. ML's stats have changed – the first three bars have lowered somewhat and the fourth bar is now higher.*) What is it Mei Lee, that keeps you in the fight? It seems like nothing is going your way.

ML: I know. At times, it feels that way to me too.

¹⁹ Walsh, S. (2008). Listening to difference in the teaching of 'English': Insights from internationally educated teachers. *Changing English*, 15 (4), p.400.

BM: Well, what keeps you motivated?

ML: Despite the hard times, there have also been happy, colourful moments.

BM: Go on...

ML: I go back to those times, the times when I have been happy here and that gives me strength. For example, I teach Chinese language and culture at the community college...

BM: Yes?

ML: To Canadian men and women who are curious, who have adopted Chinese children, who have business in China... and it is clear they like the course and are learning from me.

BM: But is that really why you came all the way to Canada?

ML: No, not at all. Not even close. But it has made me happy. It has given me a purpose for the time being. I think about that when I feel defeated.

BM: Well you're not defeated yet. This is a perfect time to welcome Contestants number 2 and number 3 for our speed round. Please put your hands together for (*drawing from the hat*) Bissu, from Zimbabwe and (*drawing from the hat a second time*) Aniela, from Poland.

Bissu and Aniela make their way on stage from the audience, one stands on either side of ML. A large table with three buzzers is rolled out and placed in front of them. A sign on the front of the table reads "Speed Round – Winner gets a prize."

BM: You've run out time, Mei Li. Your future, your struggle, your passion - it all comes down to this moment. Can you beat two other Internationally Educated Teachers in our speed round based on the Canadian Citizenship test? The first player to answer two questions correctly wins our grand prize!

ML: What is it?

BM: Everything you've worked for, everything you deserve.

ML: (*nodding with ferocity*) Let's do it.

BM: Players ready? (*They nod.*) Two minutes on the clock? (*The Scholar steps out wearing a large clock around his neck, he turns the dial and a ticking sounds begins.*) Question One. How long did the Hudson Bay Company control the Northern lands? A: 200 years, B: 250 years or C: 300 years.

BISSU: (*buzzing in*) 300 years.

BM: Correct. Bravo Bissu. Question Two. What four provinces first formed confederation?

ML: (*Buzzing in*) I know this one!

BM: Would you like your choices?

ML: No, I know the answer! It was Ontario, Quebec, New Brunswick and Nova Scotia.

BM: Correct! Excellent job, Mei Li. Question Three. Name three minerals still being mined in the territories. A: Gold, lead and zinc, B: Nickel, gold and iron or C: Lead, nickel and zinc.

ANIELA: (*Buzzing in*) I believe the answer is A.

BM: Yes, it is. We have a three-way tie. Whoever answers the next question will win our grand prize. How are you feeling Mei? (*the vital stats projection appears – the first two bars are dangerously low and the third bar is non-existent while the fourth bar is completely filled*).

ML: (*to herself*) I'm not sure I can do this... (*she looks back at her vital stats and then shakes her head, speaking with renewed vigor*) ...but I should at least try. (*The third bar creeps up into view, accompanied by the appropriate sound, this catches her attention and spurs her on*) I am feeling good, (*the third bar increases even more*) I can do this. I've been through worse than this. (*she takes a deep breath*) Let's hear the final question.

BM: Who is Canada's head of state? A: the Queen, B: the Prime Minister, or C: the Governor General?

All three players buzz in.

BM: I'll have to get a judgment call on that one... Scholar?

SCHOLAR: I believe that Bissu was the first to buzz in, followed by Mei Li.

BM: Bissu, do you have an answer?

Bissu: Oh no... I'm not sure. I'll take a guess... is it C, the Governor General? (*an obnoxious buzzer rings out*)

BM: I'm sorry that is incorrect. Mei, for the game, do you know the answer?

ML: Ahhh, (*thinking aloud*) it's not the Governor General.

BM: (*Interrupting her thoughts*) You have a fifty-fifty chance here.

ML: I see... (*another buzzer rings*)

BM: And only fifteen seconds remaining in the game to give an answer. Let's have a final look at you vitals.

SCHOLAR: (*quietly*) 10, 9, 8...

The projection appears. All three bars are non-existent while the fourth bar has exploded off the graph. Sound of a heart monitor failing.

ML: What's that?

SCHOLAR: 7, 6, 5...

BM: That's your stress level. It's off the charts!

ML: Oh! Ah....

BM: Hurry!

SCHOLAR: 4, 3, 2...

ML: Ummm... the Queen. That's it, the Queen.

BM: Final answer?

ML: Yes.

BM: Correct! You win! You win our grand prize.

ML: I won! I really won!

BM: You have been awarded a permanent teaching contract in the BSSB...

ML: Really? Really! Finally, my dream is becoming a reality. (*running to embrace the BM*) Thank you, thank you so...

BM: (*interrupting*) Now, (*pause*) you must convince the federal government that there is no Canadian teacher who has the skills to fill this position. (*sound effect: wan-wan*)

ML: Pardon? What do you mean?

BM: (*ushering her over to the Scholar who begins to push her offstage*) Thank you for playing Mei. We hope your prize turns out to be everything you hoped for. (*to audience*) Well that's the game folks. Thanks for watching The Name of the Game where each player gets a chance to pursue his or her dream the way we map out the path. Until next

time, I'm your Board Master saying good luck, you're gonna need it! (*salutes audience then exits SL*).

Stage lights go down leaving the flashing applause sign on for a few seconds before they too go off.

CURTAIN.