

A Theatre for Change:
Applying Community Based Drama Practices into Ontario Middle Schools

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Abstract

Teachers have an undeniable influence on youth, on whose shoulders tomorrow rests. It is vital for teachers to be conscious of their role in both the local and global community in order to facilitate occasions for students to develop a sense of global consciousness. By imparting to students the desire to learn and to explore their interactions with things, people and experiences, and actively pursue knowledge, they develop critical literacy skills required to both acquire understanding and be(come) understood.

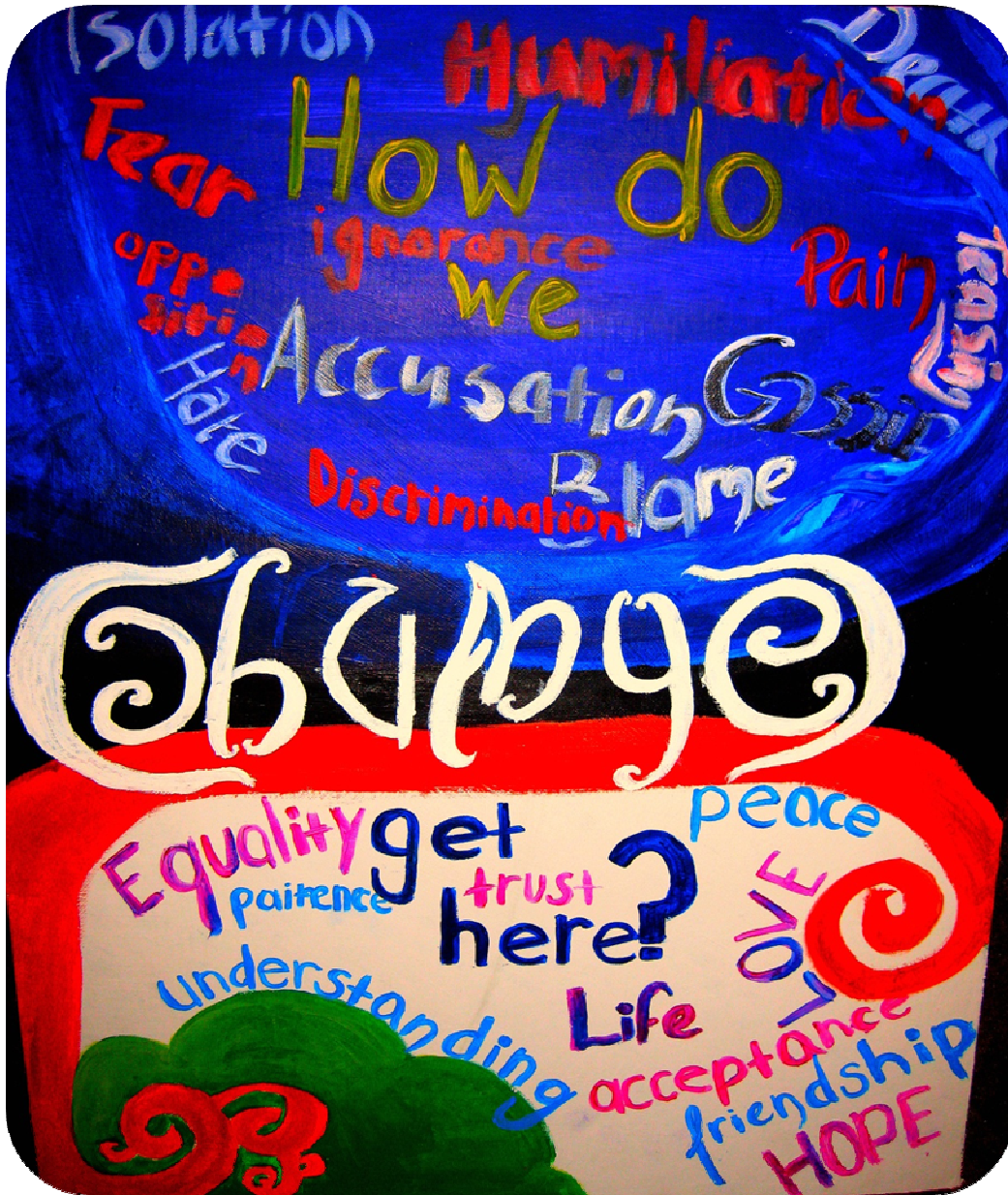
Through this research study, the implications of applying David Diamond's community drama work called *Theatre for Living*, as an effective and critical literacy practice to enhance social consciousness within a middle school, is assessed. The program was implemented in a split grade 7/8 and grade 8 classroom in southwestern Ontario. The study exemplifies for educators a practical yet significant step for initializing and developing a broad sense of awareness in students; that is the sense of global consciousness.

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Prologue: A Theatre for Change¹

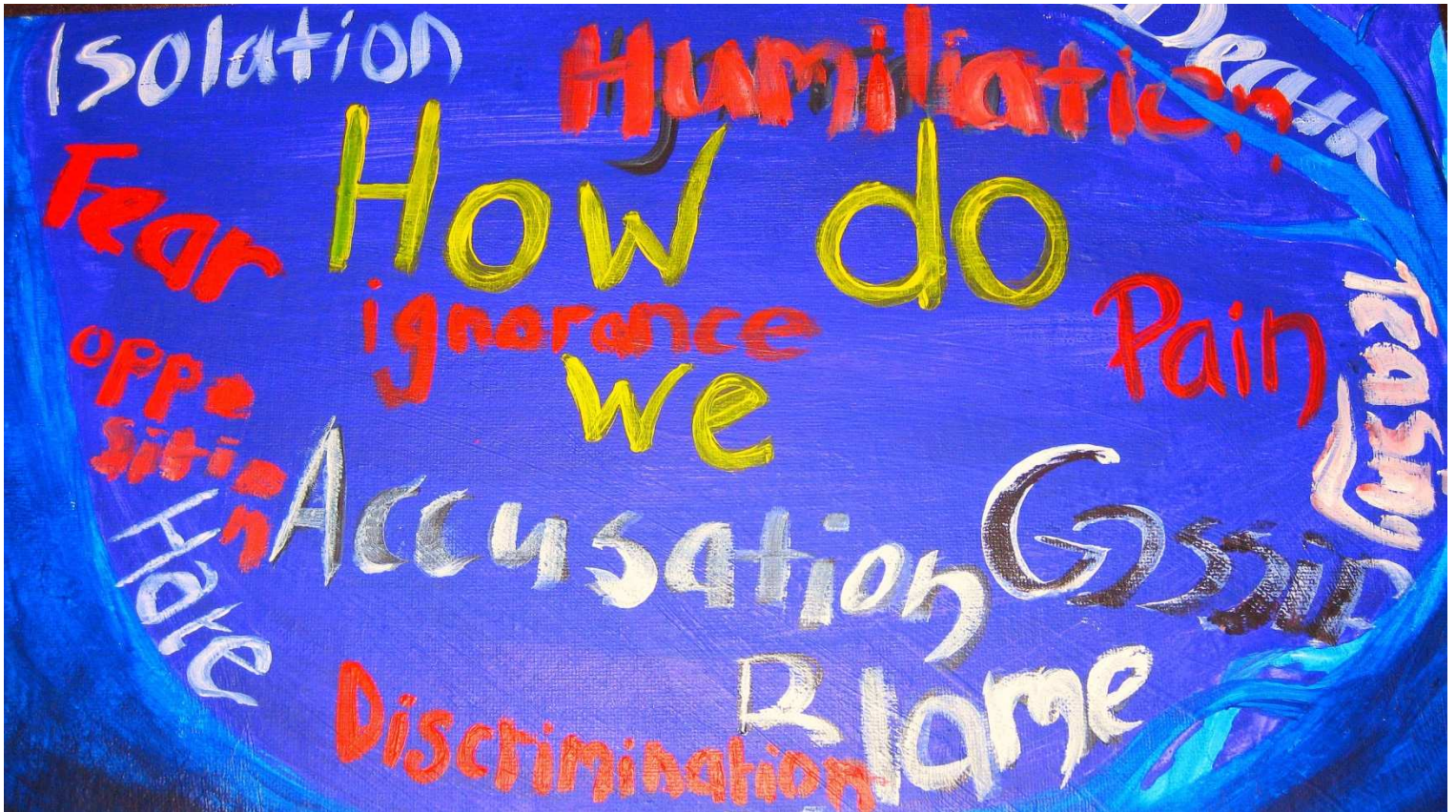


This piece was inspired by an educational dramatic arts program created and facilitated by Kiersten R. Harrison. It depicts the insights of the students surrounding their experiences with the topic of racism within the classroom/school community. The words were descriptive of tableau images presented by the students to their classmates and were documented on chart paper throughout the course of the week long program and then translated onto this canvas.

- Sarah E. Quinlan

¹ Sarah E. Quinlan is a graphic design student studying at Sault College, Sault Ste Marie, Ontario. Inspired by my efforts to combine Drama Education and Social Awareness/Action Education in the classroom, she transferred mutual interpretations of what came out of the program onto canvas and submitted it as a part of her student portfolio.

Expressions of Racism in the Community



Conversation(s) about the personal details of other people's lives, whether rumour or fact, especially when malicious



Severe emotional or mental distress, e.g., the pain of rejection



An unpleasant feeling of anxiety or apprehension caused by the presence or anticipation of danger



Transitive verb to dislike somebody or something intensely, often in a way that evokes feelings of anger, hostility, or animosity.



The feeling or condition of being lessened in dignity or pride

Unfair treatment of one person or group, usually because of prejudice about race, ethnicity, age, religion, or gender



The process of separating somebody or something from others, or the fact of being alone and separated from others



To find fault with somebody

Expressions of our *Wildest Dreams* in a Utopian Community



Willingness to treat somebody as a member of a group or social circle

A relationship that is characterized by mutual assistance, approval, and support OR the mutual feelings of trust and affection and the behaviour that typify relationships between friends



To have a wish to get or do something or for something to happen or be true, especially something that seems possible or likely



Freedom from conflict or disagreement among people or groups of people OR a state of mental calm and serenity, with no anxiety



The ability to perceive and explain the meaning or the nature of somebody or something OR A sympathetic, empathetic, or tolerant recognition of somebody else's nature or situation

Rights, treatment, quantity, or value equal to all others in a specific group



The ability to endure waiting, delay, or provocation without becoming annoyed or upset, or to persevere calmly when faced with difficulties



Confidence in and reliance on good qualities, especially fairness, truth, honor, or ability



After two days of image work, where the students created multiple tableaux (frozen scenes) regarding evidence of racism within their community as well as images of ideal communities where racism is obsolete, I asked the students what we needed to move from the current dysfunctional community to the idyllic. The mutual response throughout the first week was *change*. Although a seemingly simple and obvious response, this concept of change motivated further discussion and inquiry regarding both the students' acknowledgement of the need for a change within their community and then what specific changes were needed; what actions could these students take to begin to create and ensure change? I felt this notion of change was crucial for understanding the topic being explored and highlighted in this thesis.

Change:
To become different,
or make something or
somebody different or
to pass or make
something pass from
one state or stage to
another



Chapter One

Discovering the need for Change

An Introduction

In one of the required classes for obtaining my Bachelor's of Education degree, we were asked to identify individuals who we considered *global citizens*. Standard responses quickly followed: Oprah, Mother Theresa, Bono, Al Gore, etc. One fellow student's seemingly simple response, however, had such an impact on me that I was immediately immersed into a state of reflection. She stated that we all are global citizens whether we are conscious of it or not. After this class, I began reflecting on my place in the global community. More specifically, the first question I had to ask myself was: How am I (or was I) contributing to this *global community*?



Figure 1. Celebrated Global Citizens

I very quickly began to see, however, that it is through the engagement, love and passion I have for the field of education that I could make a conscious impact. Because of that moment I have developed a greater awareness of the ethical and pedagogical pressure that teachers face when confronting tensions surrounding their undeniable influence on youth, on whose shoulders tomorrow rests. Therefore, as an educator, it is vital to be conscious of my role in both our local and global community in order to facilitate occasions for my students where they, too, can develop a sense of global consciousness. One of the most significant steps toward

this development process, I argue in this thesis, is initialized by enabling students to enhance their sense of *social consciousness* in the classroom, school and greater community.

Quoting Richard Shaul (1972), David Diamond (2007) reminds us that “there is no such thing as a neutral education process.....in other words education either helps reinforce the status quo, or it helps break the rules” (p. 25). In relation to this, Sharon Grady (2000) puts it thus: “there is a need for a more pluralistic perspective in society [meaning] a more in-depth understanding of and respect for the identity locations that mark us different from one another” (p. xiii). Unfortunately, due to what I believe is a lack of critical pedagogical tools and understanding, most educators make the mere outcome of creating an atmosphere of tolerance their main focus. This effort, however, is simply not enough if an educator’s goal is to enhance social awareness and effect social change. Grady (2000) contends that “the problem with the simple goal of tolerance is that it often means to endure or put up with something or someone you do not like or agree with [or understand]” (p. xvii). As Grady continues to advocate for a critical pluralistic perspective, she further explains that it needs to be “less about what should be tolerated and more about what can *no longer* be tolerated” (p. xvii, emphasis added).

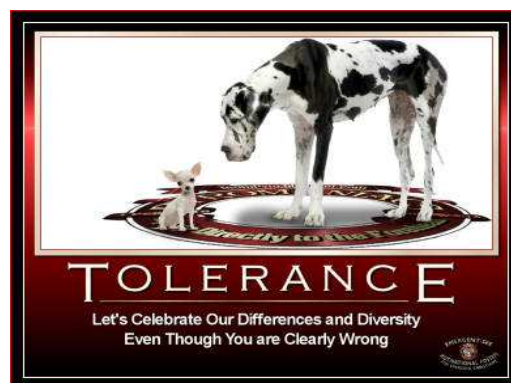


Figure 2. Image Mocking Hightened Tolerance Attempts

This critical pluralistic perspective for Grady (2000) is accomplished by facilitating an exploration of the academic community with the focal point being the multiple aspects of living that exist in the school, beginning this process, first and foremost, with the citizens of the classroom. Grady (2000) believes that “differences” among us should not just be approached as an occasional subject or special topic in the classroom but should be a central part of how teachers “conduct their practice” and how students “conceive their work” (p. 18). David Diamond’s (2007) instructions are even more direct than Grady’s, especially when addressing drama/theatre teachers, directors and facilitators. He stresses the significance in creating theatre that “does not polarize the living community into ‘good guys’ and ‘bad guys’ but rather recognize that the community is an integrated and perhaps dysfunctional organism that is struggling to resolve difficult issues” (p. 24).

As exemplified in Figure 2, I imagine this struggle for a pluralistic approach to teaching and learning to resemble a tug of war (see figure 3). However, rather than pitting members of the classroom community against one another (e.g., bully vs. victim, boys vs. girls, dominant culture vs. minority, etc.), which would actually be the opposite of the pluralistic perspective that both Diamond and Grady are advocating, the “citizens of the classroom,” including the students, teachers, support workers, and even the principal, are united together on one side tugging against whatever social issue is currently negatively affecting their community.



VS.

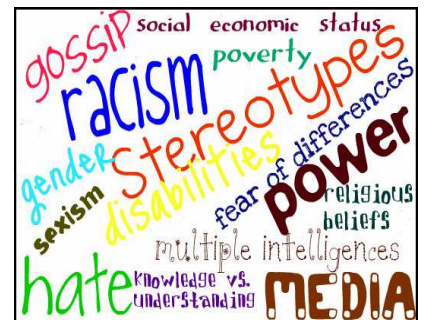


Figure 3. Classroom Community vs. Relevant Social Issues

Framed as such, my intent in this qualitative study is to implement and describe the impact of David Diamond's community drama work, called *Theatre for Living* on a group of middle school students. The program was implemented in a split grade 7/8 and a grade 8 classroom in a middle school, in a metropolitan city in southwestern Ontario. My goal through this project was (and still is) to raise social consciousness through literacy and understanding. How can I engage these students with effective and critical literacy practices? One never stops learning, but I believe that by imparting to students the desire to keep exploring their interactions with things, people and experiences as well as actively pursuing knowledge, they develop critical literacy skills required to both acquire understanding and be(come) understood.

Currently, Diamond's work through Headlines Theatre Company and *Theatre for Living* focuses on universal social issues such as violence, suicide prevention, anti-racism, youth empowerment, bullying, addiction and community development (see Diamond, 1998, 2007). Although it has been tested and widely used, *Theatre for Living* receives little attention from K-12 educators. This, for me, highlights both the uniqueness and the necessity of this thesis project. As a research question, this project asks the following: Can *Theatre for Living* be translated into a pedagogical tool for social awareness within the context of an Ontario middle school? That is to say, pedagogically, what will happen if we apply *Theatre for Living* in a middle school, namely in the context of the grade 7 and 8 language and dramatic arts curriculum focusing on racism as a social issue?

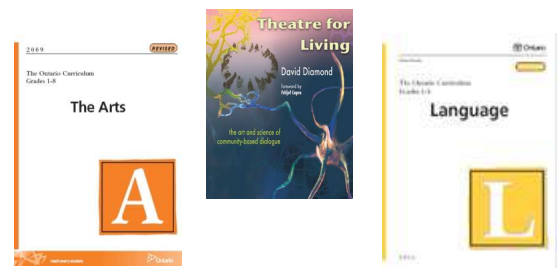


Figure 4. *Theatre for Living* textbook and the Ontario Curriculum documents for The Arts and Language Arts.

Self –Exposure

Before delving into the thesis, it is necessary to declare the heart’s desire and so the reader is owed a note explaining how this research project came about. I am a trained drama educator who believes that everything we do and all of our work as researchers, teachers and educators is laden with how we view, understand and respond to the world around us (Grady, 2000). In his book, *The Courage to Teach*, Parker J. Palmer (2007) addresses this concept and suggests that when a presenter, for example, is willing to encounter the fear of self exposure and identify herself in reference to the topic, this will give her a sense of validation. My hope is that my self examination will also offer the reader a unique window into the foundations or inner workings of the topic contained within my assumptions, beliefs, experiences, theories and intended research.

My undergraduate degree program in Drama in Education and Community was obtained from the University of Windsor, Windsor, Ontario. Certifying me as a qualified and trained drama educator, the program’s philosophy is to encourage students to develop their unique skills of facilitating learning while developing new skills as drama specialists and/or educators. This program sparked my passion for social awareness, action and change in the school system.

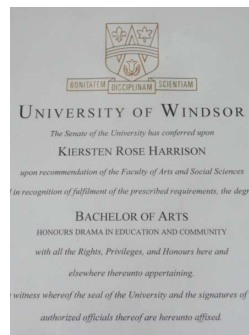


Figure 5. Researcher’s University diploma

For me, being a drama educator goes far beyond training students in the skills and specific techniques found in the dramatic arts. Here, teaching is a sophisticated and integrated idea and learning is a process that steps outside the classroom to touch the social. Put otherwise, as a drama educator one utilizes dramatic arts and other arts-based techniques, strategies and activities as tools in creating for students an embodied experience, an intrinsic connection and a deeper understanding of the subject matter being taught. This approach to educating can be applied to any subject matter throughout all the grade divisions, which is what I attempted to do in the implementation of this current research project.

In what follows, I will first offer a thorough portrait of David Diamond and the *Theatre for the Living*; second, I will revisit my personal identification with the study, relaying some of my own experiences, assumptions and beliefs regarding Diamond's work; third, I will offer a literature review and theoretical framework of/from drama theorists who believe in the power of drama and the arts as a teaching tool for enhancing both academics and social consciousness. In the method(ology) sections, finally, I will describe the specific and practical details of the study from the preliminary preparations, to the stages for conducting the research, collecting the data and documenting the results.

How Did We Get Here? The Views Behind Current Community-Based Social Action Theatre

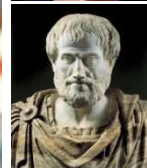
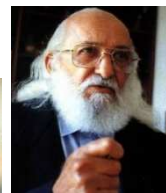
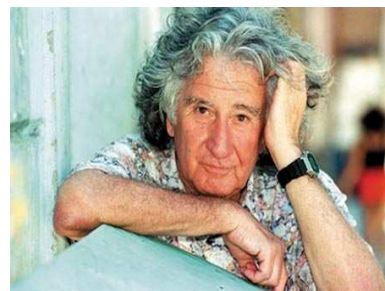
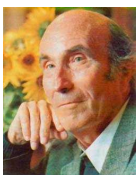


Figure 6. Top Left - Bottom Right: Fritjof Capra, Niklas Luhmann, David Diamond, Augusto Boal, Paulo Freire, Aristotle

David Diamond is the artistic director for Headlines Theatre Company² out of Vancouver BC. Although his theatre projects are enclosed under the title *Theatre for Living*, all of his work is an extension of and indebted to Augusto Boal's (1979) *Theatre of the Oppressed*.³ Boal's objectives with his community-based theatre work are predominantly political focusing primarily on social conscientization. In *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal (1979) describes theatre as a weapon, a weapon for liberation and for change. Theoretically, not to say genealogically, Boal aligns himself with Aristotle's *coercive system of tragedy*. By this, Boal (1979) reports, Aristotle "declares the independence of poetry (lyric, epic, dramatic) in relation to politics" (p. xiv). For Aristotle, the connection, if there is any, between arts and politics has to be questioned. For his part, Boal (1979) argues, contrary to Aristotle, that "nature tends towards perfection, that the arts and sciences correct nature in all its faults, and at the same time are interrelated under the domain of a sovereign art which deals with all men [*sic*], with all they do, and all that is done for them: Politics" (p. 11).

Going further and flipping Aristotle's own argument on "poetics of truth and reality," Boal (1979) concludes: "All of man's [*sic*] activities – including, of course, all the arts, especially theatre – are political" (p. 39). Therefore where Aristotle believes he has divided arts and politics into two separate spheres of thought, Boal argues that it is in fact Aristotle who constructed the prevailing *poetic-political system*. Reinforcing his belief, Boal (1979) explains

2. Founded in 1981, Vancouver's Headlines Theatre's work is a worldwide leading example of healing art, with projects in collaboration with First Nations and multicultural communities involving theatre workshops, Power Plays and Forum Theatre events around the world (more information can be found on their website:

³ "A Brazilian theater director, dramatist, theorist, writer and teacher who developed the community based drama program, *Theatre of the Oppressed*. From his work, Boal evolved various forms of theater workshops and performances that aimed to meet the needs of all people for interaction, dialogue, critical thinking, action and fun."

that “the structure of the system may vary in a thousand ways, making it difficult at times to find all the elements of its structure, but the system will nevertheless be there, working to carry out its basic task: the purgation of all antisocial elements” (p. 46). Boal is thus acknowledging what might be called *the system’s great efficacy* and utilizes it, unapologetically, as the underpinning formulation of/to his community theatre works.

From Boal to Diamond: Establishing a Living Community

While his work has attended to current local and national political agendas, and in fact much of his theory and practice are replicas of Boal’s, David Diamond has also extended his pedagogy of thought by aligning himself with Fritjof Capra and the science of systems theory. In the forward to Diamond’s book, *Theatre for Living: The Art and Science of Community Based Dialogue*, Fritjof Capra (2007) explains systems theory thus:

During the past 25 years, a new conception of life has emerged at the forefront of science, that this is radically different from the mechanistic world view of Descartes and Newton, which has dominated our culture for over 300 years. The new world view, or paradigm, is holistic and ecological. Instead of seeing the universe as a machine composed of elementary building blocks, scientists have discovered that the material world, ultimately, is a network of inseparable patterns of relationships; that the planet as a whole is a living, self-regulating system. The view of the human body as a machine and of the mind as a separate entity is being replaced by one that sees not only the brain, but also the immune system, the bodily tissues and even each cell as a living cognitive system.
(p. 14)

Simply put, systems theory is a way of looking at the human body, for example, not as separate entities such as a heart, brain, leg, and so on, but as a total entity where no part would function

without the other. When one part is not functioning as it should, then the body as a whole suffers. For Diamond, this is a metaphor for how a community functions.

For Diamond (2007), a community exists when “groups of people share geography, values, experiences or beliefs” (p. 47). This classification becomes relevant due to the complexities of the vast diversity of interrelated, co-existing, North American cultures, societies and communities for which Diamond’s work is intended and by whom it is being created. Interestingly, one of Diamond’s concrete examples of communities is children in schools: the population I am interested in for this research. As he put it, students “create layers of communities within the structure of the school: groups of friends, home rooms, grades, teams and special interest clubs” (p. 48). He describes how these communities exist within the context of a larger community which includes teachers, administrative staff and even parents. These individuals according to Diamond (2007), are “linked but separated from each other by boundaries of power” (p. 48).

Diamond’s connection to Capra’s systems theory emerges when he discusses the concept of community as a *living thing* or a living organism. With this characterization of community Diamond (2007) is able then to link the notion of community to *autopoiesis*, a scientific process which he describes as a “defining characteristic of life” (p. 44). Imagined as a little factory contained within demarcated boundaries, autopoiesis is a pattern of organization which contains two parts: a physical and metabolic system.⁴ The concept, Diamond tells us, was originally

⁴ Medical dictionary defines “metabolic” as: “Relating to metabolism, the whole range of biochemical processes that occur within us (or any living organism). Metabolism consists of anabolism (the buildup of substances) and catabolism (the breakdown of substances). The term ‘metabolic’ is often used to refer specifically to the breakdown of food and its transformation into energy” (<http://www.medterms.com/script/main/art.asp?articlekey=18074>).

proposed by biologists Humberto Maturana and Francisco Varela and used in its Greek etymology (“auto” = self and “poiesis” = creation or production) to mean *self creation*.

For Diamond (2007), what is important to note about autopoieses is that it is an automatic, self maintaining, self-regulating system. In this sense, autopoieses becomes “a process whereby a system produces its own organization and maintains and constitutes itself in a space; e.g., a biological cell, a living organism and to some extent cooperation and society as a whole” (*Web Dictionary of Cybernetics and Systems*, as cited in Diamond, 2007, p. 45). As such, Diamond concludes, autopoieses is a system used by all living things and all living communities.

Genealogically, both Diamond and Capra draw upon Niklas Luhmann’s theory of *social autopoiesis*. For Luhmann (1990), social autopoiesis are social systems that are interactional and “use communication as their particular mode of autopoietic reproduction. Their elements are communications that are recursively produced and reproduced by a network of communications and that cannot exist outside of such a network” (as cited in Diamond, 2007, p. 45). In Capra’s (2002) words, “these networks of communication are self-regulating. Each communication creates thoughts and meanings which give rise to further communications and thus the entire network generates itself – it is autopoietic” (p. 83). The vital association of autopoiesis to the *living community* comes into play because as Diamond (2007) explains “a community is made up of individuals that comprise the living organism of the community” (p. 44). Along the same line, Capra (2002) explains, “as communications recur in multiple feedback loops they produce a shared system of beliefs, explanations and values – a common context of meaning – that is continually sustained by further communications. Through this shared context of meaning individuals acquire identities as members of the social network” (p. 83).

Put simply, the association of communities and living organisms with the science of systems theory is an attempt “to apply a unified understanding of life to phenomena in realm of matter, as well as phenomena in realm of meaning” (Capra, 2002, p. 261). This unified understanding of life itself is a metaphor and a description of:

... an entity larger than a single living organism that creates a boundary around it. Not a physical boundary, but a boundary of ideas, information, beliefs and behavior that is distinct to a specific culture or community. The boundary contains a group of people. The group of people functions like a metabolic system. A metabolic system surrounded by a boundary is autopoietic. In other words a living thing (p. 49).

Being a living thing, Diamond (2007) concludes, when one part of the body is not functioning as it should, then the body as a whole cannot function to its ultimate potential. Likewise, when one part of the community is not functioning as it should then the community as a whole cannot function to its ultimate potential. Just as we would see in our physical bodies, this will eventually lead to dysfunctional, unhealthy communities that begin to display visible symptoms such as vandalism, violence, bullying, stereotyping, etc. Diamond's interest in and commitment to a systems theory view of the world is further exemplified on his website (1998), where he declares: “If we embrace the idea that a community is a large, living organism, how do we consciously work with that larger consciousness, using a primal language (the theatre) to help it tell its stories?” Answering this question poetically, the website concludes: “Once the story is acted on the stage, the living community engages in interactive, Forum Theatre, creating a true community-based dialogue” (http://www.headlinetheatre.com/theatre_for_living.htm). This is a tall order and genealogically Boalesque, as we see next.

Hate the Game not the Player

Theatre for Living is indebted to Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Diamond (2007) credits *Theatre of the Oppressed* for many of the games, exercises and principles that make up the content of his general theatre and workshop practices and he acknowledges this by stating that *Theatre for Living* has "grown directly out of Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*" and even goes as far as calling some of it "Boal-based work" (p. 43). However, there are also differences between the two approaches. First, they differ on the particular focus that Boal puts on the oppressor versus the oppressed. Specifically Boal's drama/theatre work is intended to work directly with the victims of oppression and dramatize their stories. As Boal (1995) describes in his book, *Games for Actors and Non-Actors*, the goal of his theatre workshops and forum theatre presentations is to aide in empowering the oppressed community members by finding "new approaches or new forms of liberation" (p. 240). This element of Boal's practice comes out of his connection to Paulo Freire's work *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979). It could be said that Boal's work is an extension of or grows directly out of Paulo Freire's work.



Figure 7. Example image of oppressed community uniting to confront an oppression/oppressor as would be seen through a Theatre of the Oppressed lens of empowerment.

For his part, Diamond (2007) takes on what he calls a new perspective, which he explains thus: "[In *Theatre for Living*,] Characters are no longer oppressors or oppressed. Characters have become community members engaged in various struggles with each other and with dysfunction,

which is sometimes personal and sometimes systemic” (p. 43). Diamond (2007) explains his rationale in the prologue of his book:

After encountering Freire and Boal and doing what I saw as Boal’s work for 10 years I suddenly realized that I lived in Canada, not Brazil, and naturally with the passage of time, my work was evolving. I wasn’t focused on oppressor/oppressed relationships any more ...but was investigating ways to help us live together in healthier ways. Theatre, for living in healthier communities.... *Theatre for Living*. (p. 24)

Here, he explains further, the “clear boundaries we like to think exist between oppressors and oppressed are very often not clear” (p. 38). This is because “oppressors of the world do not come from outer space. Living communities grow them” (p. 38). Therefore, as a community struggling with a social issue, we must investigate all the dysfunctions including the “fears, desires and motivations of the oppressor – with integrity” (p. 38). Diamond (2007) clarifies that this sort of spotlight effect on the oppressor is not implemented in order to promote or condone oppressive actions; rather, if our goal is to end cycles of oppression and bullying in the school, then the drama work we are exploring must “ring with authenticity” (p. 40). In other words, since oppression is not a stain on a cloth that can easily be washed away, our approach to it in theatre must “contain as much of the complexity of real life as possible” (p. 41).



Figure 8. The hands that make up a living community.

What makes Diamond’s work appealing for educators, including this researcher/educator, is that he is less concerned with finding an absolute solution to social issues, if ever that is possible, as he is with facilitating a dialogue, using the *symbolic language of theatre* between and among communities and the individual people of which they are made. This dialogue is centered on the struggles and issues that are creating uncomfortable and even dysfunctional spaces for some community members. But as Diamond (2007) makes exceedingly clear, the alternative focus is “not to break the oppression (getting rid of what we don’t want) but [rather] to create healthy communities, safety, and respect (getting what we do want)” (p. 43). As Diamond further advocates on his website:

Theatre for Living is about empowerment – about people being the experts in their own lives and being able to use theatre as a means of creating change. The process gives a community the opportunity to develop "emotional intelligence" — using a symbolic language to investigate alternative approaches to hard-to-talk-about issues. This is a first step towards dealing with difficult topics — moving towards open communication and realities that living communities want in an active and entertaining way.

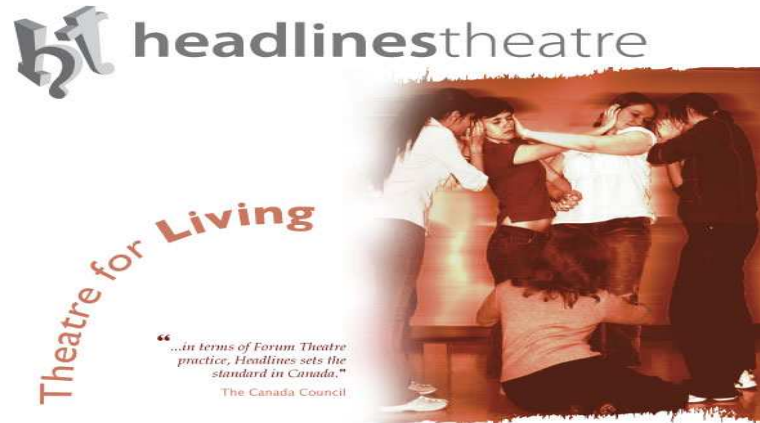


Figure 9. Headlines Theatre/Theatre for Living
http://www.headlinestheatre.com/theatre_for_living.htm

“Gimme the Key”: A Theoretical Musing

I was first introduced to these ideas during my undergraduate studies at the University of Windsor. I had the privilege of participating in a workshop by David Diamond in 2005. The workshop was called “Gimme the Keys” and was presented to us as a specialty course for credit during my third year of Drama in Education and Community training. The workshop dealt with the social issue of drinking/drugs and driving which we felt was relevant in our larger community of University students. Amongst everything previously mentioned, for me, what distinguishes *Theatre for Living* from other drama/theatre works which aim at raising social consciousness, is that “instead of producing theatre for communities it makes theatre with communities” (Diamond, 2007, p. 15).



Figure 10. Advertisement poster for the National *Theatre for Living* tour, Gimme the Key

Therefore, contrary to what we often see during educational assemblies, participants in workshops are not performing a fabricated, unrealistic skit with a too good to be true solution. Often, such skits serve as a lecture from a stage in which students are treated as silent observers with no active contribution, opinion, or participation. Rather, participants of *Theatre for Living* workshops are directly involved in every aspect of the dramatization process. They explore dissect and interpret meaningful events, situations and circumstances surrounding current prevailing social issues the students and their intra-school communities.

Because of my interaction with Diamond and his work, when it comes to social and research assumptions, I have a sizable one: It is possible for teachers to create and implement a pedagogy centered on social awareness: that is, to produce a greater level of social consciousness with (in) students. This pedagogy is not only enhanced, but also truly experienced through artistic media, such as drama. By utilizing theatre, drama and the arts, middle-school students are able to explore, experience and reflect on critical social issues that exist within their community and the world at large. Therefore as a sub-question for this research, I examined the potential of drama as a tool to address serious social issues in order to produce authentic responses, reactions and results both for and with students.

Chapter Two

The Manifestation of the Arts in Current Educational Practice:

A Literature Review



Dramatic arts are finally being considered an essential subject, even in a crowded curriculum; they are, however mostly being taught as an aesthetic. As Sharon Grady (2000) suggests, most of the drama being taught and presented to our youth holds on to the “feel good” factor. The feel good factor clings to happy endings and overtly fictional characters that have “little if any connection to the lives of many of the young people [and] is more often about the producers and their dominant culture than the audience it is supposedly serving” (p. 14). David Diamond (2007) also talks about the current role that drama/theatre plays within general society, which he believes is in a state of disconnectedness. He nudges it further by stating that the very elements we now recognize as drama/theatre, singing, dancing and primarily the act of storytelling, play a very different role in society than the original intention. He states that they have been “transformed from something that people did naturally ‘in community’ into a manufactured consumer product...we now pay strangers to tell us stories about strangers” (pp. 19-20).

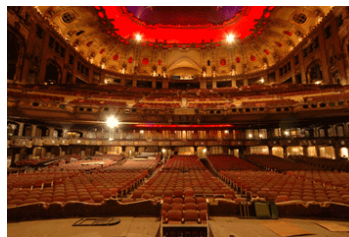




Figure 11. Examples of Modern Theatre

Thankfully, some have argued, this original lens of theatre is not completely lost, but is disguised under a different name, Drama in Education – also known in other circles as Arts Education, Theatre in Education, Developmental Drama and Educational Drama (see Bolton & Heathcote, 1994; Courtney, 1974; McCaslin, 1990; Miller, 2002; Richard, 2002; Robbie, Ruggirello, Warren, 2001; Way 1967). The basic idea behind Drama Education is to teach curriculum requirements through Arts-based techniques: utilizing drama and theatre techniques as teaching strategies for all the subject areas. As Karen Gallas (1991) explains, “the arts offer an expanded notion of classroom discourse that is not solely grounded in linear, objective language and thinking, but rather recognizes the full range of human potential for expression and understanding” (p. 22). Dramatic art strategies and activities utilized as educational tools aide in creating an embodied experience, an intrinsic connection and a deeper understanding of the subject matter being taught. In accordance with this, Ruggirello (2002) describes the effectiveness of engaging in the arts by asserting that it “launches [students] into learning experiences that shift their perspectives, providing them with new and different ways of understanding” (p. 208).

The fundamental framework for this thesis consists predominantly of the works from drama theorists and educators who believe in the arts as a form of natural expression; a way in which communication and understanding can take place through drawing, painting, singing,

dancing, movement, gesture, storytelling, role-playing etc. Robbie *et al.* (2001) assert that “drama facilitates spontaneous learning in an environment that is authentic, natural and contextualized as possible” (p. 3). Although the primary focus for many within the field of drama is to “educate” (in its pure academic sense of “schooling”), many drama theories have been transferred into other areas: such as psychology, therapy, health care (Warren, 2002; Warren, 1993) and, as we shall see in Diamond’s work, community.

(Role) Play is a Serious Business

In his study, V. Glasgow Koste (1995) highlights the role that dramatic play has in developing even basic life skills. Using Sigmund Freud, Koste shows that the purpose and content of dramatic play should be envisioned with civism, citizenship and adulthood in mind while never losing sight of the fact that “play is the most powerful way to learn” (p. 2). For Geraldine Siks (1983), and researching the younger grades, the basic elements of dramatic play include imagining, impersonating, imitating and improvising action and speech and she identifies these as “natural ways that children express themselves” (p. 3). She proposes, therefore, that academic-based drama can serve as the opportunity for students to “try-on social experiences they are likely to encounter in real life” (p. 7). Working with a mixture of older grades and adults, Bernie Warren (1996) observes that “the way an individual plays often reveals information concerning that person’s ability to cope with new situations and illuminates interpersonal relationships among individuals in the group” (p. 5).

On his part, writing about the effectiveness of dramatic play in childhood, and calling it “simulation... [or] real activity in an imagined universe,” Jay Teital (2002) states that drama could be the “most serious activity human beings are capable of” (p. 94). He thus tells parents and educators to “respect the gravity of their [children’s] play” (p. 96). As educators, he adds

that we need to encourage, create and facilitate specific occasions in our drama units for students to participate in “unadulterated and unmeasured dramatic play” (p. 96). Amongst our continual efforts to stuff countless amounts of content in children’s minds, as Teital (2002) so aptly put it, “what will endure is what they discover on their own, playing seriously” (p. 96). It is improvisational role play, storytelling and creative activities, which give students an opportunity to respond, react and rehearse for real life circumstances in a safe space.

In his article, *Holistic Education and Arts Education*, John P. Miller (2002) reiterates the need for the drama educator to create these safe spaces in the classroom “where students can act spontaneously and naturally” (p. 7). For Miller, this need stems from the fact that “young children tend to be naturally spontaneous, but as they get older the pressure from both school and peers forces the students into more constricted and frozen patterns of behavior” (p. 7). It is our job as educators to create a classroom that encourages constructive critical dissection and exploration of various expressions of thought and opinion in a non-judgmental manner. Similarly, Diamond (2007) also advocates for a safe space within his workshops and defines it as a place “free of judgement; a place where it is safe to take risks, or not, somewhere where it is safe to fail. Safe space is somewhere where it is possible to think new thoughts, feel new emotions, and to think and feel deeply, alone and in groups” (p. 86).

Part of creating safety in the classroom, especially when utilizing drama, is by remaining within the sanctuary of fictional space. As described by John McLeod (2002) “Drama was, and still is, about students making meaning of experience through taking on a role” (p. 65). Here, McLeod continues, role-play is a technique where his B. Ed. students transform their speech, actions, thoughts, emotions, characteristics and movements from their own into their interpretation of another’s. They are required to view life through a new lens, he concludes. They

also take on a form of accountability for a new set of skills, knowledge and experiences (see also Bolton & Heathcote, 1994; Sleeter & Grant, 1994). It is also through the technique of role-play, which is commonly utilized in drama, that students are able to explore multiple issue-related situations from different perspectives, as we shall see in my research; thus begins the process of obtaining social consciousness within the classroom. In accordance with this, Ron Richard (2002) declares based on his research with primary grades that “drama, in particular role-playing, provides a framework for the students to work out and discover solutions and approaches to real problems, situations and relationships in real time...” (p. 166).



Figure 12. When role-playing true-to-life characters, What do they look like, dress like, move like, feel like, act like, talk like etc?

Using the often quoted saying “standing in someone else’s shoes,” McLeod (2002) explains that engaging in role-play requires students to not only be connected to the content of the drama, but it also gives them the occasion to experiment with ideas about their characters. This, he believes, is about “students making meaning of their experience through taking on role” and gives them an opportunity to “bring their own perspectives and experiences to bear on the work they are creating. Engagement, being combined with imagination” (p. 65). As Fantone (2003) emphasizes, role-playing affects self-perception and can be an empowering force even

when translated from imagined life to real life (p. 58). Buckingham (2003) seems to concur with Fantone, insisting that play offers an opportunity to “construct our identities through the roles we take and rules we follow” (p. 17). He stresses, however, that reflection on this identity construction must be made explicit by educators in order to promote healthy dialogue (p. 28).

Storytelling: Linking the Arts and Social Awareness

Through drama-based explorations and role-play, one may conclude building on the literature above, preconceived biases and prejudice schemas can be critically examined. For Sleeter and Grant (1994), it is these same biases and prejudices that have the potential of turning into alienation, bullying, harassment, violence, self-destructive behavior and hate crimes if they remain ignored. Typically when these issues, such as bullying, arise in the classroom they are considered taboo and momentarily treated as a symptom (Grady, 2000). Rarely do educators move beyond the symptom and investigate the underpinning phenomenon that fuels it (Perry, Winne & Woolfolk, 2006).

Here, Grady (2000) argues, when a community is not exposed to other communities outside their own culture and society, their view of the world is quite narrow. This narrow worldview is how prejudice opinions and schemas are developed creating a need for social conscious pedagogy and curriculum tool such as *Theatre for Living*. In a globalized world, “dealing with diversity is not a choice, but our responses to it certainly are” (Howard, 1999, p. 2). Race, ethnicity, social class, economic status, gender, sexual orientation, family units, ability, strengths, weakness, multiple intelligences, multiple literacies, experiences, assumptions, prejudice and ignorance are all examples of the types of diversity that affect our daily interactions with people in and outside the classroom.



Figure 13. Inevitable interactions of difference.
<http://theblacksentinel.wordpress.com/2007/07/27/intolerance-for-tolerance/>

Educating for social and even global consciousness raises awareness of the realities that exist both within and outside of one's own culture and society. In order to truly be effective we must critically investigate circumstances and situations that arise in real life when differing communities attempt to interact. This critical investigation is carried out by becoming aware of, acknowledging, exploring and tackling the seemingly smaller-scale social issues that arise during these interactions which in fact fuel the larger local and global issues. In this study, the critical investigation tool employed is drama.

The first thing that needs to be explored during a dramatic investigation, by both facilitator and student, is the individuals' personal experience. It is through the lens of our individual literacy, culture and society that each of us determines how and in what way we interpret the world around us. Proponents of the field of cultural studies, among others, argue that teaching is not a neutral practice, but rather a social practice instilled with aspects of history, politics, power and culture (Giroux, 1994, p. 234). For Giroux, it is this socio-cultural space that informs the choices that we make as educators as we construct our teaching. Agreeing with

Giroux, Grady (2000) suggests that “whatever we teach our work is loaded with our assumptions about how we see the world” (p. xv); and similarly in his book, *The Courage to Teach*, Parker J. Palmer (1998) argues, “We teach who we are” (p. 2).

As educators, becoming aware of our own attitudes towards social issues raised in the classroom is crucial. We need to be critical of how we influence the classroom and therefore, model the initial process of becoming socially aware. In addition, Grady (2000) states, “students are also grappling with similar complex combinations of identity markers and belief systems” (p. xii). For his part, Parker (1998) acknowledges the fact that students will bring their own literacy, culture and societies into the classroom and will respond to the content and resources that we (teachers) bring through on their own lens which is created from previous experience.

Therefore as educators we must introduce this concept of examining personal literacy to our students and guide them through this initial process of social awareness or *social conscious pedagogy*. Through this pedagogy, an educator facilitates explorations and conversations, orchestrates materials and tasks and creates an environment that encourages and supports the increase of independent thought so that meaningful change is likely to occur (Perry, Winne & Woolfolk, 2006). I believe all of this can be brought about by reengaging the age-old model of storytelling.



Figure 14. From Jesus' parables to native storytelling to today. Storytelling has been a significant part of teaching, learning and understanding for a long time.

As Joe Salas (1993) claims, “when we weave our experiences into stories, we find meaning in what we have undergone” (p. 18). He takes this concept to the next level by stating that “telling our stories to others helps us to integrate the story’s meaning for us personally. It is a way, too, for us to contribute to the universal quest for meaning” (p. 19). Storytelling also plays a central role in Diamond’s *Theatre for Living* work as he encourages his participants to find a collective story or the story of the living community; a fictional story containing actual truths.

Storytelling in drama does not always have to be accomplished by employing concrete language. Utilizing drama techniques such as imagery, gesture, movement, and sound to tell a story allows students to step into and embody their thoughts, feelings, desires, fears, problems and emotions. According to Bernie Warren (1996), “for all people, the body is the primary means of expression” (p. 4). It gives occasion for the students to communicate without having to come up with the “right” words. By simply corresponding through images, movements and gestures within a group, the pressure will be alleviated to employ the “correct language.” This will allow students to develop an appropriate response through image, gesture, sound or spoken language and will allow others to interpret and connect with the story based on their own experiences. Drama theorists claim that drama and theatre are expressions of an emotional and symbolic language. Diamond (2007), for example, argues that “before the evolution of spoken language humans communicated through gesture” (p. 105). This human communication through gesture is directly related to drama and acting and, interestingly challenges our modernist notion of teaching and learning.

Adjusting (the Motivations for) Teaching and Learning

Based on his drama classroom, Miller (2002) argues that the facilitator/teacher should not concentrate on the quality of acting but rather on the exploration of the feelings, reactions and attitudes of those involved. This is because, as Ron Cameron (1999) explains, “the study of acting is scattered by its very nature. What you get out of an exercise depends upon who you are and what you have experienced thus far in life, the values you embrace and the understanding you already possess” (p. 21).

The educators’ intrinsic motivation behind the implementation of Drama Education must be to better individual students, the classroom community, the whole student body and the community outside school. This is accomplished by preparing them for the advancement of their cognitive abilities regarding social consciousness. For Perry *et al.* (2006), teachers should judge their success by the success of their students. As Bernie Warren (2005) stresses:

[C]hanges will likely be because they [teachers/pedagogues] remember that it is the people themselves, not the exercise, improvisation, or play that are important. For people have always been and will continue to be the lifeblood of drama. Without the idiosyncrasies of individual human beings drama workshops, theatre performances, psychodramas and in fact all social interactions simply cease to be (p. 4).

Drama calls for authentic human participation, and as such reflects the complexities of real life. As Miller (2002) suggests many “have argued that drama is one of the most holistic subjects since it can combine several subjects (e.g. English, History, Art and Music) as well as engage the whole person (e.g. the intellectual emotional, physical and spiritual)” (p. 5). For Miller (2002), this is synonymous with Holistic Education and is a major part of current

professional development strategies for educators. The main purpose here is to prepare students to meet the challenges of living as well as to educate the whole student.

To do so, Diamond (2007) argues, drama must ask for, require and result in authentic human participation. Since we cannot predict what our doing does, the results are impossible to predict (p. 52). Using the same program with the same issue but with different students who have different life experiences, produce completely different results. “Defined by human action and interaction, drama is primarily concerned with what happens to participants while they are engaged in the activity” (Warren, 1996, p.3). Warren (1996) continues to argue, “drama has no fixed or end product” (p. 3). Ultimately, my intent is to answer this research question: Keeping in mind Warren’s contention that “drama has no fixed or end product,” what happens when David Diamond’s work is implemented as part of a middle school curriculum?

Chapter Three

Qualitative Constructivist Worldview: A Methodology

In *Qualitative Inquiry & Research Design*, John W. Creswell (2007) acknowledges the difficulty in assigning a *fixed* definition to what he calls the “ever-changing nature of qualitative inquiry” (p. 36; see also Morse & Richards, 2002; Weis & Fine, 2000). But if one is pushed towards a definition, Creswell continues, Denzin and Lincoln’s (2005) definition of qualitative methodology is the most comprehensive:

Qualitative research is a situated activity that locates the observer in the world. It consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible. These practices transform the world. They turn the world into a series of representations, including field notes, interviews, conversations, photographs, recordings and memos to the self. At this level, qualitative research involves an interpretive naturalistic approach to the world. This means that qualitative researchers study things in their natural settings, attempting to make sense of, or interpret, phenomena in terms of the meanings people bring to them. (as cited in Creswell, 2007, p.36).

According to Creswell (2007), qualitative research more than ever “involves closer attention to the interpretive nature of inquiry and situating the study within the political, social and cultural context of the researchers, the participants and the readers of the study” (p. 37; see also LeCompte & Schensul, 1999; Hatch, 2002; Marshall & Rossman, 2006).

Based on these nuanced definitions of qualitative inquiry, the present study was squarely positioned within this tradition. Here, as indicated in the previous statement by Creswell, the study is based on the very personal nature of dealing with students and their specific academic and social learning needs. Alongside of that are the major social issues found within the

community of the school. A qualitative research project like this one is in many ways dependant on pure, raw honesty requested from the students during discussion periods; honesty that pertains to such things as personal connections to the activities and the content explored within the program. That same level of honesty was expected from myself as the researcher as well, as she interpreted, assessed and recorded the data and then described the results.

For Creswell (2007), “qualitative research begins with assumptions, a worldview, and the possible use of a theoretical lens” (p. 37). In my study, I invoked what Creswell calls a *qualitative constructivist worldview*, one where I am able to identify myself in the study and support the utilization of the arts as a cross curricular tool. Most of my reporting is focused on the interpretations that I acquired as I carried out the program in each of the classes, and the potential influence it has on future classroom methods. However, as part of my reporting, I facilitated group discussions with the students where I learned the impact of the program on the students and therefore I will report on potential outcomes of the program. As well, I was able to adjust my explorations and interpretations during the research sessions by adapting some of the elements of the program design based on the feedback and reactions provided by the students.

This qualitative research project is also influenced by a *postmodern paradigm*, where “the basic concept is that knowledge claims must be set within the conditions of the world today and in multiple perspectives of class, race, gender and other group affiliations” (Creswell, 2007, p. 25; see also Bloland 1995; Clark, 2005; Stinger 1993). An interesting way of understanding the postmodern paradigm is to consider it as more than just a theory but as more of a family of theories (Clark, 2005; Slife & Williams, 1995). One of the criticisms of postmodernists, however, is that they “focus their critiques on changing ways of thinking rather than on calling

for action based on these changes” (Creswell, 2007, p. 25). Postmodernists are even sometimes referred to as “armchair radicals” (Thomas, 1993, p.23).

Despite this seemingly negative analysis of a postmodern perspective, changing the way we think about various social issues, such as race/racism within this project, was my intent with the implemented program. In a way, I see this program as the prerequisite for being able to create social action. However, where I extend away from the postmodern paradigm, as we shall see in chapter four, *Expanding a “Pluralistic Perspective”*: *Theatre for Living and Dramatizing the Politics of Empowerment*, is that by the end of the program, or at the very least by the end of a series of programs, there is in fact an ethics, a responsibility and a call for action.

To complement the postmodern paradigm, another perspective that finds its way into my research is *critical theory*. According to Creswell (2007) “Critical theory perspectives are concerned with empowering human beings to transcend the constraints placed on them by race, class, and gender” (p. 27; see also Fay, 1987). Writing in the forward of Diamond’s book, Fritjof Capra makes an observation about *Theatre for Living* that directly aligns the intent of Diamond’s work with the objectives of critical theory. Capra (2007) explains *Theatre for Living*’s ability to facilitate change by “empowering the communities [through] the [symbolic language] of the theatre – words, movement, gestures, dance – to tell their stories, open up new channels of communication, and face difficult problems such as racism, gender stereotypes, addiction, and violence” (p.15).

One of the things Creswell (2007) also highlights about a practicing critical theory perspective is that “researchers need to acknowledge their own power, engage in dialogues, and use theory to interpret or illuminate social action” (2007, p. 27; see also Fay 1987; Madison 2005). If the word “researchers” is substituted with “educators” in Creswell’s quote, we are able

to identify our primary role as educators and the power we have. With this power, however, comes an *ethics of dialogue*. Here, we need to engage in what Freire (1972) calls “true dialogue” rather than preachy monologues about critical social issues. Crucial to the politics of critical theory is the creation of possibilities for taking action outside the classroom regarding social issues (Madison, 2005), which is as much an epistemological question as it is a methodological one.

What Name do We Give: A Methodological Question

The actual methodological design of this project is best described as a *self-study/action research* project. Since this thesis project does not neatly fit into either one of these research methodology as a single or whole design, I feel the need to combine them. According to Hamilton, Smith and Worthington (2008), significant to note, action research goes hand in hand with self study (see also McNiff & Whitehead 2006; Whitehead 2005). Therefore the combination of these two research methods seems to be more of a natural pairing than a forced fusion of two completely different theories.

For Hamilton et al.(2008) self-study is “a look at self in action, usually within educational contexts. These methodologies privilege self in the research design recognizing that addressing the self can contribute to our understanding of teaching and teacher education” (p. 17). In accordance, LaBoskey (2004) states that “the action of self in relation to other(s) reveals the professional identity and knowledge of the researcher” (p. 21). With a more simplified yet all-encompassing explanation, Dinkelman (2003) asserts that self-study involves “intentional and systematic inquiry into one’s own practice” (p. 8) in order to reveal “knowledge about practice” (p. 9). In addition to these definitions, Hamilton et al. (2008) quote LaBoskey’s (2004) outline of the five major components of a self-study: “it is self-initiated and focused; it is improvement-

aimed; it is interactive; it includes multiple, mainly qualitative, methods; and it defines validity as a process based on trustworthiness.” (p. 21; see also Hamilton, 2005; Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Berry (2004) addresses the inspiration or the need for teacher educators to embark on a self-study. “Teacher educators engaging in self-study” he contends, “commonly share a broad motivation to improve the experience of teacher education through improving their teaching practice” (p. 1308). Berry (2004) also outlines four major reasons that motivate teacher educators to embark on self-study which are linked with my own motivations in this thesis project. These include “(a) articulating a philosophy of practice and checking consistency between practice and beliefs, (b) investigating a particular aspect of practice, (c) developing a model of critical reflection, and (d) generating more meaningful alternatives to institutional evaluation” (p. 14; see also Loughran, 2007). Whitehead (1999) articulated this motivation as a series of questions: “How do I improve my practice?” “How do I live my values more fully in my practice?” and “How do I help my students improve the quality of their learning?”

Hamilton et al.(2008) identify that a self-study researcher’s focus is two-fold: first, on studying their current practice by “examining their personal values and their professional work” (p. 24); and, second, on the improvement of practice by “closely attending to self and others in and through their practice” (p. 25). Berry (2004) affirms this by stating that “Teacher educators who choose to study their practice also draw on the idea of credibility as a motivating influence in their work. They ask themselves, how can I be credible to those learning to teach if I do not practice what I advocate for them?” (p. 1308). Accordingly, Loughran (2007) argues, “[a]n important outcome of self-study is embedded in the need to create ways of better understanding what constitutes teachers and/or teacher educators’ professional knowledge and as Hamilton

(2004) made clear one purpose in so doing is not only to better inform the individual involved in the self-study but also to make that knowledge available to others” (p. 17).

In my project, I found self-study useful as a methodological approach because we were concerned with and working through sensitive and emotionally-charged social issues in classrooms. Although it is also not a foreign concept to some classrooms, there is little guidance on how to effectively create experiences where social issues (be it sexism, racism, gender stereotypes, etc.) are able to be addressed without it becoming a situation that causes strife and division within the classroom community. Through the programming that I introduced in this middle school, by means of this thesis project, and through the very specific reflective focus on myself as the educator, my aim is to offer pedagogical tools for educators to undertake, adapt and even improve upon for their own classroom practices.

Action research, on the other hand, is the other component of my research methodology, which as mentioned above is a natural link with self-study. McNiff & Whitehead (2006) authors of *All You Need to Know about Action Research*, my principal source for this project, employs a self-study perspective as a basis, or primary focus, in carrying out action research. Action research, the authors argue, is increasingly popular as a part of professional learning and has been especially prevalent in education. One of the reasons for its popularity is that it is often carried out by the practitioners (teachers, principal, educators) themselves rather than professional outside researchers (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006, 2002). Steinberg and Kincheloe (1998) also address the its popularity and go as far as saying that anyone and everyone can conduct this type of research; from the researcher to the ordinary practitioner to the student. This distinctive method, however, is still considered “a powerful and liberating form of professional

enquiry,” where educators “find ways of living more fully in the direction of their educational values” (McNiff & Whitehead 2006, p. 8).

According to McNiff & Whitehead (2006) “action research has always been understood as people taking action to improve their personal and social situation... [while] educational action research is coming to be seen as a methodology for real world change ” (p. 12; see also McNiff & Whitehead 2000). Heron and Reason (2001) take it as far as emphasizing the potential of action research’s prospective of encouraging greater productivity and even a peaceful world order (see also Heron, 1998). This change can take place because action research is not about being told what to do but rather “deciding what to do in negotiation with others” (McNiff & Whitehead 2006, p. 8). In other words when I look at the social situations in classrooms and ask, what is really happening here? How may I, as a classroom teacher/educator, improve on this in negotiation with my students? I then have embarked on an action research enquiry.

Where my study predominantly fits into the action research model is through the *action – reflection* process of *observe, reflect, act, evaluate, modify*, (McNiff & Whitehead 2006, p.9; see also McNiff et al. 2003, Elliott 1991). McNiff and Whitehead (2006) explain this process, “In your action inquiry you would identify something of concern, try a different way of doing things, reflect on what was happening, and in light of your reflections try a new way that may or may not be more successful” (p.9; see also McDonagh 2000, Mead 2001) As a student teacher I had identified an area of concern in the school system with regard to addressing social issues in the classroom. Through planning and implementation of the drama program, I tried a different way of presenting the subject to the students. During the time in between the first and second weeks, I reflected on what took place. Finally in the second week, I implemented changes to the program based on my reflections of the first week and began the process over again. As you will see in

Chapters Five and Six some of the changes were successful while others were not. I also identify in those chapters even more changes I would make were I given the opportunity to facilitate this program again.

One of the key elements in linking action research with self-study is establishing myself as an *insider researcher* where I am more than just an educator; I am a part of the situation I am investigating; I am a citizen of the classroom community. McNiff & Whitehead (2006) explain it thus: “personal theories are especially powerful for sustainable educational change. Sustainable change happens when people create and implement their own ideas rather than only accept and implement the ideas of others” (p. 12). Therefore I have implemented a self-developed program which is fundamentally based on the works of prevalent drama theorists such as David Diamond Augusto Boal, Sharron Grady and others in order to create sustainable change within social aspects of the classroom.

Finally, as we shall see, I am also offering a summative evaluation on the effectiveness of the programs for both myself as an educator and for the students. Through reflection of/on myself as the facilitator of the programs and through my interpretation of students’ feedback, I am asking: Is my/our work going as we wish? How do we improve it where necessary? Part of reflecting, McNiff (2003) argues, allows necessary changes to be made as participants experience the program. This reflection process becomes most important for me, the research/educator because as McNiff & Whitehead (2006) explain “The basis for [my] research is that [I] am trying to live in the direction of [my] educational values” (p.19, see also p. 46).

In the following chapter I offer a step-by-step daily account of the program. First, I explain how I received the initial invitation to conduct this research at a school. Then I will describe the planning process and my rationale for each of the activities and exercises chosen.

Third, I will discuss my daily experiences at the school while implementing the program. Fourth, I will discuss my findings and, finally, offer concluding remarks and reflections on the actual practice and implementation of this entire program within the middle school setting.

Chapter Four

Moving from Methodology to Method: An Invitation

The invitation to go into the school came long before I had even decided the details of this thesis project. For an assignment in a preliminary post-graduate class on conducting research, I was required to perform interviews on a subject of interest. I chose to interview a close family friend about the programming that was already taking place in schools within her board surrounding two specific areas of significance - social awareness and the arts. I broke it down into two separate interviews. Within the context of the second interview, however, which focused on arts-based programming, I incorporated inquiries into existing programs that combined social awareness and dramatic arts.⁵

After carrying out these interviews, my friend informed me that my questions paralleled those of her school board, which identified them as gaps to be remedied. On her own volition, she informed a principal about what I had been investigating. Since the principal was familiar with my background training in cross-curricular dramatic-arts work in the classroom, I was invited to come to the school and conduct an interdisciplinary drama workshop. I was elated by this invitation to put some of my ongoing assumptions and even questions about drama-based education into practice. After careful considerations of the efforts required in carrying out this request, I decided to take on this prospect, hence this research project.

⁵ See appendix A for interview outlines.

Wildest Dreams: Planning a Workshop

The original outline including the curriculum expectations can be found in Appendix B. In the following sub-section I will discuss the process that went into planning each of the five days, explaining my rationale for partnering other drama activities with Diamond's work as well as explaining breaking apart or stretching *Wildest Dreams* into a 5-day workshop. In the next chapter; *Chapter Five: Putting the Plan into Practice: A Personal Look at a Facilitator's Experience*; I will describe in detail what the students have actually created and the emotions and mindsets that surround my experiences as the facilitator of this project

The details were finalized by January of 2009 and I was given an official invitation to implement a week-long unit with two classes within the middle school in March of that same year. Each session took place within the timeframe of one 100 minute period per day for five days and focused on a social issue that each of the classes collaboratively deemed worthy of exploration and discussion. The two populations I was to be working with were a grade 7/8 split and a grade 8 class in an affluent part of a large metropolitan city in southern Ontario. I was given the responsibility to facilitate each class through a program which addressed a social issue while following the Ontario Curriculum Standards for Language Arts and the Arts.

Suddenly, I had a lot of planning ahead of me. Fortunately, I had already determined at that point that I would put into action Diamond's community drama work within the classroom. Therefore, the bulk of the unit directly followed a workshop outlined in Diamond's book, *Theatre for Living: The Art and Science of Community Based Dialogue*. However, in order to make this workshop fit into both the schedule I was given by the school and the Ontario Curriculum Standards, I brought in additional resources to assist in the re-designing of the workshop.

The Diamond workshop I chose to employ was entitled *Wildest Dreams*. I chose this workshop for a number of reasons. First, the workshop was an original technique which came directly out of Diamond's work with *Theatre for Living*. Unlike a lot of the other exercises outlined by Diamond, which are considered an adapted, modified and enhanced version of Augusto Boal's work in *Theatre of the Oppressed*, otherwise known as Boal-based work (see Diamond, 2007; Richard, 2002), *Wildest Dreams* is a technique that was developed by and unique to Diamond himself. For this research project, I wanted my focus to remain specifically on Diamond's extended work with *Theatre for Living* as opposed to some of his connected work with Augusto Boal. As previously explained, divergent to most of Boal's work, the central focus for *Theatre of Living* is less about the identity of oppression and more about the dysfunction of a community which I believe is a perfect fit for many North American schools.

The second reason I chose *Wildest Dreams* was the constraint of time. When Diamond enters a community to facilitate workshop activities, exercises and/or forum theatre presentations he often requires full 8-hour days. I, on the other hand, was given 100 minutes or 2 periods per day with the students. Since *Wildest Dreams* is usually a 2-3 full-day workshop, I was given the task of stretching it over the period of 5 days, accumulating up to 500 minutes. Due to the very crowded Ontario Ministry of Education curriculum requirements, time is often an issue for classroom teachers as well. Therefore, while integrating the activities and exercises with the curriculum, I could test whether this program could in fact be effective in smaller parts. The tricky part in *Wildest Dreams* is the need for intense continuity, which would not be possible with the students' schedules. If I could not make this work under those conditions then how could I expect other teachers to benefit from this program?

Third, *Wildest Dreams* was chosen because it is advertised as being designed to work best in a community of people who know each other, who have relationships and who share some type of geography with one another (Diamond, 2007). The students in this study know each other and have formed relationships as classmates. Also the geography that the students share is the school itself and the classroom. Although some also share the out-of-school community, it could not be assumed that everyone was from the same community background. Therefore the spotlight here was the school/classroom community, tackling their dysfunction with the hope that they may transfer their understanding from this experience to their outside communities.

Finally, I was motivated to choose *Wildest Dreams* because of a statement Diamond (2007) made about the focus of this technique. “The focus ... is not an external issue that may concern the community; the focus is the community itself. How can a community work effectively on issues of concern if it is itself dysfunctional?” (p. 203). Thus I was left with my original question: What will happen if we implement *Theatre for Living* in a middle school? More specifically in this case: what would happen if we apply *Wildest Dreams* in this community of middle school students who are at an age where they are beginning to wrestle with complex social issues that exist within their communities?

Having an understanding of my planning process is important because David Diamond’s work is not foreign in some academic circles. However, his programs are seemingly always implemented as an event: one workshop, one week, one time. Personally, I am not convinced that one week of implementation is enough to see social or academic changes. I realize that by having been in a classroom for only a week, I am likely to have a similar, if not lower, percentage of long-term effects as Diamond. However, through the process of connecting

Diamond's program to the Ontario Curriculum Requirements and then applying it within the classroom I have offered a preliminary glimpse at the potential of those changes. It therefore allows for the generation of these programs to be applied, modified, adapted, enhanced but most importantly supported and implemented as part of regular curriculum and teaching methods. Moreover, what I am investigating is the potential that the units, based on Diamond's work as a regular/reoccurring teaching method, could have academically and socially with middle school students.

If these workshops become a reoccurring part of curriculum, Diamond (2007) cautions us not to fall into the trap of developing a set formula for the workshops: "Once one adopts a formula, one is no longer present inside the moment with the people in the room" (p. 60). Each workshop will and should have a unique set of characteristics which include various strengths and weaknesses. Although, it is evident that facilitators must be fully prepared ahead of time, as I believe to have exemplified in my outline of the program⁶, they must also be flexible and must listen and assess the participants' responses and reactions to the work. It would be wise for any facilitator to develop a bank of drama activities from which one can easily employ interchangeably and thus make appropriate adjustments or modifications to the "plan." As explained above I exemplify this flexibility in the forthcoming sections "Diaries of Week 1 & 2".

Something important to note before delving into this explanation is that from an educator's perspective I was working at a point of disadvantage right from the onset. As will be discussed in more detail in Chapter Six, the conclusion of this text, the biggest drawback I was facing came in the form with not knowing my students. All I had to work with at this stage was the basic statistics that surrounded the school community. The families that make up this

⁶ See Appendix B.

community are predominantly middle class with various ethnic backgrounds. English as a second language (ESL) accommodations are a dominant practice among the classroom educators in this board. Although the cultural backgrounds are quite diverse there is a prevailing culture of Middle Eastern students and interestingly enough an almost equal distribution of Jewish and Muslim culture. Based on this information I probably could have guessed that racism would be a prominent social issue that affected this community. At this point, however, I also did not know the social issue we would be exploring as I had asked the classroom teachers to collaborate with their students, closer to the date of my arrival, in choosing the issue they would like to address. So, I decided to go ahead and think through the Unit I will be implementing. Along with its rationale, here it is detailed:

Planning For Day 1:

Gesture Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Ask students to think of one gesture that is typical of their own personality—for example, a shoulder shrug, a spin, air guitar, a mimed activity, etc. Gather the students into a circle. Everyone shares their gesture with their name. After each person shares, the whole class repeats and as you make your way around the circle the class continues to repeat all those that have gone before.

Diamond commences the first day of every workshop with a full session of theatre games and the first moments of each day with opening games since “games are integral to the investigation” (Diamond, 2007, p. 91). Bernie Warren (1996) also talks about the “less obvious, implicit and explicit educational benefits of drama games” and lists them thus: enjoyment, social integration, personal contact, body awareness and physical control, creativity and self-expression, cognitive skill development and greater accessibility (p. 4). According to Warren (1996) these games contain a vast range of potential benefits for students as long as we, as educators, emphasize that no special talent or training is required. Therefore, every student has

the ability to participate if he/she chooses. The introductory activities of my program, designed for middle school students within the requirements of the Ontario Curriculum Standards, were a compilation of Diamond's work and complementary drama-based teaching techniques proposed by other drama theorists.

Introduction Circle (10 minutes)

This is a discussion circle where I introduce myself and the project, discuss what will be happening and what will be expected of the students.

Diamond also begins each workshop with an "Introduction Circle" where everyone has the opportunity to introduce him/herself equally. According to Diamond, in the circle the students and the "joker" (i.e., facilitator) acquaint the class with any expectations they have for participation, cooperation, behaviour and the process of the workshop. They may also share anything else about themselves they wish. The Introduction Circle should always include the classroom teacher, and in this case, I, as a visitor to the community, was a part of the equal sharing. As Diamond (2007) asserts, "the first moments of the workshop set the tone for the workshop" (p. 87). Therefore, it was imperative that during the Introduction Circle I, the joker/facilitator/educator/researcher, was appropriately open about who I was and what I was doing there. This model ideally encourages the students to also be positive and open minded throughout the rest of the workshop. In those first moments it is important to ensure that the students understood that I value their participation, input and expertise because without those things there would be nothing to explore (Diamond, 2007).

Balancing (15 minutes)

· *Pulling*

Partner the students. They will face each other, take each other by the wrists, and lean out taking each other's weight so that if one would let go, the other would fall. The goal is to stay balanced and sit down. Then proceed to stand up. Do this a few times. Then join another partnership

creating a circle of 4, then 8 then 16...

· Pushing

Partner the students. Begin by explaining to the students that this game is not about winning or losing but again about finding a balance of strength. Explain that naturally one person will be stronger and one will be weaker physically. The one who is stronger should push less and the person who is less strong should push more. They will stand facing each other and place their hands on each other's shoulders and push. This activity should be done without speaking.

Balancing is a game that Diamond also consistently employs on the first day of every workshop regardless of the community. He explains that this activity exhibits the essence of drama: conflict. As, Diamond (2007) describes it, "one character wants one thing, the other wants something else. Those two desires are in opposition to each other, this creates drama" (p. 89). This game is intended to be a predecessor for the images and improvisations made throughout the workshop where, as Diamond (2007) illustrates, "the characters are all struggling with each other about the issue we are investigating. They are all ... pushing against each other. If they don't do this there can be no drama." (p. 89). As a facilitator of this game in a middle school classroom I realized that I needed to stress the instructions to find the balance with their partners, meaning *not* trying to push each other over. As long as carried out appropriately, it is a symbolic representation of working together in partners or small groups, i.e., balancing..

Image Circle (20 minutes)

First, form a circle, then partner students as A & B. "Partner A stand in a circle with your backs to each other!" "Partner B stands facing your partner!" Partner A is the intelligent clay and Partner B is the sculptor. Sculptors are responsible for their partner's limbs, facial expressions, etc. There is no talking during this activity. The sculptor may use his/her own body and face as an example and then the clay will imitate. The sculptor can then make adjustments. This is where the concept of intelligent clay comes to play. The intelligent clay must attempt to fill the shape with thought and emotion that is indicated by the body position he/she is being placed in. After each image is ready, all the sculptors walk around the circle and observe the other images and then the partners will switch.

Begin by having each of the student sculpt basic things (e.g., emotions, actions, thoughts, etc.). Next, have the sculptors create an image that relates to the issue under investigation. As they walk around the circle this time ask them to reflect upon and even silently interpret some of the

images that they see. Instead of having them switch they will make a second image about the topic. Again as they walk around ask the sculptors to reflect on the images they are seeing. The intelligent clay can then relax but must remember their image. Finally, ask one sculptor to offer their image to the center of the circle and then one at a time each sculptor will bring their image to the center and place it in relation to the others. (Sculptors cannot change their image at all; they should place it where they think it would make sense in relation to the next.) After every image has been placed in the center, each sculptor then has a second chance to adjust their placement if they feel that there may be a better place for it. "Now sculptor, what do you see?" Have a brief discussion about what is happening in this randomly made image.

Image Circle is an activity that I learned through my undergraduate work and have utilized on numerous occasions for many different situations. Diamond employs a version of this technique which he calls *sculpture partners*. The motivation behind this activity, according to Diamond (2007), is to allow the group to make personal images. As he explains “they [the participants] should leave the room having a sense of what the rest of the workshop is going to entail, and a sense that the image work that reflects their own life experiences is central to the workshop” (p. 95). In my program, it was a great way for the students to practice directing others in the creation of an image without speaking, a skill which will be necessary for future drama activities. This is one of my favourite activities because it is always interesting to see the differences and similarities of the students’ images which are all based on a single word – humour, for example – with both concrete and abstract meaning.

This activity was also an effective way to practice the process of linking the images to the language of the workshop. As will be discussed further in the section below, *Expanding a Pluralistic Perspective*, it was crucial to initialize this activity to help locate the *here of the group*, that is to seek out a sense of cohesion and togetherness when addressing the social issue. Basically, this activity allows a facilitator to begin formulating an understanding of where the class is with regard to the subject matter. One way to do this is to begin with familiar language or “fun words” to spark the participants’ interest in the game and then slowly move on to language

that is central to the issue under investigation. This single word could represent emotions, actions, ideas, etc. By making observations and reflections on how the students chose to represent each word, I was able to make sense of the students' states of minds and the *here* of their social consciousness.

In order to bring the activity full circle, I often challenged the students' reflection by asking them to identify words they saw exhibited in the images other than the original word. This was done near the end of the activity, once the students were comfortable with creating images. For example, one of the words I asked students to exhibit was "hate." In response, they also created images depicting "violence," "anger," and "fear," to name just a few. By first creating an image from a word they heard and then associating other words with it, students created links and connections with other aspects of the issue in question: hate. Thus, they created a broader understanding of the issue. This was especially effective when they created images from the language associated with racism, the explored issue.

Group Image (35 min)

In small groups each student will make an image using themselves and other people in their group. If there are five people in a group then there should be five images. The image should depict an actual moment in their life where they were struggling with the issue under investigation. This MUST be their own moment, not a friend or a relative's or something they have heard. They may play as the protagonist, antagonist, by-stander, direct or indirect victim; but it must be a personal moment. The image may contain as little as two people and as many as there are people in the group. The sculptors must also place themselves in the image as themselves. Similar to the image circle, the sculptors must sculpt without speaking. Therefore they will not be sharing their story verbally with the others at this point.

Next, all the group images will be presented. After the presentation the other students will vote on one that they connected with the most. The one with the majority of votes will present their image again, only this time they will experience a form of image activation. Students in the image will be tapped on the shoulder and they will be asked to put a voice to the image. Here I will be asking them to identify their character's wants. .

The final activity on Day One was Group Images or as Diamond calls it *groups of 4 (or 5...)*. This activity is also a constant at the end of the first day of many of Diamond's workshops. The motivation behind this activity is similar to that of the previous activity but it differs in application. For this activity, we are no longer naming the images being created. As Diamond (2007) explains, "by not naming the images we start to break down the artificial barriers between the individual consciousness and that of the group" (p. 98). Therefore the group image activity was essential in initializing the crucial process of moving from an "I" to a "we" mentality as was also described in the section above.

Diamond illustrates the potential impact of this activity by depicting through example the power of images:

An image originates from the experience of one person. That person makes a specific image. She knows who the characters are what they are thinking, doing, feeling. Her only way to convey this to her clay, though, is to sculpt them in detail.....Once the participant puts her very specific but unnamed image in front of the group; it ceases to be her sole property. It starts to become an image of the living community....each individual participant is going to view the unnamed image from their own perspective, informed by their own life experiences. They may see and feel the image differently, but what they experience will very often be linked by emotional content to the central experience of the original image creator (p. 98).

During the closing of the *Group Image* activity, there is a true movement from an "I" to a "we." The students are given a brief introduction to a process Diamond calls *Image Activation*. According to Diamond (2007), this is a very crucial part of all the image exercises he uses throughout the workshop process. As he explains it, "activating the images is a deepening of the

community dialogue. Each activation is really a question that the workshop participants answer through action” (p. 100). By dialogue, Diamond is not talking about an actual dialogue between the characters on stage; but rather a symbolic dialogue for the whole community surrounding aspects of the issue under investigation. Therefore, Diamond is not asking the students to make the whole image come to life by using improvisational skills to act out the story, at least not at this point. Diamond is guiding them through a process of looking underneath the image, by digging into the deeper consciousness of their characters’ motivations and inner thoughts. As Diamond affirms “integral to image activation is the internal monologue” (p. 100).

Working with students at the middle school level, I was concerned about their ability to obtain this level of higher consciousness. I was not sure how to assist in an understanding of the concepts of inner thoughts, feeling and emotions; concepts which are not normally spoken out loud, or in those terms. Diamond’s solution for this is to give the participants a phrase to begin the sentences that express their internal monologue, such as “I want ...” As Diamond (2007) explains, “[it] is not determining the content of the sentence. It is a tool to help them focus. What happens from this request? Each character wants something. It is human nature. The *want* is a motivation for action. The request helps the participant clarify what he wants” (p. 102).

Closing Circle (5-10 minutes)

Students share their expectations for the rest of the week

A closing circle at the end of each day, which I used as part of my implemented program, is also something that has been enforced by all of my professors and mentors since my days as an undergraduate. It not only allowed the students to reflect on that day’s summative task but it also allowed the students to reflect upon the day as a whole. Also, I found that the closing circle permitted a temporary closure of the content for the students. The content we investigated could

be quite heavy and the students still had to leave the classroom and go on functioning normally for the remainder of the day, either in other classes or at home. Therefore, it was important for me as the facilitator to be conscious of both the potential emotional impact caused by the content within exercises and the students' physiological needs in relation to that content; that is, their bodily reaction.

To explain, the students had different needs on different days, or they had multiple needs within the same day. Sometimes they needed to let out pent up thoughts, feelings, emotions or ideas. For this I used a talking stick, which was passed around the circle and through which students could choose to say what they pleased. Sometimes I noted they needed a summary in order not to feel uneasy or unsure about what they had experienced. For this, I asked a few guided questions and on one occasion I asked each student for one word to characterize some of the insights of the day. Finally, one day, when the content was really heavy, I let them unwind and we performed light, fun theatre games I had prepared. For that reason it was crucial to maintain an awareness of my students throughout each session and leave time to meet their needs in a closing circle.

Planning For Day 2:

Both Warren (1996) and Diamond (2007) argue that games, unlike how they are often regarded, are not simply mindless warm-ups for the drama, but also play the role of mediator for the social issue. Each game will be experienced differently and filtered through the various life experiences that exist within the classroom. To strengthen this effect Diamond takes a few moments following each activity for students to reflect. Similar to Diamond's method, I asked students two very simple questions after each activity: What did that activity have to do with the topic under investigation? What was inside this activity for you?

Although Diamond does this right from the onset I decided to initialize this discussion on day two. Day 1 exercises were primarily to assess and encourage participation levels with the drama activities while only briefly touching on the social issue. Our Day 2 focus will be taking a bigger step in exploring the social issue through the activities. In fact, as you will see throughout this plan, each day the games, exercises and workshop activities become more advanced. They are constantly going back and forth between the “I” and the “we” and each day the “we” gets bigger and includes more collaborative work. The improvisational drama techniques also advance, moving from the single and collective still images to gestures, movements, mime and then speech- first in the form of an internal monologue or secret thoughts and then finally to a purposeful dialogue.

Yes Let’s! (10 minutes)

Divide the students into partners or a group of three. Any member of the group makes a suggestion, e.g. “Let’s climb a mountain”. The rest of the group summon up all their enthusiasm and exclaim “Yes Let’s!” and mime doing so. And the game continues until each member of the groups has had two or three turns suggesting an activity.

“Yes, Lets!,” which was my first activity in the second day, is a game documented by Bernie Warren (1996), in his book *Drama Games* as a collaborative warm-up game. According to Warren (1996), this game employs and helps develop skills in both social integration and creativity and self-expression. Social integration involves “acquiring skills necessary to good social functioning, building cooperation and trust with peers, and understanding the rules of social performance or generally improving social interactions” (p. 28). Creativity and self-expression, on the other hand, involve “developing expressive and receptive language, encouraging sensory awareness, and enhancing imagination, spontaneity and abstract thought” (p. 28). From many previous experiences with this game as both a participant and a facilitator, there is also a high level of enjoyment involved in it and it is a great way to bring a class

together.

Complete the Image (20 minutes)

Gather students into a large circle. Take a brief moment to explain the importance of not naming an image and allowing for different interpretations. Then ask one of the students to volunteer to come into the middle and offer the class an image it does not have to mean anything at this point, just a shape in space). Next have a second person come in-and without speaking or miming or explaining in anyway (just by offering a frozen image)-complete the image so it tells a story. Then send the first person back to the circle. Ask the students to reflect on what they see now and ask someone else to come in and complete this image. Repeat this pattern for a few minutes and then add a third person to the image and continue. Finally have the students clear the circle and announce that you are now making images about the issue under investigation. Repeat the pattern above but continue adding more and more students.

Complete the Image is an exercise that Diamond often employs on the first day of a workshop. Because I adapted a 3-day workshop into 5 short days, I chose to bring it in on the second day. It was a perfect prelude to the initial steps of the core of the unit which began on that day. This exercise was also a fitting extension from the previous day's activities. On day one individual stories were shared through image; on day two individuals intertwined their stories by completing the images offered by their classmates. Therefore they each called upon their individual experience to create a collaborative image and by doing so the students began to tell a shared story.

The bulk of Diamond's workshops is creating images because according to Diamond (2007), "images are the core building block of theatre" (p. 93). For Diamond, it is through games like *Complete the Image* where there is an intersection of personal and collaborative images that the stories of the living community begin to emerge. Therefore, when "working with the living community it is essential to discover that images can emerge in an organic way" and, as Diamond (2007) stresses, the joker (i.e., the facilitator, the teacher) must "create an environment in which the group conscious can express itself, sometimes at a subconscious level, using the

language image” (p. 93). This was what I attempted to do, and for the sake of the participants, it was important to keep in mind that “this process can be fun even when the images are about very serious topic” (p. 93)

Wildest Dreams Intro (30 minutes)

Begin by making practice images of the dysfunction of their community (in relation to the social issue). To create the images, begin with one person and then add until no one has anything left to offer. The images may include from two to all of the participants. Once these are made, take a few moments to have the students reflect on what they saw and then try to synthesize them.

Repeat four or five times and then separate students into groups. Each group will also create images of the dysfunction of their community (in relation to the social issue). Have each group create an image where everyone in the group is involved, present their image, and discuss briefly. Then invite students to add anything to this image either by moving an existing character or adding themselves in. Similar idea to complete the image.

As mentioned above, the program outline I followed is an original technique created by Diamond entitled *Wildest Dreams*. This technique was inspired by Paulo Freire’s (1994) notion that: “...you never get there by starting from there, you get there from starting from here” (p. 58). As Diamond (2007) explains, “when one enters a community as an educator from the outside, one must begin where the [students] are not where the educators wishes they were” (p. 202). Therefore, *Wildest Dreams* was actually designed to enable the process of moving a community from their sense of *here*, where they are currently struggling with the issue, to a sense of *there*, which is where they want to be in regards to the issue. It was designed, as Diamond emphasizes, “to help communities envision a path from here to there” (p. 203). In this activity we focus specifically on the “here”.

Graffiti-Wall (5 minutes)

A large paper role is laid out in the middle of the floor. Members of the workshop are encouraged to write or draw single descriptive words, phrases or pictures of what they saw in the images presented. Once everyone who wants the opportunity has contributed, the paper role

is hung on the wall and the content of it is read aloud by the facilitator.

Diamond's original outline included using a Polaroid camera to document the images. As visiting researcher/facilitator, however, I was aware that pictures could be taboo. Therefore I chose to have students use language, written and oral, to describe the images through an activity called *Graffiti Wall*. This is yet another technique I experienced in my undergraduate studies, where students can use words, symbols or drawings to express their thoughts, emotions, ideas, opinions or summaries about the image work being created in the classroom. By placing the role of paper on the wall and making it a part of the classroom for the remainder of the unit it is a constant reminder of the content being explored. It can also be a point of reference for both the students' reflection and the teacher's instruction. All through the unit, I allowed students to add their graffiti whenever something of interest to them came up. As the students explored and dug deeper into the topic under investigation (racism), they also develop more of an understanding of what was, or sometimes what should have been, involved in their previous image work. This exercise was also a great way to reinforce the link with the Language Arts curriculum requirements.

Wildest Dreams – Stage II (25 minutes)

The end result will be to create one large image that encompasses all of the ideas from the graffiti wall.

Day two's summative task involved one last collaborative image that encompassed all of the experiences of dysfunctional racism that were expressed by the students through the multiple images being created and recorded on the Graffiti Wall. This summative task was about bringing it all together for the class and as Diamond has argued "so now the task is not to create *an* image of dysfunction but *the* image of dysfunction – that is a representation of the core dysfunction of

the community” (p. 205). Afterwards students create a caption and a brief description for this image on chart paper and put it on the wall for future use.

Image Activation (5 minutes)

The students in the image will be tapped on the shoulder and they will be asked to put a voice to the image. Here I will be asking them to identify their character's secret thought and or internal monologue.

For the second part of this task which included *Image Activation* (i.e., (re)making use of the image), I wanted the students to advance from the previous day's version of this activity and dig deeper into the character's internal monologue. Therefore instead of using the phrase “I want ...” I employed another phrase suggested by Diamond: “I wish...”. “I wish ...” is different than “I want ...” in that it does not directly imply to the action and in fact, in this project, it contradicted the action of the image on many occasions. Although it needed to make sense, “I wish ...” gave the students a chance to identify with a character as a bystander or victim caught up in a bad situation. On one occasion it told a small part of a bully's story. Generally speaking, the students explored the complex layers of the issue in question (racism or bullying for example) and the people implicated in it, whether victims or perpetrators. This is the ultimate objective of my program.

Final Words (5 minutes)

In the circle, go around and get one word from each student to characterize some of the insights from today's discussion. Encourage students to keep these ideas in mind as we move further into the issue.

Having reached (of course modestly) my objective on this second day, I noted that it was a heavy day for the students. They participated in quite a bit of reflection throughout the exercises combined with learning new drama techniques such as image activation. Working on these many

layers required more time to process than I had planned. Therefore, for this closing circle I allowed students to simply close with one last final word that reflected more about themselves as participants; rather than commenting on the activities, exercises and image work they experienced. This of course was optional and students always had the right to pass.

Planning For Day 3:

Whose Hands are These? (20 minutes)

This game is played in two stages. In the first stage, a player sits on a chair in the middle of a circle blindfolded. One at a time, other players gently touch the player in the center (on the shoulder, the top of the head, or the player may wish to sit with his/her palms out to be touched). The seated player has to guess whether the person touching him/her is male or female.

In the second stage, a player sits in the center of a circle blindfolded, with their hands resting on their knees and palms up. One at a time, other players approach the person in the middle and place their hands palm down on top of the first player's hands. The player in the center tries to determine who it is through examination of the person's hands. Briefly discuss what it feels like to be in both roles

For me, *Whose Hands are These?* was a great way to springboard into a real discussion about assumptions, prejudice and bias based solely on physicality. Sometimes, based on subconscious and conscious assumptions, prejudice, and biases, we are symbolically blindfolded, where we can only “see” and therefore form opinions based on physicalities such as: skin colour, gender, disabilities, and even signs of lower or higher social economic status. Therefore, through this simple process of engaging the students in the game, critical reflection focused on some of their own faulty assumptions, prejudice, and biased opinions based on physicality, specifically related to the issue under investigation.

Fill the Space (10 minutes)

Everyone walks around the room, eyes open, relaxed. Be aware of each other. Now, be aware of the spaces in between you and the other people, you and the walls. Fill the empty spaces. Do not let there be any empty space. Now allow the students to move faster, continuing to fill the empty space. Allow the students to move around for a few moments and then freeze them. Ask them to join arms with the person closest to them. Now in partners fill the empty space. Now in threes.

Some will have to split up and form new groups (have the students figure it out and count down from 6). Always begin with a relaxed pace and then allow them to move faster. Finally, have the students break off individually again and fill the empty space remaining at an up-beat pace.

Fill the Space is a game designed to get the students moving and familiar with the space in the classroom. Although it would usually be employed earlier in Diamond's workshops, and the students were fairly familiar with the space. I used this workshop as a transition from the previous activity and discussion, where the students were predominantly sitting, into the continuation of the *Wildest Dreams* exercise. It gave the students a chance to *shake their sillies out* before entering into the main content of the day. The content and structure of *Fill the Space* was also an idyllic parallel for the evolution of the workshop itself where as a group we continued moving from individual effort to collaborative effort. Finally this activity also offered an opportunity to discuss effective ways to begin tackling the issue under investigation both individually and as a group.

Wildest Dreams-Stage III (30 minutes)

One person begins by making practice image of a completely perfect, functional utopian community (in relation to the social issue). To create the images, begin with one person and then add until no one has anything left to offer. The images may include from two to all of the participants. Once these are made, take a few moments to have the students reflect on what they saw then try to synthesize them. Do this 4-5 times and then separate the students into groups. Each group will also create images of a completely perfect, functional utopian community (in relation to the social issue). Have each group create an image where everyone in the group is involved, present their image, and discuss briefly. Then invite students to add anything to this image either by moving an existing character or adding themselves in. A similar idea to completes the image.

The activities involved in the third stage of the *Wildest Dreams* exercise were in essence a replica of the first stage except this time the students made images of their healthy, functional community. This was the students' opportunity to identify the collaborative *there* – where the students want to be. This was often a difficult concept for students to grasp because it was not their reality and, for me it seemed easier to give them a frame of reference from the images

created on the previous day even though Diamond cautions us against this. He stresses that it is important that we do not treat the activity as a reaction or response to the images of dysfunction. As Diamond (2007) asserts, “we are imagining that the dysfunction, struggles, oppression do not exist. In this wild fantasy what does the community look and feel like?” (p. 206). For example, he adds, just because a community is not struggling with a social issue such as racism does not mean that the members of that community are constantly hugging, singing or skipping their way through life. For my students, this was not a realistic sense of “there” to recognize as a goal. It was important, therefore, for me to take as much instruction and practice time as required until I saw there was an understanding of the concepts displayed within the images. . Ultimately, the task was not to create *an* image of healthy functional community but *the* image of a healthy functional community – that is, a collective representation of the core ideal of the class.

Graffiti-Wall (5 min)

A large paper role is laid out in the middle of the floor. Members of the workshop are encouraged to write or draw single descriptive words, phrases or pictures of what they saw in the images presented. Once everyone who wants to has contributed to the activity has, the paper role is hung on the wall and its content is read aloud by the facilitator.

Once the students had exhibited ideal yet realistic images of a healthy, functional community I engaged them once again in the *Graffiti Wall* activity exactly as described in Day 1.

Wildest Dreams – Stage IV (25 minutes)

The end result will be one large image that encompasses all of the ideas from the graffiti wall.

A replica of Day 2’s Wildest Dreams Stage II.

Image Activation (5 minutes)

The students in the image will be tapped on the shoulder and they will be asked to put a voice to the image. Here, I will be asking them to identify their character’s secret thought and or internal monologue

For day three’s Image Activation, I asked the students to begin their reflection with the

phrase “I wonder”. Here the intent was to instigate the concept of thinking, to talk about what was on their minds. If there was no fear, no hate, no struggle of any sorts what would inhabit their thought world? By activating the image using phrase “I wonder...” students were once again required to explore, interpret and reflect on what the situation would be like without the issue; that is, imagining the possibilities of finding a resolution for that issue.

Final Words (5 minutes)

In the circle, go around and get one word from each student to characterize some of the insights from today’s discussion. Encourage students to keep these ideas in mind as we move further into the issue. Briefly discuss the difference between yesterday’s words and today’s.

Day 3 was another heavy day in regards to both content and reflection. Once again for the closing circle I allowed students to simply sum up that day with one final word.

Planning For Day 4:

The Power Game (20 minutes)

Place a chair, desk, book and other small props in the middle of the circle. Invite one person to enter the circle, arranging the objects to make a naturalistic or abstract scene in which one chair appears to be the most powerful object. Objects can be moved or put anywhere within the space. Invite other students to redesign the space so that different objects seem more powerful.

Next, one student enters the space and makes a frozen image, assuming a high status position. Other participants are invited to enter one by one and freeze in position, each trying to assume a higher status than everybody else in the stage picture.

After each image, discuss what was powerful about it, what strategies worked the best and how the students felt when they assumed power and when their power was overridden and finally what does power have to do with?

The *Power Game* is a game that was presented to me as a part of my teacher training. Since I was introduced to it, it has probably been the most recycled game in my collection of drama activities. I believe that the notion of power is a significant part of all cultures. Power does not have any one way of expressing itself; in fact the possibilities for the expression of power are endless. There is also the concept of what/who we as people, both individually and

collaboratively, give power to or recognize as powerful. The perception of power in our North American communities is connected with every subject. This game was a subtle and interesting way to begin to address notions of power with the students.

This game allowed the students to first visualize and the notion of power by organizing and reorganizing random objects in the middle of a circle. Then, once the students took the random object out and put themselves into the circle in positions of power (over another in the circle), they had the opportunity to physically and mentally experience the perception of power and being powerful, as well as the notion of being under that power as new people came into the circle and “trumped” the power that they had exhibited. As each new image/position of power entered the circle I always have the class vote on which image was more powerful. By doing this there was a collaborative community-based notion of power. If the class thought the first image offered was still more powerful then the individual would remain in the circle until someone was able to offer a more powerful image. If the class thought the second image was more powerful than the first image, the participant that offered the first image rejoined the outside circle. As I facilitated this activity, I asked three probing question in order get the students to reflect on their acknowledgment of power: What/Who has the power here? Why do they have it? How did they get it?

This *Power Game* opened the door and allowed the students an occasion to investigate, identify, discuss and dissect as a community the characteristics of power. First, What is power? What does it look like in our community? It may be about wealth, physical strength, violence, knowledge, fear, popularity, etc. In previous experiences and also in this experience with this game, I saw students focus on height, where the more powerful images just kept getting taller. I have also seen groups of students consider power as leading a large group and others consider

power as being separate from the group. Once the students identified the collaborative description of power in their community we then asked the most important question: What does power have to do with the issue under investigation? In this case both sets of students from both the classes thought that power was very significant in respect to racism. The grade 8 class focused their observations and reflections on the abuse of power that they saw in both their local community and the larger community worldwide.

Fear/Protector (10 minutes)

Students stand in a circle. Ask the students to choose, without talking, students they are going to pretend to be afraid of. Then ask the students to choose again, without talking or making it obvious, a different person they are going to pretend to be their protector. Their goal will be to keep their protector in between them and the person they are afraid of. They can use the entire room.

Fear/Protector is an activity documented by Diamond (2007). This is another activity which initiated deeper reflection and it extended the reflection from the last game to a more personal/internal connection. For this unit, I asked a few additional questions. One of them was: What was inside this activity for you? An additional question was then addressed to those who recognized they were selected to be someone's fear (e.g., a bully): How did that feel? Also for those students who recognized they were chosen to be a protector: How did that feel? Did their focus lean towards protecting the "victim" or did it remain on their own fear and protector? And then there was the possibilities of having their protector choose them as a fear which meant that he/she was running away as they were trying stay close. What was that experience like? At that point I asked my last question - What did that activity have to do with the topic under investigation?

Wildest Dreams-Stage V (35 minutes)

The final images that come out of this stage are exploring the steps that need to be taken between where we are as community disabled and bound by a social issue and where we want to be as a community free of this social. To create the images, begin with one person offering an image and then add until the image becomes a story. The images may include from two to all of the participants. Once these are made, take a few moments to have the students reflect on what they and saw then try to synthesize them. Do this 4-5 times and then separate the students into groups. Each group will also create images of the middle ground between the first dysfunctional community and second utopian community pictures (in relation to the social issue). Have each group create an image where everyone in the group is involved, present their image, and discuss briefly.

The fifth stage of *Wildest Dreams*, as defined through this particular implementation and thesis project, was really the crux of the whole program. On day two, stages I and II, we identified the struggles of the community. On day three, stages III and IV, we determined our ideal by investigating a community which is not struggling with the issue. During this fifth stage of *Wildest Dreams*, however, we finally began to explore the pathway of decisions, experiences and changes that lie between where we are and where we want to be with regard to the issue under investigation. We accomplished this by creating multiple group images. Again, rather than use a camera, I had to find another way to keep a record of the images. It was essential for the students to be able discuss, organize, and determine where each of the images they created belonged in relation to the two extreme images from the previous days. Therefore, as an alternative and as a link to the language curriculum, I had the students create a caption and a brief description. For each image created (as opposed to one final agreed upon image as we saw in the previous stages). This was carried out as a way to label but also to recall all the images for this stage.

Unlike the last two stages, here, we were not looking for a single image that defined the community. We were looking for multiple images that act as steps to be followed from the identified place of struggle to where we wanted to be as a community. According to Diamond, they can be *realistic* or *symbolic* images and all images should be accepted. Diamond (2007) stresses that in this stage “compromise is the word of the day” (p. 207). He goes on to explain that if and when there is disagreement in the group about where on the continuum the image belongs then it is up to the facilitator to “gauge the consciousness in the room” and, as he clarifies, once the images are placed they are not “frozen in place, they can be moved later if necessary” (p. 207). It is for these reasons that this stage of *Wildest Dreams* in particular reinforced my belief in the added benefits that the classroom teachers have with their on-going student/teacher relationships. Compared to myself, the visiting researcher, they would potentially have an enhanced overall understanding of the students’ responses and reactions to the program and the content. Therefore, they would have an advantage when, as mentioned above, they are *gauging the consciousness in the room*.

Discussion/Final Images (15 minutes)

Are there any images missing? Is the next step after the last image perfection or are there more steps? Create one or two more if the class feels there are more steps.

After the class had the opportunity to create multiple images we took a moment to simply take a step back and reflect on what had already been created as a big picture rather than as individual, sequential steps. As an educator I found this reflective break to be especially helpful at points when the students’ ideas seemed to plateau. Sometimes this occasion presented itself naturally when the students were not as eager to offer images. Other times the students were really enjoying the activity had a lot of ideas to offer, but I began to notice they were simply

repeating what had already been seen. Although I was careful not to discredit their effort, but after we had experienced a few of these same kind of contributions it was time for a reflective group discussion.

The reflection break, or group discussion, gave the students an opportunity to look at what they had come up with and what might be missing. In some cases they identified gaps between the first image from the previous days and the second newly offered image, thinking that the step was much too drastic. Likewise, on the other end, they identified that there needed to be more sequential steps of change from the last image offered that day to the extreme ideal image. Diamond (2007) has often taken this further by suggesting that through this reflection the class may decide that “a new image exists outside the boundary of extreme images – in other words, this new image has redefined the extremity of dysfunction (the community’s ability to define its ‘here’) or the dream, (the community’s ability to define its ‘there’)” (p. 207). Although this didn’t happen with the two groups of students I had worked with, it was something I always kept in mind. I did this by asking questions such as, is this still where we/this community is at with this issue? And is this still what we think the ideal community would look like?

Wildest Dreams-Stage VI/Writing (15-20 minutes)

Students have two writing choices

1. *Describe how they have personally identified and been affected by the dysfunction of the community, explaining not only why they relate to the first image but also backing up their explanation with any significant events, etc. They will also describe the process and changes required to move on as a community from a place of dysfunction towards the next symbolic yet sequential step on the continuum of images.*
2. *Describe each phase of changes that has to be made beginning with the first sequential image after our main dysfunction until the last step before we have reached a utopian community. Include the story of self and how they can personally be a part of creating the changes.*

Once the students created the final images of the day it was time for the sixth and concluding stage of the *Wildest Dreams* program. For the past three days the reflection and language elements had been predominantly oral and more of a public forum. Therefore, I had enforced the right to pass for those students who might not have been comfortable sharing their ideas, thoughts and reflections in a public space. As an educator, I am aware that I cannot always control what kind of activity is going on outside the classroom that may hinder students to share. Therefore, I do not think that the students should be forced to share. I do, however, believe reflection is an important part of this workshop and in essence is a crucial ingredient when initializing a journey towards achieving a greater level of social consciousness. This had been my intent all through this unit/research program, so I asked all students to share their thoughts and reflections in writing.

By assigning a writing task in this stage I had diverted from Diamond's original outline, but I also eliminated the pressure of the public forum and this allowed for a more individual and private moment for each student to reflect on the past four days. Although I hoped this would not be the case, I have to admit that it was the first time I heard any type of reflection from some of the students. Therefore this stage was crucial and hence was given optimal regard and time. I also considered this stage (the stage sixth) a summative task for assessing the unit's effectiveness and the students' engagement.

On a side note, because the fifth stage was an equally important element of this program and deserved to be given as much priority and time as would be necessary, the sixth stage may need to be put on hold for the following day. In that case I would suggest to other educators to have a theatre game prepared. This, however, was not the case for the implemented workshop discussed in this thesis project.

Planning For Day 5.

Speed Gestures (15 minutes)

Have the students line up against a wall. Ask someone to offer an open-ended gesture but also fill it with emotion. Have the student present the image three times, each time starting from a neutral position. Then starting at the end of the line each person will come to the center and face the first person (person A). Person A will repeat their gesture just once and person B will quickly respond with another gesture and a sound and then to the end of the line. Short exchanges with no words continues down the entire line. There is no way to do this wrong as long as the gestures are responses to the first.

Next a new person A offers a new gesture and person B responds with a gesture and sound that grows directly out of the gesture. Person A then responds with a new gesture and sound that grows directly out of B's gesture.

Finally a new person A offers a new gesture and person B responds with a gesture and a word or phrase that grows directly out of the gesture. Person A then responds with a new gesture and a word or phrase that grows directly out of B's new gesture. And person B responds with a final gesture and a word or phrase.

Encourage students to respond promptly and move through the line fairly quickly. Person A must accept the interpretation person B gives to his/her gesture as reality and respond to it. B's cannot repeat other B's gestures. As long as what you are doing is a response to the same gesture, there is no wrong way of doing this.

Speed Gestures is an exercise that Diamond uses to very gently transition the students from image work into improvisation. As Diamond (2007) describes it: "The key to this exercise is to keep it moving very quickly" (p. 109). He instructs that, for best results, participants should not be given too much time to think but should be encouraged to go with their first instinct or impulse. As Diamond (2007) stresses, "there is no way to do it wrong" (p. 109). I employed this exercise within this unit with multiple intentions including basic dramatic arts instruction and an educational or community drama focus. My experiences with *Speed Gestures*, including this last experience, have proven that it is an engaging way to start the day for the participants.

Create Improvised Scenes (30 minutes)

Begin by asking students to stand behind an image from the middle ground photos. They should

choose an image they can relate to the most or one which particularly resonates with them. This is how they will be placed in groups. It is not important for the groups to be even but if one person is standing alone then ask that person to choose a different image. Next, have the students sit in their groups and briefly explain their feelings about the image and what they identify as happening in the image. Students will then be instructed to create short (2-3 minutes) improvisation scenes that build to a crisis. The scene should include all of the group's ideas. It does not have to directly relate to the image, but it must relate to the issue under investigation. At this point there should not be a solution in this scene, only a crisis.

Present scenes (15 minutes)

Mini Forum (40 minutes)

Students will present scenes again. Then the other students as the audience will be asked, what do we do? As the scenes are played back over and over, the other students watching can shout out “stop”, come in and replace a character to attempt a solution. In character, the students will respond to the intervention as accurately as possible. After each intervention, we talk about what worked and what did not work and the realities about what changed.

Ultimately, if one is to follow David Diamond's program to the letter, this last day of teaching would have been reserved for the completion of any stages of activities of *Wildest Dreams*. We could have, for example, carried exercises over such as the writing task from stage six. Nevertheless, because the planning, facilitation and, of course, participation allowed for a final day of teaching, I thought it would be interesting to observe the students engage in a mini forum. However, due to the fact that I had not given the students the appropriate time, reflection or even instruction to create proper forum theatre presentations, I basically facilitated a glorified version of dramatic freeze tag. This is a game where 2-3 players begin to act out a scene until one person from the audience yells FREEZE! The players then freeze in place and the audience

member replaces one of the players and begins a new scene. Therefore, by no means did I attempt, within the implementation of this study, to determine any conclusions about whether these students would be able to accomplish or benefit from forum theatre which, as will be described below in *Expanding a Pluralistic Perspective*, could be considered the next level of the social conscious pedagogy: social action.

My rationale behind this last day was both to simply advance the dramatic arts instruction and provide opportunities for students to make contributions to the issue under investigation. I strongly felt that this exercise was more effective and fitting than a day filled with unrelated theatre game. Although I have high regard for theatre games and do not believe they must always have a direct purpose, I would not be satisfied with myself as an educator by ending my time in these classrooms without allowing students to practice their learning. As mentioned earlier, one of the benefits of drama education is that it allows for the occasion to practice for real life situations under the security blanket of a fictional space. Therefore, the students participated in what I am calling *mini forum*, which I intend to discuss theoretically in the following section. The mini forum included the creation and presentation of improvised scenes about a crisis situation surrounding the issue under investigation and then a improvisation- based dramatic brainstorm on ways to approach the situation.

Expanding a “Pluralistic Perspective” within the Plan

The process I implemented for this thesis project involved engaging students in a process to gain understanding through drama and theatre development. In this case, the process was to gain understanding in areas surrounding race/racism. As previously discussed in the Literature Review, drama training does allow students to step directly inside the issue and candidly explore it while remaining within the safety of a fictional space. “Given safe space in which to work and

create, the story will emerge from the living community,” Diamond argues (2007, p. 85). The students were able to construct real meaning for themselves through simulated explorations of issue-related situations and circumstances. For the present project, this was done by approaching the curriculum material as a springboard into the social issues that exist in and around the classroom and by incorporating elements of Diamond’s theatre-based techniques as teaching tools. In so doing, there is an opportunity for educators to not only enhance academic learning but social consciousness, thus initiating the development of what Grady (2000) calls “pluralistic perspective.”

This pluralistic perspective is central to David Diamond’s *Theatre for Living* which he defines as “empowerment.” For Diamond (1998), *Theatre for Living* is “about people being the experts in their own lives, and being able to use theatre as a means of creating change” (npr). *Theatre for Living*, Diamond explains, “gives a community the opportunity to develop ‘emotional intelligence’ [by] using a symbolic theatre language to investigate alternative approaches to hard-to-address issues. This is a first step towards dealing with difficult topics -- moving towards open communication and realities that living communities want in an active and entertaining way” (<http://www.headlinestheatre.com/>). In the foreword of Diamond’s book, Fritjof Capra (2007) clarifies Diamond’s *Theatre for Living* as a way to “help communities become more connected within themselves and thus more alive, creative and capable of bringing about meaningful change” (p. 18).

Encouraging modeling and practicing trust and openness in the workshops was a major focus for me, the facilitator in the classroom, at the onset and consistently throughout the study. This was especially so considering the population I was working with was a group of *ego*-centric, or self-absorbed, adolescents (Klein, 2001). Although it was essential to launch the

workshop with individual perspectives and experiences, so as not to overwhelm the participants on a cognitive level, it was also essential to constantly move towards the collective/plural understanding. As Diamond (2007) explains, “it is the process of having to work together, of entering a state of disequilibrium and trying to achieve equilibrium, that the group transforms from a collection of isolated individuals into something larger than the sum of its parts” (p. 168).

The critical process of moving from “I” to “we” was another way of creating safe space for the participants and also what I hoped would encourage students to be authentic. This is because the intent was not to tell a “documentary truth” (which captures real people in a real situation) but rather a “fictional truth” (in which real people create and enact a symbolic representation – through drama/theatre – of what they agree is their reality) (Diamond, 2007, p. 181). Therefore, at no point was the focus on one person’s exact experience with the issue. “We are never telling one person’s story but rather creating the best fictional art we can that tells the true story of the living community” (Diamond, 2007, p. 43).

Accordingly, when I was working with this group through a collective process of theatre creation, it was imperative for me to take the time to find the ‘here’ of the group. That is to say, before we can explore the process of how to get where we want to be as a community we have to identify, investigate and understand where we are now (Diamond, 2007, p. 28). This is the gift of “good teachers.” As Parker J. Palmer (1998) put it, “good teachers possess a capacity for connectedness. They are able to weave a complex web of connections among themselves, their subjects and their students so that the student can weave a world for themselves” (p. 5). Taking Diamond in mind, therefore, the idea was to begin with stories of individual experiences that inspired, lead into and made connections amongst others stories in the room; thus, creating a collective fictional story that contains actual truths. This is why, when Diamond invokes the

“here” he is not talking about an “individual here” for each person but rather a “collective here,” where they are as a group, as a class, as a community. All of these essential elements are fostered in what Diamond calls a Theatre Workshop.

Although it was not included to its full potential in this thesis project it is still worth noting the final step of Diamond’s work: Forum Theatre. Here, the intent is to continue to pluralize the impact of the experiences of the workshop participants into the larger community. Diamond explains it thus: “the cusp of all this lies in the interactive Forum Theatre process where the people who are from the community who are living the issues under investigation and who are experts in their own lives create and perform the theatre” (p. 77). “Forum theatre is a form of participatory theatre,” Diamond (2007) continues, “it is an opportunity for creative, community based dialogue” (p. 39). The theatre projects in this research are created and performed by community members who have participated in the week-long workshops.

Participants of the preliminary theatre workshops, Diamond (2007) explains, create short skits in groups about the central issue. By collaboratively creating this skit the participants are taking part in what Jeffery Goffin (2002) refers to as “collective creation” which he asserts, is “both a process and a product” (p. 148). After a strategic process of placing the participants in groups Diamond then asks them to share emotions and feelings, not necessarily personal stories, that connect with the issue under investigation. By sharing feelings and emotions surrounding the issue rather than actual experiences participants will find things in common. As Diamond (2007) describes, “it is some form of struggle [with the issue] that links you [the participants] together” (p. 119). Using their common struggle, the participants create a skit that builds to a point of crisis which Diamond (2007) describes as “the heart of the issue” (p. 114), and then stops there, offering no solutions to the problem for the audience. Goffin (2002) talks about this process

when describing collective creation: “The script is not the product of one individual’s vision; every member of the collective participates in formulating it” (p. 148). Therefore once again the skits are not a re-enactment of one person’s story or a single incident but rather a collective illustration of the struggle that is caused by our shared experiences with the social issue.

At the actual performance the skit is performed once so that the audience has the opportunity to see the full picture and reflect on the multiple complexities which are contained within the issue or problem. It is then up to the audience to begin to explore the possibility of solutions by stepping into the skit and improvising through their idea. The play is then run again where audience members are able to freeze the action by yelling, “STOP!” at any point where they see an opportunity to intervene and try out their solution. They will replace an actor they think could adjust and solve the issue. Diamond calls this an intervention. The improvisational actors remaining will then also respond in character as authentically as possible to the change in the scene. After each scenario is presented, Diamond initiates a dialogue with the audience about why the “solution” was successful or not. This process is then repeated multiple times. (Diamond, 2007).

As I reflect on the forum theatre process I cannot help but link it to the *action-reflection* process of action research, *observe, reflect, act, evaluate, modify*, as is outlined by McNiff and Whitehead (2006) and was discussed in Chapter Three. As a community audience they *observe* an issue identified and presented to them by other members of their community. During the performance and briefly afterwards they *reflect* on what aspect of that scenario could/should be changed to avoid the inevitable outcome. By stopping, entering and participating in the scene they *act* and try a different way of approaching the situation. During the facilitated dialogue they

evaluate whether their solution was successful or not. Finally, as the community continues participating in the forum theatre they modify their solutions in light of their reflections.

These larger community presentations require much more time and commitment from all parties within a one-week session than the typical allotted class time will allow. Diamond does usually take seven days having participants involved 7-8 hours a day. In order to see this level of performance accomplished in schools, this could become an extra-curricular project or after-school club where there are frequent meetings and one performance per semester. As an alternative, I decided for this project to facilitate my own version of a mini-forum which was contained within the five-day programs for the class.

For me, the forum should be part of a final and crucial element to implementing social consciousness into a middle school, taking what would now be understood about significant social issues and facilitating a positive action plan towards improving the larger society. To some, this is the most important part of the pedagogy of developing and enhancing social consciousness in the educational setting and a key step towards the overall objective.

Accordingly, as the Oxfam Curriculum argues, “students need to develop skills ... to understand and respond to global issues” (cited in Ibrahim, 2005, p. 181). For their part, Fisher and Hicks (also cited in Ibrahim, 2005) expand on this by stating that “skills are of little value unless they involve at the same time, or later, action to influence decisions in the real world” (p. 181).

As I believe was (and will be) shown to a smaller degree through this study in the classroom, bringing in this final step of social action could prove to have lasting results on the larger community. Through implementing social action plans as an extension of their endeavors to enhance social consciousness, educators are able to take teaching to the next level and have an opportunity to truly lead by example. I believe the time is ripe to look at the social issues that our

students are facing daily and begin critical pedagogical processes as educators that promote a sense of respect and understanding for all the members of our classroom, school and the local and global community. This is what I hope I have done at this middle school, which I discuss next.

Chapter Five

Putting the Plan into Practice:

A Personal Look at a Facilitator's Experience

Acquiring a Social Issue

Once I felt confident with the five-day outline discussed above, I sent it via e-mail to both the principal and teachers for approval. With that e-mail I also sent a request for each of the teachers to announce to the students that I was coming and have the students decide on a social issue that was of concern to them within the school or in the larger community. I stressed that it should be an issue that the students would be willing and interested in confronting and dissecting within the workshop. This request to have the students choose a topic to investigate came from my understanding of Diamond's urgency that an invitation must be received from the community before one enters the community. Diamond likens this to the actions of a traditional and experienced hunter who finds a place in the forest, calms himself or herself and waits for prey to present themselves. It is important to understand, as Diamond makes clear, that in no way are his motivations the same as a hunter and he does not liken the communities he works with to prey. The focus here is on *the calm and the wait* for invitations from communities. When Diamond enters a community, for example, the community wants him there; he has not pushed himself or his work onto them.

Diamond (2007) describes this process as he contrasts how *Headlines* compare to regular theatre companies:

One way that theatre companies function is to decide their programming for the public. In most cases the director and/or a programming committee and/or Board of directors decide on a season,

and then it is the marketing department's job to convince the public to come and see the selected plays. Another way, I thought, could be that Headlines 'calms' itself; recognizing that it [needs to be] part of the larger community - not an entity that exists separate from our potential audience. [Therefore] having calmed ourselves we could wait for the project invitations to come to us - to present themselves. We would no longer stomp through the forest. (p. 51)

Although I had in fact been invited by the principal of the school, I considered that she would not be directly involved with the community through participation and therefore could not be considered an intimate member of the community. As Diamond (2007) asserts, "if we [truly] embrace systems view, it becomes impossible to consider that a family, or a community, an organization or a nation can benefit from being worked on from the outside" (p. 50).

To explain his point, Diamond describes a learning experience at a healing center where he had received an invitation from the Board of Directors of the healing center rather than the actual community he would have been working with. It turned out that the community of youth had no interest in his work. Therefore, participation was lacking and it was made very clear to Diamond that there was no intention for that to change. Diamond decided to cancel the workshop. As he explains, "it cannot be the workshop facilitator[s'] role to peel workshop participants off the wall and beg, cajole or try to force them to engage in an activity" (p. 56). Unfortunately, as educators there are many times that we find ourselves facilitating activities and content that students are not interested in. However, as Diamond continues to assert, this is not how this type of work should be facilitated, "forcing people to make theatre together might be possible but it is the antithesis of *Theatre for Living*" (p. 56).

I believed that by asking the teacher to dialogue with the students about the program and then

having the students mutually decide on the topic/issue, I would fulfill Diamond's prerequisite for a community invitation. I also saw this as an opportunity to give the students a sense of ownership in what they were doing therefore igniting potential for intrinsic motivation. By choosing their own topic, I believed the students would be more eager to explore and dissect the issue on a deeper, more personal level. On a side note, this was also how my professor at the University of Windsor handled the choosing of our social issue when Diamond came to work with us.

Unfortunately, my request was not exactly met the way I hoped. Shortly before I arrived at the school I received an e-mail from one of the teachers which stated that the teachers had decided that since they were coming out of Black History Month the social issue they wanted their students to cover was racism. Initially I was disappointed and concerned for the students. Although racism was as good a topic as any for this program, my concern stemmed from the notion that the students were not a part of the process of topic selection. My fear was that their motivation to participate would be lower or even non-existent and therefore, the effectiveness of the program for the students would suffer. Also, I was afraid the results of the study would be hindered due to the lack of participation.

I did not want this seemingly small yet so important detail to upset everything I was trying to do with these students, this classroom and, ultimately, educators and the field of education. I did not feel, however, that I wanted to cancel the workshop without giving it my best attempt. Therefore, I immediately thought of ways I could change this. For example, I could use the first day as an introduction/topic selection day where I would guide the students through a discussion of the program, explanations of social issues and finally topic selection. In hindsight, this is probably what I should have done in the first place. However, I also felt stuck between a rock

and a hard place at this point because I was a visiting researcher and did not feel comfortable overriding the classroom teachers' decision.

I also needed to consider the teachers perspectives. This consideration again reminded me of our crowded curriculum and the vast demands that come from the Ministry/board of education, the principal and, sometimes the parents and community. Therefore, this e-mail was already a turning point for how I envisioned this program working as a part of regular practice for educators.

Something that I considered at this point was that extensive "programs" in their entirety, like the one I was given the opportunity to implement, may not always be realistic for an educator's in-classroom practice. I was a researcher coming in with a small-scale picture of the effectiveness of one program, but as a classroom teacher I would always have to be thinking more big-picture, full year, and full curriculum. I later understood that even though the teachers made room for me to come in with this program I was fulfilling the entire drama requirements for this semester. Interestingly, the teachers' interpretation of the program was quite different than mine. Where I was focused on incorporating social awareness under the guise of drama because of my special training in Drama in Education, the teachers' focus was on the drama which just happened to combine aspects of social awareness. This was, of course, because of their requirement to meet curriculum standards.

Therefore, I was required to expand my questioning again. I questioned whether it would be just as effective for educators to limit their focus to utilizing the more meaningful activities/exercises, employing and facilitating them as separate parts rather than one large unit, or as tools to delve deeper into content being presented. For example, with *Wildest Dreams* I focused exclusively on the core components of the activity such as the imagery work. Also,

instead of leading up to the core exercise with drama-based activities I was forced to amalgamate it into the academic-based work. Therefore maintaining a cross-curricular integration of drama which, as was discussed above in the literature review, is what would be found at the heart of drama-in-education practices anyway.

Although part of me was disappointed with the idea of classifying Diamond's work simply as another tool, I had to consider that this may be a more realistic approach for in-classroom practice. However, if educators committed to the concepts and benefits of this type of programming, they could take the more complex extensive programs and create an extra-curricular club for social action within the school community. In that case the participating students would choose to be there and then would have the opportunity to be more active in choosing the content. Educators and students would also be able to employ the Forum Theatre component, as mentioned above, which is a key element in transferring social awareness to social action.

I would like it to be understood that my concern here was not just for the integrity of the program itself, but rather for the effectiveness of the program for the students. Diamond also gives a few examples in his book where he had entered a community where the actual participants were not the ones who invited him, as I cited earlier, and the purpose and value of the program for the students was lost. It is key that our purpose and motivation is student-centered, not only within the content of this program but also in general in education. For Diamond, this approach is very significant, and as we saw in the example of the healing center, if it is not about the community, its needs and struggles, then there is no point in continuing with the work.

Diaries of Week 1
Monday March 2nd – Friday March 6th 2009

The first morning I awoke with a stomach full of butterflies which I was not expecting. While I was prepared and felt confident facilitating the material, I was unsure as to what I should be documenting and how I could transfer this to something that qualified as research ... a word that was becoming a dreaded part of my vocabulary. I suddenly felt very alone. I was wishing that I had a partner for this project who could help document the goings-on as I was facilitating the activities and then we could brainstorm together themes and outcomes from the days and from each week. This, however, was not the reality I found myself in and therefore I had to adjust my focus.

The drive to the school, however, proved to be equally stressful as I was inundated with thoughts about all the possible end results. I was aware though, that if this programming did not work as part of classroom learning the way I expected, it would still give me something to write about for my thesis; my thesis would just have to travel in a different direction than my original intention. On the other hand, because of the relationship I had with the school through the principal, some of the teachers and, of course, my close family friend who at this point was working at the board level, I felt added pressure for this program to be effective. Although the teachers and principal had agreed to allow me to utilize this experience to benefit my academic endeavors, their enthusiasm for inviting me was the implementation a unique and effective drama workshop on social awareness issues for their students.

As I approached the school parking lot, however, I began to sense a feeling of calm, in part because I was pulling into a place that was friendly and familiar. I had been a guest in this school a number of times previously for a variety of reasons. I had formed positive relationships with a number of the teaching and administrative staff and I knew that if I struggled with anything there

would be people there I trusted to ask for advice. More importantly, however, I also remembered why I began this process; I believed in what I was implementing. I believed in the process of the workshop and I believed in the outcome for the students. All of this vested interest came from my own personal experience and training with Diamond in one of his community theatre workshops.

As I entered the school I was given a familiar greeting by the receptionist. After a brief chit-chat I was left alone with my thoughts again, waiting for the principal to finish her meeting. My sense of calm was quickly reverting back to a sense of anxiousness except this time it was not about the program but about myself as the facilitator. For the first time I began to consider the idea that if the program was not implemented or facilitated just right, it could look as though the program failed when in actual fact it was me, the researcher, facilitator, educator, who let down not only the program but the students. With this overwhelming concern I decided that my reflective notes must include confessions of my own successes and faults as the facilitator not only within the content of this program but also with each of the two groups of students. Just as I was jotting this down in my notebook, my thoughts were interrupted by the principal's greeting.

Once again, seeing a friendly face put me at ease. In the office I was finally able to detail my proposed program. I appreciated this time because although I had sent them an outline and they had approved it, there had not been a noteworthy discussion about what was expected of me. At that time the principal inquired as to the social issue topic. I explained to her that the teachers had requested that it be racism since they were coming out of Black History Month. She then asked what exactly that meant. I, again, really appreciated this because racism is a vast topic and there is really no way to address the broad issue through a one-week program. I stated that the teachers had suggested using examples of current events, such as the war in Gaza (Palestine).

However, I noted to the principal, even though I appreciated the teacher's suggestions, I was hoping to look more inward at what was going on here, in their school. The principal agreed this was best especially since I was not prepared to handle a topic like the war in Gaza, which apparently had become a heated issue, due to the large mixed population of Jewish and Arab students at the school.

I was glad to have this information in order to be prepared if conversations start to head in that direction. As a new educator I am still grappling with the concept of facilitating. When students take a topic in a different direction than where I am going with it, sometimes I need to allow students to have learning moments. Sometimes I need to deflect back to the intended topic without disrespecting the student's attempt at connecting. I am still learning how to recognize those moments as I facilitate in different classes. I find this quite challenging when one is moving from school to school or classroom to classroom where there is not enough time to really get to know the students.

After meeting with the principal I was brought into the science class where I observed my first set of students, the split grade 7/8 class, for one period before lunch. I was scheduled to begin directly following the lunch period. At this point the students were given no explanation as to who I was or why I was in their classroom. I simply made my way directly to the back of the room to sit and observe. I cannot say that the students did not notice me there; they obviously did but after about 10 minutes, they seemed to forget about me and carried on in what I presume was a normal fashion. I had been previously warned a number of different times that this class was considered the "behavior" class of the school. I, however, tried to disregard this because I wanted to focus my observations on individual students rather than on the class as whole. As noted earlier, the workshop should *begin with stories of individual experiences that will inspire, lead*

into and then make connections amongst others' stories in the room. I also was looking for signs of *the struggle* that might be making itself visible with regard to the social topic. In other words, were there any obvious expressions of racism either directly or even through humor? At this point, I found none but then I was just entering the classroom.

During lunch I went into the classroom where I was going to be working which also happened to be utilized as the lunch room for the class. The room was smaller than I expected and more narrow than square. It was going to be a tight fit with 35 students and the desk removal would have to be strategic if I wanted to maximize the floor space. The floor was also carpeted and full of food pieces which was not the level of cleanliness I had hoped for. I immediately regretted not requesting a different space for the workshop. I had debated requesting a specific space beforehand, but decided against the idea because I wanted to make this program/workshop as accessible as possible for educators to implement. I felt that if an educator had to schedule space and time, they may rather substitute an activity they could complete right in the classroom. Therefore, I wanted to be able to complete the workshop right in the classroom. I considered reworking some of the more active exercises in the program later in the week.

As I was scanning through my outline, the language arts teacher/my support teacher arrived. She was a half-day teacher. This was the first time we met face-to-face so I was glad she had arrived in time to discuss some details before the class began. I was again warned about some of the behaviours and issues of the classroom so I asked for her help with discipline for today. I wanted to see what the children were used to. I hoped that by having their teacher remain as an authority figure, students would be less likely to “test” or “push” me. I have observed this as being typical behaviour towards new teachers in all the schools I have taught in.

As the lunch bell rang and students filed in, the principal came in and asked to speak with the

students. The principal greeted the students and then introduced me and gave a brief explanation of what I was going to be doing with them over the next week. Although there was a calendar behind the teacher's desk that indicated my visit by highlighting SPECIAL DRAMA PROGRAM over the days that corresponded with the week I was there, I wondered if the principal's explanation was the first time the students had heard about the program. It seemed so. Although this was not the most ideal situation, I had no choice but to approach it as best I could.

After the introductions the principal expressed to the students her expectations of them with regard to me being there, especially as far as behaviour was concerned. Within this she reviewed the major components of a behaviour management program called Tribes Learning Community (TLC). TLC was created by Jeanne Gibbs and is intended to be a proactive program that creates a positive, safe and healthy learning environment within the schools and classrooms. The program is based on cooperative learning strategies and on four main agreements that all students, teachers and administrators must follow. The four agreements are attentive listening, appreciations/no put downs, mutual respect, and the right to pass (Gibbs, 2001).

Within my Bachelor's of Education year, I completed a Tribes Learning Community weekend training course and was familiar with the program and the agreements. Hearing the principal talk, I felt that a TLC-based classroom could really be a benefit to this drama workshop. As outlined in the literature review, Diamond puts major emphasis on creating a safe environment for students, and since it is TLC's projected purpose to create those environments, I could only see them as being complementary. This, however, proved not to be so. As will be discussed later, as beneficial as I still believe this behaviour management program to be, it presented some challenges and limitations to what I was trying to do with the students.

After the principal had left the teacher also had some "busy work" to discuss with the

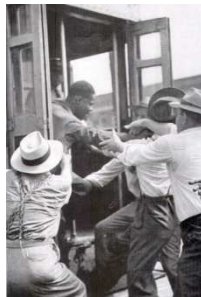
students: homework assignments, up-coming projects, etc. When the class was finally handed over to me, there were 25 minutes cut from my 100-minute time block, which equalled out to about two activities/exercises needing to be cut. Figuring out how all the students could all sit in a circle on the floor, took another 10 minutes. At this point I made a mental note to adjust the outline to look like a 75-80 minute period block and then have a bank of extra games ready, if need be. Although the principal would not be coming in everyday, I knew there was always going to be “busy work” to discuss and we would also always have to move the desks.

I began the class with an introduction discussion, introducing myself, the program and of course the topic. When engaging the students in a conversation of their understanding of the topic of racism, I observed there to be quite a bit of reiteration of history and current events which likely came from school/classroom learning over the course of the past month. As I was listening I thought that the teacher must be pleased since the students’ responses showed impressive knowledge-based understanding surrounding different scenarios of historic racism: from slavery to the Holocaust to First Nations’ genocide. Clearly, they were able to transfer their learned knowledge into a casual discussion without any leads by the teacher or myself. In light of this, I respected the connection the students were making and allowed everyone the chance to speak before asking a different question that redirected the discussion to a more inward look at how racism affects them both personally and as a class.

Strangely enough, this question seemed harder to answer for the students. This led me to a few thoughts. First, it raised a red flag that since this was not the students’ topic of choice, this might not be something they honestly considered a major issue within the classroom/school. Therefore, I asked myself, how will this affect the program implementation and eventually my research? However, I also thought of the conversation with the principal where she expressed

some concern with tensions surrounding discussions of the Gaza situation. Therefore, that conversation was evidence enough that discussions on/about racism (in the most broad sense) existed within the school.

Free association at this point was expected, so I remembered a discussion on racism I once had with a friend after one of her undergraduate psychology classes where it was explained that expressions of racism comes in many forms. Although some are very direct, overt or explicit, such as physical exclusion, expressions of hate, violence, etc., some (probably the majority) are less obvious such as subtle jokes (and sometimes not so subtle) that seem harmless but still may have negative consequences (see especially Garner, 2007). Finally there is also racism that can take place in our inner-thoughts. As mentioned in the Literature Review, this prejudice thinking can come from many places where the child interacts within the community including the home. Inner thoughts are almost impossible to pick up on because the students know better than to express them. However, they can be the most dangerous (Harvey, 2007; Ibrahim, 2003). Although there may not be obvious racism seen immediately, the prejudice is festering in their minds and I believe that if it is not confronted, it will eventually lead to a more outward expression.



Figures 16. Examples of explicit, overt, historic racisms identified by the students

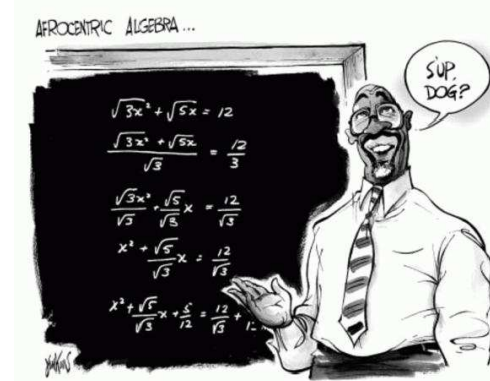


Figure 17. More subtle forms of racism, “humor”, still deemed acceptable within a large segment of ‘our’ society

In compliance with this, Guerin (2003) suggests in his article *Combating Prejudice and Racism: New Interventions from a Functional Analysis of Racist Language*, “legal and activist interventions have reduced overt or explicit racisms but not the covert, modern or subtle racisms (e.g. Akrami, Ekehammar, & Araya, 2000; Essed, 1991; Feagin, 1991). People [may] not openly slander members of other racial groups but they still subtly talk in prejudicial ways when [they feel it is] safe to do so” (p. 29; see also Billig, 2001; Feagin, 1991; Zajicek, 2002). I immediately

considered the Tribes agreement *mutual respect*, which is laid out as an agreement to show respect for and be welcoming to others - no matter what their uniqueness. Respect each others' property. Respect individual skills, talents and contributions. Respect individuals' privacy, e.g., no rumours or gossip (Gibbs, 2002). This was considered a steadfast school rule, an agreement made as a condition for a student/family to enter the school. For me, this is a perfect example of how the school has made considerable headway in reducing overt or explicit racism. However, the question is, did this agreement transfer at home or outside in the community?

At this moment I asked myself, could this program be effectively used to explore, dissect and draw out the issue of racism within the school or, at the very least, this classroom? With this I considered once again, would one week be long enough? What if it took me an entire week to finally get something significant from the students? What if there was no planned follow-up from myself or the teachers? These thoughts began to overwhelm me. I decided to explore these concepts further that evening.

After the discussion I began to facilitate the students through our first drama activity. It was supposed to be a basic drama activity but it turned out to be a disaster. Very early into this activity I saw my hopes of avoiding the whole "test the new teacher" dissolve. The student's conduct was so disruptive that we did not even finish the game. I stopped the activity in the middle of it and tried to dialogue with the students about why and what we were doing. However, this strategy was not working. At one point the disruption increased so much that the classroom teacher stepped in and took over discipline. The students were sentenced to sit completely silent for 10 minutes. Although I appreciated the assistance to bring order to the class, another part of me cringed about losing another 10 minutes.

The day did not get much better from there. In fact, I would say it got much worse. By

the end one male student had even been sent out of the classroom and I found out later that he was not permitted to return to participate for the week. Instead he was required to carry out his “regular academics” elsewhere. With this incident I found myself in another conflict of thought. As mentioned above, if one part of the community is dysfunctional the whole community will not be able to function to its ultimate potential. I saw a small group of students that had created dysfunction for the whole class. I was conflicted about the formal removal of one of those students.

When I observed beyond the behaviour that caused disruption in the classroom and looked into the content of this student's actions specifically regarding the whole five-day program and what it was intended to accomplish, there were deeper issues. First, I believed that it was exactly this student that could have benefited the most from programming such as this. In a way he demonstrated the urgency of my program and, generally, for a social conscious pedagogy and programming with which students can create change within the classroom community. Second, I was conscious of the fact that the removal of this student was not permanent; it was simply for the remainder of this week.

Therefore, since this student was considered an insider of this community , much more than I could ever hope to be at this point, when he returned he would be bringing back to the community all the expressions of dysfunction with regard to the social issue (be it racism or bad behaviour) with him. Again, when one part of the community is dysfunctional the whole community cannot function to its ultimate potential. Therefore I concluded that even if I was able to make a significant breakthrough this week with the class, the social dysfunction that was not given the opportunity to be confronted and addressed with this student will re-enter the community and therefore hinder the rest of the class from functioning to its ultimate potential.

This decision however, was out of my control and I must admit the rest of the week went a lot smoother as far as behaviour management was concerned.

Coming back from school that day I felt very low in confidence yet also a sense of determination to make things better for the next day. That evening I had a flash back of the progression of the day. Not to lose my mind, I called the family friend with regard to the students as she had known most of them since grade 3. My focus here was not on the class as whole because as a whole they had already been described to me. My intent and goal was to gain insights on them individually in order to employ successful strategies for both behaviour management and participation. I decided I would reassess my program as far as functionality within the space and maturity levels to handle certain activities.

The following day with the students went significantly smoother than the first day. I am not sure if the reason for the change was the absence of the student, the more confident facilitation practice I employed or a combination of both. I replaced the first planned warm-up activity, *Yes Lets*, with a more contained drama game called *Liar's Tag*. In the game *Liar's Tag* one student begins by miming an action of their choice for about 10 seconds (e.g., miming they are brushing their teeth) then the student to their left asks them what they are doing? The student miming the action lies and tells them they are doing something completely different from what they are actually doing? (e.g. I am dancing). The student who asked the question then has to begin miming the stated action for about 10 seconds until the student to their left asks them what they are doing. They lie about it and so the game goes on. The students seemed to enjoy this game which really helped to get the day started on a positive note.

Another decision I made, altering the original program, was with the *Wildest Dreams* imagery work. I intended for the students to create tableaux images that depicted how racism was

expressed within their community. Based on the information gathered from the previous day, however, that was not where the students were mentally or emotionally with regard to racism. I truly believe that when you approach teaching it is important to find out where the students are at in terms of the subject, both individually and collectively, and begin “here” (as Diamond would put it). That way they can take what they already know and/or understand about a subject, and then move on from *here* to *there*, continuously accumulating additional learning and understanding. Therefore, I changed the instructions for the images to depict any form of extreme racism that they had seen or even heard about rather than sticking to having them depict their struggle with racism in their community.

One of the mistakes I made, however, was allowing it to end there. In reflection, at the end of the week, I realized that I should have facilitated two sets of *Wildest Dreams*-inspired image exercises. The first being the new instructions which would then lead to guided questions such as where/when might these types of expression of racism be taking place? Then after we had determined the where and when I would like to have facilitated a compare-and-contrast discussion about those communities versus their community. I then would like to have repeated the same image exercise only this time with the original instructions, depicting racism found in their specific community.

I am sharing this now instead of in an end of week summary, because I found it difficult for both myself as facilitator and for the students to get anything substantial out of the final image exercises of the program on day four. In day four, we dealt with taking the community from a place of dysfunctionality to a place of functionality as depicted in images of an ideal utopian community created by the students in day three. However, because I did not have any references of actual dysfunction that was specifically linked to their community it was difficult to

involve the students in discussion; especially when we discussed changes they, the students and youth of the community, could make.

As illustrated below in Figure 18, the question - How do we get here (living within the tension or finding a resolution)?- was a key question that could potentially lead the students into an understanding that they have the ability to create social change in their community. I believe the beginning of empowerment is when we realize we can create change. Unfortunately, due to the fact that I did not realize this until the end of the week, I do not believe the students in week one were able to benefit from the full potential of this program. There were, however, still some great insights on the topic of racism in general terms that came out of this week-long program for the students and myself. These reflections also better prepared me for the following week.



Figure 18. How do we get here?

The third day was the best day as far as attitude, behaviour and participation was concerned. The students loved the opening activity, *Whose Hands are These?* so much that we extended it for another 10 to 15 minutes. This really worked out because I had previously decided to cut out the second activity, *Fill the Space*, due to the lack of space and as a precautionary measure to avoid unnecessary disruption. I had planned another game to replace it, but the students seemed to enjoy the first game enough it filled up opening activity time schedule. I am always encouraged when I find “that game” for the students - the game or activity

that they really enjoy and that can be employed later as a reward for hard work, or as motivation to complete their work. I believe that *Whose Hands are These?* was that game for this class.

This day was particularly interesting because although facilitation went smoothly, it was also a day where I was very conflicted about the program. I was unsure about how to feel about what was depicted within the content of the images presented today. The students were instructed to present images of an ideal utopian community where their wildest dreams of functionality would be revealed. One of my exact explanations was to illustrate a perfect community. Although technically those instructions were followed to the letter, my initial reaction was disappointment to what I saw as a lack of depth within the images being presented. Most of the students presented images that were excessive scenes of happiness and kindness and loving (e.g., with skipping and arms wrapped around each other, giant group hugs, etc.). The whole thing could be described as looking almost cartoonish. For me, students took the notion of “utopia” to its ultimate end and as result “realism” suffered.

As I reflected on this, I attributed some of the blame to my mistake in facilitating Day Two’s *Wildest Dreams* Introduction. As mention above I altered the program and asked the students to create scenes of extreme racism they had heard or learned about rather than of actual racism that was affecting their community. Although those scenes were real racism they were not real to the students on a personal level. Therefore, in day three’s image, the scenes were equally, unrealistically extreme; except this time on a positive end. I have to admit that my own interpretation of the program included tackling real-life scenarios within the school community. Lack of overt racism does not mean that we all skip around with our arms wrapped around one another in grade 7 and 8. I anticipated seeing things like a basketball game or jump rope or real activities the students engaged in with their community with evidence of inclusion, harmony and

other things that were opposite to what we saw the day before.

I had never seen or experienced Diamond's version of this particular program personally so I was not sure what inspired these images. Was it my instructions? Was it based on the fact that the students may not have been the ones who chose racism as an issue they struggled with and therefore did not have ideas about what a realistic utopian community could look like? Was it based on my error with yesterday's instructions? Was it because of their ages or maturity levels? Or was this really the depiction of their utopian community? My growing concern, once again, was for the next/final day's image work, where the focus was on change and what changes the students were able to make in their community. The intention was to discover, explore, and dissect real changes that could be made to take us from where we were to where we want to be. The problem I had was that within the two days of image work I did not believe that we accomplished a reflection of where the students actually were with the social issue nor did I have a realistic portrayal of where they wanted to be or how they wanted to live without the dysfunction of racism.

Before moving on I attempted to discuss this with the students while being very careful not to devalue their work. They seemed to only scratch the surface of understanding so I decided to move on and observe if they made changes in the following exercise which was stage Five of the Wildest Dreams program. Stage Five included one large group image that summarized all the images that were previously presented that day. I was looking to see if they would/could create a more realistic scenario while still implementing the utopian elements that were presented in the previous images and documented on the chart paper. As was exemplified in their contribution to the large image I found that some students were able to show evidence of an altered understanding while some still remained extreme in their thinking.

At this point, due to time, I had to choose between image activation or final discussion. I chose final discussion for a couple of reasons. First, in general, I believe that a final discussion is a crucial part of any learning process especially, for ensuring authentic understanding. Second, I found that the image activation activity in Day Three was not a strong element of the process for these students. They struggled with understanding what it meant to reveal inner thoughts which is revealing something that was not obviously seen and instead commented on what was already obvious in the images. For example Day Three's image work surrounded evidence of racism. One student group depicted a fight. I explained to the students that I wanted them to dig deeper and find out more about why the fight was happening. Then I gave them the starting phrase "I want ..." to find out what they, the characters they were portraying, wanted out of this situation. I received answers like *I want to punch him* from a character that already had his fist clenched and arm pulled back. During these moments, I continued prompting the students with guided questioning (e.g., Why do you want that? Why do you feel that way? etc., depending on the responses). For Day Five, as noted, I was dealing with a time constraint and did not have time to prompt the students. Therefore, I felt that a final discussion was the best usage of the remaining time.

On the Fourth Day of this first week, the day of truth arrived. I opened the day with the *power game* which actually ended up being a slow start to the day. I had a small breakthrough with the second activity *Fear/Protector*, which was gratifying because I debated even doing the activity. I had cut an activity that was similar in physicality on Day Two because of space and concerns that the students would not be able to handle this activity maturely. Based on the progress made over the past few days I, however, thought I would try this activity on Day Four. During discussion following the activity, one of the students had an enlightened moment in

which he began to understand that a bully might also be, or have been, a victim. This moment was, for me, the first shred of evidence that the students were able to think at a level of deeper consciousness.

To be honest, at this moment, I was first excited and then saddened that the week was almost over. It felt as though just as we were finally getting somewhere, the program was coming to an end. This conflicting moment also posed a question in my mind about the sustainability of the program and, ultimately, who exactly this thesis was intended for. Although Diamond has been successful in empowering communities with short-term visits, I felt like these students needed more; not necessarily more on this subject or this program, but just more. I do not feel this program needs a follow-up, but a prerequisite. I think that part of the success for these students was the fact that I took time to first teach them how to think and respond at a deeper level of consciousness. This aligns with the old saying, *if you give a person a fish they will eat for a day but if you train them how to fish they will eat for a lifetime*. Likewise, I believe that as educators we should focus on teaching students how to learn rather than memorize content we have predetermined for them. In this case, regardless of the content, we brought the students to a place where they felt safe to explore, dissect and make changes to their way of thinking about the social issue.

I decided to tackle Day Four's image work on a *middle ground*, or what they would like to see as changes, by creating two large chart paper lists of all the descriptive words from the two previous days of image work. After I created practice images of middle ground, I separated the students into groups and had them pick one word from each chart paper. I then had them create five transitional tableaux images. The first image represented a word from Day One, the next three images represented major changes that needed to be made to get to the last image,

representing words from Day Three. We then discussed the changes after each group presentation. I also slightly altered one of the writing task options. Instead of assuming that the first image represented where the class community was, I simply asked the students to identify and describe an image that they personally identified with and that showed dysfunction that affected them. Then, as was originally planned, they had to explain why they related to the first image, back up their explanation with any significant events, and describe the process and changes required to move a community from a place of dysfunction towards the next step on the continuum of images.

Considering all my concerns from the past three days, this exercise seemed to go quite well. Although, I will admit my perception was coloured by that small eureka moment that followed the second activity. The students once again did not connect to the content on an internal level as I had originally thought. For most of the students, the changes they presented were not necessarily in sequence or realistic and their written reports lacked depth and detail. However, the day produced some evidence that the students were making connections and, therefore, in small ways beginning a deeper awareness

As I drove back to the place I was staying and reflected on how the week had gone, I felt good, but not great. There were a lot of learning moments this week, not just for the students but for myself as the facilitator of this program and as an educator in general. Mostly, I felt ready for the challenge of the next week. I spent most of the evening that day reviewing the program and making notes about how I wanted to conduct my practice. Throughout the first week with the grade 7/8's, I had made many modifications. I decided, however, to begin again fresh for the second week with the grade 8's. Therefore, I would change nothing about the original outline.

Just as I did with the Grade 7/8's, I planned to simply address each situation as it came up. This would ensure that it was these students' specific experiences that controlled any adjustments made to the program rather than decisions I made for a completely different class. If I applied some of the changes I made for the first class, I felt that I might actually limit the learning opportunities for the second class. Above and beyond that, it really would not provide me with the means to produce an accurate reflection on the program. As this thesis is intended for educators, it is important that it be understood and not as a "set in stone" blueprint, but as a program that responds to the various needs and circumstances of the students involved. Given the circumstances, although I did not have the luxury of planning with these specific students in mind, I needed to ensure any changes made catered to their learning needs.

Finally, it was Day Five, the last day of the program. This day was mostly about testing out a small-scale version of forum theatre. I handled it like an extended, extreme version of *freeze tag*. I was a little nervous because I was going into this activity blind. Basically, I combined the new concept, forum theatre, with the more familiar activity, *freeze tag*. The students, however, responded well to the exercise. In fact, I realized in my reflection how impressed I was with how the students had progressed over the whole week, with regard to both their level of participation and with the content.

The Diaries of Week Two
Monday March 9th – Friday March 13th, 2009

Starting this second week with the grade 8 class, I was in a completely different state of mind than the first. I was more confident in both myself and the program; I was more prepared for behaviour management, school-related busy work and all the other random interruptions one must deal with in practice as an educator. Finally, I was more determined. I almost felt like the first week was a practice week and the second week was more of the “real deal.” Already on my side, the new classroom was not only bigger but not being used as a lunch room and a lot cleaner. It was also hardwood flooring rather than carpet; all in all, much more appealing.

Another encouraging factor was the fact that I would be working with these students in their home room. Although I am only speaking from personal experience, I find that there is often a higher level of respect between students and their home room teacher; often, home room teachers refer to their students as “their kids.” On a side note, knowing the homeroom teacher as an acquaintance, we had already been able to discuss the program. Therefore I felt like we were in alliance with what I was trying to accomplish.

I went in early again on the first day of the week to observe the students in another class. I looked for obvious signs of struggle that involved racism and once again nothing overtly obvious stuck out. As the final lunch bell rang and the class poured in I immediately saw a difference in attitude from the previous class. Where that class was resistant right from the beginning, this class was excited that I was here and curious to know what was going to happen. I quickly realized, however, that I had to flush that kind of thinking from my mind because I did not want this to become a compare-and-contrast project on the two classes. My focus needed to be on this class only and whether this program was going to be effective for them.

As to be expected there was a lot of busy work that needed to be covered by the teacher before I could begin. But when the time came these students were very efficient in moving their desks and getting into the discussion circle. In the discussion the students had a lot to say about racism and I could tell that they had taken part in discussions like this before; almost all of them had what would be considered the “right” things to say. Although there was a brief moment of disappointment, because once again this was more than likely not the struggle or topic the students would have chosen on their own, I also saw this as a challenge to connect on a deeper, personal conscious level. On a side note, there was one very brief but strategic reference to the Gaza situation; it was the first I had heard it mentioned since the principal’s office.

The rest of the day went by without a hitch. The students were very responsive and positive about the all activities and exercises. Following exactly the same program of Week One, it was obvious that the students had participated in at least basic drama before and I notice that as a whole they were confident and even eager in elements of performance. I once again chose to cut out the activity, *balancing*, partly because of time and partly because of maturity. I do not believe in facilitating an activity simply for the sake of it. Even warm-up games should be a precursor to either the physical drama activities or content of the day. In my experience with Diamond, after each activity, even the seemingly simple and fun games, he would ask what we discovered from that exercise that might have to do with the topic we were exploring. I, too, put into practice that type of questioning following each activity. Therefore, if there was potential to fool around with an activity and lose the point, as I felt there was in the *Balancing* activity, then why use the activity?

While saying that, I feel the need to acknowledge that, of course, there will be times when exercises, activities and games will not work out perfectly. This is a pedagogical truism;

and sometimes even with the best of intentions students will not really connect with the game and/or the topic. Although an issue is clear to you, the teacher, it does not mean it is clear to the students. This was the case in the first week while I was conducting a few games and activities such as *The Power Game*; students showed no interest whatsoever despite my best efforts. Even with the game they loved, *Whose Hands are These?*, it took extra guided questioning for some to relate the activity to racism. The point I am making is that we, as educators, should do our best to ensure that there is potential for connections to be made with each activity we ask our students to participate in, and we need to make that connection explicit.

The second day was, in many ways, another great day. The students were attentive and responsive. I was careful to use discussion time and formulate my instructions to ensure that the students explored, depicted and dissected racism as they saw, conceived or lived through it in their school community. Although I noted that students made more personal connections, for instance, by illustrating and offering examples that were taking place in their school yard -there was still something odd, almost distant and performance-based about it rather reality-based. It left the impression that it was too easy for them; too easy to talk about, too easy to depict, too easy to identify. I actually felt like they had done this all before and I was facilitating a repeat course for them. It spoke well of the teacher and her coverage of the topic, but it also spoke to the fact that this was probably not a social issue that was considered by the students as a current struggle in their particular community.

The third day, I have to admit, felt similar to day three from the previous week. Again, a great day as far as participation and positivity were concerned, but a general sense of lack in depth of content. The students' images of a utopian society were filled with excessive happiness, kindness and all kinds of extreme loving behaviour. The similarities were uncanny between the

two classes, specifically scenes with skipping, arms wrapped around each other and giant group hugs, etc. I found myself once again feeling conflicted about the effectiveness of the program as an educational tool. If this was simply a drama unit/program I would have been thrilled with the results of this week. However, the intention was to initiate social awareness in education through drama. On the same token, the motive was to empower students to help make positive changes with social struggles in their community.

At this point in the week I was not sure what to do about this predicament. I did not know if I was even being reasonable; part of me had to acknowledge that I may have been expecting too much from both these students and myself. I was expecting to see students being as impacted by the program as I was when I experienced it. What I neglected to reflect upon was how long it took me to realize the programs impact. First, I was in a different place intellectually, psychically, and maturity-wise; second, I spent days reflecting, talking about it and even writing a required journal assignment before I really understood and felt the full impact of the program. As a more mature university student who chose to take part in the program there were different levels of vested interest and intensity. As well, I experienced a program that was five days long, 8 hours a day, involving the crucial community-based element of Forum Theatre. I also remembered that although I believed *drinking/ drugs and driving* was a serious issue and struggle in our community, I personally did not struggle with this issue in my life; therefore, not much of my participation was based on personal experience.

I think this is why Diamond (2007) warns us not to have too many expectations; results are impossible to predict. I would add that this is especially so when entering a community with which you are unfamiliar. However, if I were a permanent part of the community facilitating this type of program would things be different? Would I be able to create a more significant impact?

Not being in that situation, I can only assume that it would help.

The fourth day with these students was interesting to say the least. When I walked in the teacher informed me that there was an impromptu assembly taking place that afternoon that was going to only leave me with approximately 30-45 minutes of class time. This was obviously not ideal, but it was another prime example of the type of interruptions that we have to work around as educators. I was thankful it was taking place almost immediately following lunch because at least I could use the time to rework the program; I will reiterate here how much I hate doing filler to pass time.

In my opinion the image work on middle ground, or change, was too important to try to rush through and although Day Fives's mini forum would have been worth trying with this class, it was not technically part of Diamond's *Wildest Dreams* exercise outline. As a result, I decided to move the last stages of *Wildest Dreams* to the next day and cut out the mini forum. I would keep the two warm-up activities that I had planned for day four and add an exercise from day five's plan called, *Speed Gestures*. *Speed Gestures*, which I have discussed in more detail above, is one of my favourite exercises from Diamond's pool and I utilize it whenever I can. It is an effective tool for both drama technique and social content.

In retrospect, incorporating *Speed Gestures* as the main exercise was probably one of the best revision decisions I had made so far with the program. Not only did the students love this exercise, but it also brought forward an awkward yet dynamic learning moment for the students once the exercise focused on racism as a social issue. That moment became the main subject of a closing discussion where I was finally able to sense a deeper connection of consciousness for these students with the topic, racism.

I began this exercise as usual, facilitating the students through a few rounds not focused

or connected to racism. This is also how Diamond did it with us, getting us comfortable and familiar with what we were doing physically or dramatically, before throwing the additional focus of the social issue into the mix. I allowed focus to remain away from the social issue of racism for far longer than I had planned because the students were having so much fun. They were quite comical, so much so that they had me and the two other teachers in the room laughing away.

Finally, however, I asked the students to continue with this same activity only this time shifting to the topic of racism. A student volunteered to open the new round with a gesture and statement. The basic idea behind the *Speed Gestures* game is that one person offers a gesture and word or sentence to the class and then each person responds with an accompanying sound and gesture they believe correlates to the original offer⁷. In one case, a student stomped one foot in front of the other and stated, “I hate you ’cause you’re black.” This caused a huge reaction from the student’s classmates. It was an awkward moment where all the students were also looking at me to react. Even though that student would have known to repeat the gesture and statement three times before their classmates would begin with their gesture/statement responses, they too, paused and looked to see my reaction.

I did a quick scan of the room to find the only person of African Canadian descent, which happened to be a support teacher, who gave me an “it’s ok” sign with her fingers. However, the reaction in the room was too big for me to just leave it alone. I was also wary of putting down that student’s contribution so I started by acknowledging that “This was what I said I was looking for: however, why don’t we generalize the statement so that we don’t focus just on one race?” The student immediately changed the statement to say, “I don’t like you ’cause you’re

⁷ For a detailed explanation of this game see Appendix A or the above section detailing the planning of the program.

different.” The rest of the class deemed this as an acceptable and more appropriate statement and they continued with the exercise. However, the energy had significantly died and there was awkwardness lingering in the classroom.

In hindsight, I should have stopped the activity immediately and initiated a discussion about what caused that reaction and what made that moment uncomfortable. I then should have asked if that statement was an accurate expression of what they see going on in their classroom community. If they did not think it was then we could have collaborated on how we could change the statement to make it align to a more accurate expression of this community’s struggle with racism.

Immediately following this round I brought the students into a discussion circle. I asked them questions like, What happened here? What was this experience like for you? Why did you feel the way you did? What was different between the energy in this round compared to the previous rounds that were not about racism? What exactly was awkward or uncomfortable about what happened? What does what happened here reveal about racism? The ensuing discussion was brutally honest and one where I finally got the students to start functioning at a deeper level of reflection. All it took was one real moment! The discussion was actually cut short by the bell which was disappointing; I loved being in that moment with the students, but at the same time I was encouraged and excited for tomorrow.

The fifth and final day was exactly what I had hoped the last day of a program like this would look like. Although it also happened to be the last Friday before a week-long Spring Break for the students I did not find them overly distracted. I decided to add a couple more rounds of *Speed Gestures* as part of the warm-up activity, beginning right away with a focus on racism. I hoped this would help bring the students back into the same train of thought that they

left with the day before, making it interesting to see how these students would address the changes that needed to be made in their community.

I approached the last stages of the *Wildest Dreams* exercise the same way I did the following week with five transitional and sequential tableaux, images that took them from the place of dysfunction that they were in to the place of utopia that they desired to be. I would say most of the class, with few exceptions, presented significant yet reasonable options for achieving change in their community. The discussion in between each image presentation was equally as significant. In fact, because the students had so much to say about what changes in their community could and should look like, we completed the exercise with only 10 minutes left in the day. I felt this was insufficient time to ask the students to complete the writing task and therefore, we ended the day with yet another round of *Speed Gestures*, only this time it was for fun.

One of my disappointments from this second week was not having time to produce the writing assignment as a final summative task. At one point in the day, I thought it was worth asking the students to work on it over the weekend/Spring Break and hand it in on the Monday they returned. If I was returning to the school, I probably would have done that, but I did not want to ask the students to hand something in that may not have gotten to me. So I decided to be happy with what I was able to accomplish: all the stages of *Wildest Dreams* as David Diamond has documented them

I left the students with words of appreciation and thanks for their participation. I also encouraged them to carry out the changes we discussed in class, to continue to be aware of injustices within their community, and always be on the lookout for places where they could make changes for the better. In reflection time later, I was very encouraged about how the

program had progressed that last week. I realized that although there were flaws and, therefore, tweaks that still needed to be made, overall I was confident in what I had done.

Chapter Six

The Final Curtain: A Conclusion

Not everything that is faced can be changed

But nothing can be changed until it is faced

James Baldwin

Through this qualitative self-study/action research project, my primary objective was to assess the implications of applying David Diamond's *Theatre for Living* workshop, called *Wildest Dreams*, as an effective and critical literacy practice within a middle school. This assesment was carried out with the intention of enhancing social consciousness through both literacy and understanding. Having received permission both from the school prinicpal and two classroom teachers, I implemented the week-long workshop/program with two groups of middle school students that were beginning to wrestle with complex social issues that existed within their multicultural, yet middle to upper-middle-class communities. My hope here was to exemplify for educators a practical yet significant step towards a process of understanding that would ideally initialize and eventually lead to the development of broader sense of awareness for the students that is a sense of global consciousness, aware both of its limits and its locality.

Reflecting back on this study, I am overwhelmed with how this whole project has come together. What I thought I was doing at the beginning of this process and what I have actually done are two very different things. My innitial intentions with this thesis assignment was to conduct interviews throughout the week-long program and create qualitative case studies of the students' expeirnces. My original objective was to look at the effectiveness of the program in inniating social awareness in these students. At one point during the innitial stages of this project, as I was reviewing and journalling about some of the concerns I had for the project, I

recognized that I needed to re-evaluate some of my aspirations and re-think my method.

With the little time that I would actually be at the school I acknowledged that the hope of actually creating significant change for with or in the students was unrealistic; especially without a promise from the classroom educators to continue this practice or even really generate any follow-up. I began to realize that any conclusions I might come up with would run the risk of being overstated and even a false or sweeping claim. The moment that sparked a change in my approach was when I turned my focus on one specific concern I had for this project; facilitation. As I began to really look at the significant role the facilitator would play in this and began to understand how my facilitation would directly effect the outcome for the students, I grappled with the idea this project could be more effective, not mention more interesting, for future and current practicing educators if I was simply able to address the process of linking this the program to the curriculum and then studying its implementation from an educator's perspective. Now that I have finished the research and documentation I have to admit that keeping it simple by participating in self-study/action research was the better choice then what might have come out of over complicating and overestimating my research.

Primarily, I kept thorough reflection journal entries detailing the program implementation, its processes and its outcomes. Sorting through my experiences of those two weeks, I am struck by the program changes, behaviour management, general chaos, busy work, and interruptions that teachers face on a daily basis. Nonetheless, it was significant to the validity of the study that I was introduced to and fully immersed in the school complexity and, for many educators, the all too familiar struggles of making the curriculum relevant. Despite all of these difficulties, through this research study there emerged valuable practices for educators and, above all, effective programming for students. These practices and programming were able to

address pertinent social issues, issues such as racism.

Prior to this workshop experience, and in talking with them, it became clear that students' understanding of racism was based on standard academic teaching, leaving the students with an adequate knowledge-base but limited understanding. Although students were able to regurgitate the notion that racism was, for all intents and purposes, "wrong," they only recognized it as an issue that transpired elsewhere. Therefore they reflected on it from a distance. Through this workshop experience, I witnessed (albeit tersely and in a limited capacity) the students develop their ability to identify racism within their own school communities, assess the negative effects that this issue had on the community, collaboratively determine an ideal community existence and finally discover, dissect and explore the possibility of creating real change within their community, all the while meeting curriculum requirements.

As a researcher/educator, I carried out a program that engaged the students, modest as it was, in higher levels of social consciousness. I did this through drama activities and exercises that sparked the students' interests and enhanced their desires to participate and connect with what was going on in the classroom. Within my role as the workshop facilitator, I was given the opportunity to share in the students' experiences and struggles surrounding racism. In a sense I was able to step into their shoes and initiate a process of understanding (with) them. As a result I was also able to guide the students through a progression of discovery, exploration, dissection and reflection with regard to actually dealing with and even possibly making positive changes in order to achieve an ideal environment in the classroom. This ideal, they decided, would include the gradual elimination of racism within, at least, their classroom community.

One of the major limitations in this study was the lack of relationship I had with the students. Going into the study I was not concerned with this aspect of facilitating and it really

caught me off guard once I realized the extent of it. This realization happened gradually and organically as my reflection journal entries increased. I had witnessed David Diamond himself implementing this program at the University of Windsor during my undergraduate years without any prior connection, relationship or even knowledge of us as students. I would not say that I did not take the teacher/student relationship into account at all. I had already acknowledged that a relationship with the students would be an advantage to this type of programming in schools, but I was not prepared for the disadvantage the lack of this relationship caused in my program implementation.

As Perry, Winne and Woolfolk (2006) explain, the classroom teacher has a special responsibility to know her/his students on various levels of comfort and ability, such as emotional, intellectual, physical, etc. Therefore, the potential for a positive impact is more likely because the educator already understands specifics of how to instruct, question, and facilitate learning. The educator would also understand when, where and how to appropriately utilize Diamond's work. This creates a dynamic where, in order to be effective, the educator must maintain a balancing act of being both a leader and an active and contributing member of the classroom community. I believe this relationship is the key ingredient to unlocking the students' maximum potential, especially while applying Diamond's work as a re-occurring part of classroom activities. Therefore, I am concluding that the advantage of "relationship" will prove to seriously enhance Diamond's work in the classroom.

Looking back on my planning process, I can see the earliest evidence of limitation with respect to my program implementation. Although my intention was to coordinate a plan *with* the students, I was actually making decisions *for* them. I was making decisions about activities without having any idea of who they were, what they were capable of, what they would enjoy

doing or could handle maturely. I did not even take the working space of the classroom into consideration. I was simply basing all my planning on the curriculum expectations. As I am grappling with this now, I should have flipped the script: that is, I should have started by knowing the students, the site, the issues, and the classroom. Here, I am reminded of Ted Aoki's (1993) argument which addresses complications that often come between two types of curricula: the *curriculum-as-plan* and the *lived curriculum*.

In his article, *Legitimizing Lived Curriculum: Toward a Curricular Landscape of Multiplicity*, Aoki (1993) documents what he refers to as “an intimate understanding of the curriculum landscape” (p. 257). In this, he portrays for his readers the experiences of a grade 5 educator whom he refers to as *Miss O*. Like myself, *Miss O* wrestles with her reality of juggling the differences between the two curricula. As Aoki (1993) describes it, *curriculum-as-plan* “usually has its origin outside of the classroom [and] is the work of curriculum planners, often selected teachers from the field, under the direction of some official often designated as the curriculum director or curriculum supervisor” (p. 258). In other words, it is the curriculum we as educators are required to teach. The outlined plan seen in Appendix A is a perfect example of this type curriculum planning as it was based solely upon the Ontario Curriculum Standards and it was formulated completely separate from the classroom.

On the other hand, the *lived curriculum*, although mostly self-explanatory, is described by Aoki (1993) as “a multiplicity of lived curricula that [is] experienced” (p. 259). In other words, it is the part of the curriculum that becomes more than just a neatly organized plan. It is the reality of living, experiencing and doing *life at school*. It is facilitating a curriculum amid all of the *uniqueness* of a group of 20-30 students. A documented example of this can be seen in sections above, the *Diaries of Week One* and *Week Two*. Here, life gets in the way and

curriculum rubs against the unexpected, that which is staring us in the face that we can not but deal with.

It gets complicated when confronted with the fact that the planners are often not planning for any form of uniqueness. Rather they are doing quite the opposite; they are planning for a generalized and sometimes even stereotyped group of students. “The student” thus becomes an imaginary category. As I suggested in the introduction, everything we do and all of our work as researchers, teachers and educators is laden with how we view, understand and respond to the world around us (Palmer, 2007). I believe, unfortunately, I was caught in the same vicious cycle, planning for an idealized context and for a “student” who is ready to engage drama activities and intellectually ready to talk about and address difficult social issues (such as racism). Put otherwise, I was not basing my planning on the distinctive group of students I was going to be working with; rather, I was formulating opinions and plans from my previous experiences with students in grades 7 and 8.

I did not even realize the implications of what I was doing while I was doing it. Aoki (1993) warns us that there is a serious danger of having the *uniqueness* of the students snuffed out by “prosaically abstract language of the external curriculum planners who are, in a sense, condemned to plan for faceless people...” (p. 259). By executing a planning process that inflicted a *curriculum-as-plan*, I believe I unconsciously contradicted the general intention of the program, therefore having possibly hindered the potential effectiveness and outcome of the program for myself as the facilitator and, of course, for the students. The point is, if I did have prior knowledge or a relationship with the students, I would have been able to implement a more individualized program.

Planning individualized programming for specific groups differs from what Diamond

(2007) exemplifies in his book, *Theatre for Living*. When Diamond facilitates a workshop he has a set plan and outline that receives little to no alterations. These are pre-set activities, exercises and practices that he has put into practice and has been successful. I am not implying that he never tweaks anything for the special interests or needs of the group but for the most part, at least to my knowledge and understanding, the way he outlines the exercises in his book, is exactly the way they are carried out in his workshops. I believe Diamond is able to do this for two reasons. First, he has proven not only his work to be effective but I also believe him to have mastered the art of facilitation.

Second, Diamond works through invitation only, therefore when people contact him they know what he is about and seek him out. Therefore, based on communication between the two parties, he simply decides which exercises to utilize depending on a variety of circumstances. Nonetheless, because people seek him out he can say, “This is how the program works, this is the commitment that is required and this is what I need from you.” Although I was also working through invitation from the principal to facilitate a unique workshop on social awareness in that middle school, it did not quite work in the same way. Unlike Diamond, I was expected to work with whatever guidelines and timelines the school could offer and make the program work within the confinements of the Language and Dramatic Arts curriculum requirements.

Another factor linked to this limitation, i.e. the lack of relationship with the students, is relevant to identifying the social issue. According to Diamond’s program, it is “the community” that decides on the issue. Unfortunately, however, in my case, it was the teachers who decided. Choosing the topic, for Diamond, is probably the single most important step at the beginning of the program/workshop. It determines the energy and level of engagement of the participants: a group of middle school students in this research. Here, I came to realize, I made a serious error in

judgment: I asked the classroom teachers to facilitate a crucial element of the program, choosing the topic, when they did not have a broad understanding what the program was about.

In an idealized world, I should have first established a relationship with the students. Only then could I be considered an “active member of their community,” which is a central idea of Diamond’s program. Second, I should have determined the social issue with the students that they were struggling with or directly affected by. Taking advantage of Black History Month meant paying little attention to students’ daily struggles or the social issues closest to their hearts. This is not to suggest by any means that racism was not an issue of concern to the students; I might have taken the same decision as these teachers. For the sake of this program, however, that decision should have been taken in consultation with the students. Not doing so affected not only their level of engagement during the activities but also their reservations when we sat around the circle to debrief/discuss the program implementation. This, I believe, is directly related to them getting to know both me as an outsider/facilitator and the program, which challenges them to open up and talk about sensitive issues.

Put otherwise, if students were to reveal racist actions going on at the school, for example, they could risk causing themselves, their friends or even their “enemies” serious disciplinary action. This is not to suggest that disciplinary actions should not be taken should it be necessary; but the intent and the objective of this programming is to create dialogue between the community members, which is done through invitation not disciplinary actions. Unfortunately, because the students knew almost nothing about me, I understand their reluctance to risk social ridicule from their peers. If I were the classroom educator, I would have had the occasion to gain their trust and confidence in order to share some of the realities that related to their struggle with the social issue.

By having an established relationship with the students, I also believe the issues with behaviour management, classroom busy work, and maybe even some of the general chaos that I experienced in class would have lessened. Taking into account that I was not their classroom teacher, I probably should have made the first day of programming a topic selection day and planned games around that. Also, for planning, I should have visited the school before the beginning of the program and familiarized myself with the students and the classroom setting.

These realizations are exceptionally significant for the potential reader of this study, the educator/researcher that shares similar passions for furthering education, specifically arts in education, and the future application of this workshop in classrooms. This study, I now realize, was ideally intended for practicing educators who are looking for ways to initialize or expand their students' sense of social awareness in the classroom through academic programming such as this one. Being a leader and an active member of the community (a group of grade 7 and 8 students in this study) is, ultimately, important to the success of a program like *Theatre for Living*.

Expanding this research

There are multiple possibilities in moving forward with a project like this one. This research was conducted as a self-study/action research that focused on my reflective experience as the facilitator of a drama education program/workshop. With permission from the school, the program was implemented for two weeks in a middle school in a metropolitan city in southwestern Ontario. In it, I combined my understanding of education drama theories and the specific works of David Diamond. And, as noted already, there were a few challenges in the program implementation primarily relating to not having prior contact with or knowledge of the

students or the school.

To make the best out of this program both as a researcher and/or practicing educator, I would suggest implementing it over a longer period of time, half a year to a full year for example. Within this (half) year, an educator could begin with the programmatic activities as discussed in this study, then move on to employ more intensive exercises from Diamond's *Theatre for Living* and finally engage the students in the process of Forum Theatre. The latter, as already explained, is a form of participatory theatre which is created and performed by students who have participated in the workshops; as such, it is an opportunity to pluralize the impact of the experiences accessed by the workshop participants into the school and the larger community (see Chapter 4; Diamond, 2007).

Another way for future researchers to conceive of this research is to write a compare and contrast piece. In addition to implementing exercises from *Theatre for Living* in the classroom, one might create an extra-curricular drama or social awareness club, where the students participate in exercises, workshops and even Forum Theatre. One of the interesting differences would be in participation: one group chooses to be there versus another group which may be participating as part of their classroom duties. No matter how student-centered we try to be as teachers sometimes we need to accept the fact that classroom activities are not for everyone. Therefore, for the extra-curricular group, one might venture to suggest, the sense of "community" is different and their passion for drama or social change will make a radical difference.

Having said all this, I can answer positively that David Diamond's *Theatre for Living* was a practical and effective critical literacy practice within a middle school. Critical literacy practices, according to Paulo Freire and Donaldo Macedo (1987), grew out of social justice

pedagogy. When interacting with any particular text, such as the images that came out of this program, one must by definition engage with “reading the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1987). Allen Luke (2000) argues, however, that the term “critical literacy” is currently regarded in North America as simply having characteristics of “higher order comprehension”. While there is definitely a direct link to social justice pedagogy, as described by Freire & Macedo (1987), the basic critical literacy practices that are currently being taught in Ontario schools, as described Luke (2000), as early grades one and two, such as critical connections text-to-text, text-to-self and text-to-world or critical questioning such as what? So what? and now what? where without question being reinforced at a higher level on consciousness or “higher order comprehension” through this study. Despite the pedagogical challenges, it created possibilities that otherwise were not readily available to these middle school students. First and foremost, it created a space for dialogue to address difficult knowledges, to talk about unsettling and uncomfortable social issues such as racism.

In the end: Closing Remarks

There is an ongoing debate about whether the arts are a necessary part of the education process. The intention of this study was to advance the evidence that the arts, specifically dramatic arts, can be utilized as a cross-curricular tool. Accordingly, Brankley (2009) argues that the arts “have great capacity to create a classroom that engages the learning styles, multiple intelligences, and varied backgrounds of its students” (p. 173). Their influence, Brankley adds, is reflected through an enhancement in the students’ academic accomplishments and social conscious development. This project examined the use of dramatic arts in addressing important content that is crucial to the development of students’ social consciousness. Developing a higher

level of social consciousness is a subject that is relevant for Ontario's school system and clearly stated in its curriculum materials (see also Purnell, Ali, Begum & Carter, 2007).

To conclude, this study provides a guideline for educators to develop and execute dramatic arts programming that links curriculum requirements with pertinent social issues in the school. Therefore, rather than participating in basic forms of mainstream theatre training; the students are learning how to engage their community in forms of participatory theatre – a “theatre for change.”

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Appendix A: Outline of Preliminary Interview

Interview One:

Estimated Time: 45 minutes

Grouping task-

I instructed the participant to group the following set of words, related to social awareness/action education, into sections. I explained that once the grouping was complete, I would ask her to describe the groups and explain the rationale behind her groupings. I emphasized to the participant that there is no right or wrong answer and she could take as much time as needed. I clarified that this task was simply a warm-up activity, allowing the participant to focus her thoughts, actively interact and personally connect with the material in question. Ideally, it also relaxed the participant if there was any nervousness or tension, which can be common in interviewees (Seidman, 2006). I left the room while the participant was completing this task in order to alleviate pressure; but I remained within earshot for the participant to alert me when the task was completed.

Words:

Social Awareness	Social Action	Racism	Individuality
Fear	Comfort	Gender	Identity
Diversity	Pluralistic Perspective		
Poverty	Ageism	Culture	Bullying
Society	Ignorance	Biases	Disability
Education	Literacy	Knowledge	

Interview questions:

The following questions guided my open-ended interview.

- Where do social issues such as racism, sexism, diversity, poverty, disability, ageism, amongst other “ism’s” fit into the classroom setting?

- How does a teacher's level of comfort play a part when addressing social issues such as sexism, diversity, poverty, disability, ageism, bullying, etc. ?

- Throughout your experiences as an educator, when do you find it easy to approach a social issue? [Probing question: What made it easy?]

- Throughout your experiences as an educator when do you find it difficult to approach a social issue in the classroom? [Probing questions: What made it difficult? What might help you?]

- Can you give an example of how addressing these issues have proven to create positive results in your experience as an educator?

- Can you give an example of negative results stemming from addressing these social issues in your experience as an educator? [If yes] Can you think of how that might have been avoided?

- Are there programs already in place addressing social issues in the classroom? [If yes] What are the top three programs?

- When addressing social issues, do the students recognize that there is a need for look at and further address the issue

- If you could predict the social issues your students would consider relevant in their classroom and/or school environment, what would they be? [If the answer is bullying, probe deeper by asking: what is the most common reason for bullying?]

Interview Two:

Estimated Time: 20-30 minutes

While the previous interview focused solely on social issues, this interview focused specifically on cross-curricular drama work in the classroom. Therefore some of the questions may seem similar but the content of the answers will concern different subjects. I have chosen to separate them here for better clarity.

Interview questions:

- Can you distinguish between instances in your experience as an educator where drama/art has been implemented across the curriculum and in turn where it has been implemented purely as an aesthetic performance and tell us about each? [Probing questions: What was different about each experience? What was similar? How did you feel as an educator in each instance? How were the reactions of the students similar? How were they different?]
- How is integrating drama/art across the curriculum work having an effect on the teaching/learning dynamic in the classroom?
- What tensions arise when the arts are attempted outside of the regular specified arts class? Or in other disciplines? Does curriculum support such work?
- Do you think drama/art should be an essential part of a student's education?
- How does the knowledge of drama/art play a part when implementing in the classroom?
- In your opinion does a teacher's talent or training still play a significant role when implementing cross-curricular drama?
- What is your favorite drama activity? Why? Can you expand with an example of how it was used and why it worked?

- What are your feelings around using drama to enhance the approach to social issues in the classroom/school/community [Probing questions: Is it a powerful enough tool? How? Why? Why not?]
- Can you give an example when drama/art may have been used to approach social issues? [If yes] What were your feelings behind this approach?

Formal Outline of Workshop

Ontario Ministry of Education Curriculum Expectations:

Overall Expectations:

Language:

Writing

- Generate, gather, and organize ideas and information to write for an intended purpose and audience

Oral Communication

- Listen in order to understand and respond appropriately in a variety of situations for a variety of purposes;
- Use speaking skills and strategies appropriately to communicate with different audiences for a variety of purposes;
- Reflect on and identify their strengths as listeners and speakers, areas for improvement, and the strategies they found most helpful in oral communication situations.

Dramatic Arts

- Create drama pieces, selecting and using a variety of techniques;
- Critique solutions to problems presented in drama and dance, make decisions in large and small groups, and defend their artistic choices.

Day One:

Specific Expectations

Language: Oral / Visual

- Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by adapting active listening strategies to suit a wide variety of situations, including work in groups;
- Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate speaking behaviour in most situations, adapting contributions and responses to suit the purpose and audience;
- Communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style appropriate to both the topic and the intended audience.
- Use appropriate words, phrases, and terminology from the full range of their vocabulary, including inclusive and non-discriminatory language, and a range of stylistic devices, to communicate their meaning accurately and engage the interest of their intended audience.

Dramatic Arts:

- Assemble, rehearse, and perform a collection of drama and dance works based on themes and issues drawn from a variety of sources from diverse cultures;

- Select appropriate themes that deal with specific situations and that are aimed at a specific audience;
- Organize and carry out a group improvisation;
- Produce pieces that deal appropriately with youth problems (e.g., pieces created through forum theatre);
- Produce work as a member of an ensemble;
- Communicate abstract ideas through drama and dance;
- Demonstrate understanding of the motives of the characters they interpret through drama and dance
- Organize and carry out a group improvisation;

Materials

- An assortment of easily handled props, such as a small table, some chairs and a book
- Random object used as a talking stick for circle.

Method:

Gesture Warm-Up (10 minutes)

Ask students to think of one gesture that is typical of their own personality—for example, a shoulder shrug, a spin, air guitar, a mimed activity, etc. Gather the students into a circle and everyone shares their gesture with their name. After each person shares, the whole class repeats and then repeats all those that have gone before.

Introduction Circle (10 minutes)

This is a discussion circle where I will introduce myself and the project, discuss what will be happening and what will be expected of the students.

Balancing (15 minutes)

· Pulling

Partner the students. They will face each other, take each other by the wrists, and lean out taking each other's weight so that if one would let go, the other would fall. The goal is to stay balanced

and sit down. Then proceed to stand up. Do this a few times. Then join another partnership creating a circle of 4, then 8 then 16...

· Pushing

Partner the students. Begin by explaining to the students that this game is not about winning or losing but again about finding a balance of strength. Explain that naturally one person will be stronger and one will be weaker physically. The one who is stronger should push less and the person who is less strong should push more. They will stand facing each other and place their hands on each other's shoulders and push. This activity should be done without speaking.

Image Circle (20 minutes)

First, form a circle, then partner students as A & B. "Partner A stand in a circle with your backs to each other!" "Partner B stands facing your partner!" Partner A is the intelligent clay and Partner B is the sculptor. Sculptors are responsible for their partner's limbs, facial expressions, etc. There is no talking during this activity. The sculptor may use his/her own body and face as an example and then the clay will imitate. The sculptor can then make adjustments. This is where the concept of intelligent clay comes to play. The intelligent clay must attempt to fill the shape with thought and emotion that is indicated by the body position he/she is being placed in. After each image is ready, all the sculptors walk around the circle and observe the other images and then the partners will switch.

Begin by having each of the student sculpt basic things (e.g., emotions, actions, thoughts, etc.). Next, have the sculptors create an image that relates to the issue under investigation. As they walk around the circle this time ask them to reflect upon and even silently interpret some of the images that they see. Instead of having them switch they will make a second image about the topic. Again as they walk around ask the sculptors to reflect on the images they are seeing. The intelligent clay can then relax but must remember their image. Finally, ask one sculptor to offer their image to the center of the circle and then one at a time each sculptor will bring their image to the center and place it in relation to the others. (Sculptors cannot change their image at all; they should place it where they think it would make sense in relation to the next.) After every image has been placed in the center, each sculptor then has a second chance to adjust their

placement if they feel that there may be a better place for it. "Now sculptor, what do you see?" Have a brief discussion about what is happening in this randomly made image.

Group Image (35 min)

In small groups each student will make an image using themselves and other people in their group. If there are five people in a group then there should be five images. The image should depict an actual moment in their life where they were struggling with the issue under investigation. This **MUST** be their own moment, not a friend or a relative's or something they have heard. They may play as the protagonist, antagonist, by-stander, direct or indirect victim; but it must be a personal moment. The image may contain as little as two people and as many as there are people in the group. The sculptors must also place themselves in the image as themselves. Similar to the image circle, the sculptors must sculpt without speaking. Therefore they will not be sharing their story verbally with the others at this point.

Next, all the group images will be presented. After the presentation the other students will vote on one that they connected with the most. The one with the majority of votes will present their image again, only this time they will experience a form of image activation. Students in the image will be tapped on the shoulder and they will be asked to put a voice to the image. Here I will be asking them to identify their character's wants.

Closing Circle (5-10 minutes)

- Students share their expectations for the rest of the week.

Day Two:

Specific Expectations

Language: Writing

- Generate ideas about more challenging topics and identify those most appropriate for the purpose;
- Identify their point of view and other possible points of view, evaluate other points of view, and find ways to acknowledge other points of view, if appropriate;
- Spell familiar words correctly

Language: Oral / Visual

- Identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expression, gestures, and eye contact, and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help convey their meaning;
- Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by adapting active listening strategies to suit a wide variety of situations, including work in groups;
- Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate speaking behaviour in most situations, adapting contributions and responses to suit the purpose and audience;
- Communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style appropriate to both the topic and the intended audience;
- Use appropriate words, phrases, and terminology from the full range of their vocabulary, including inclusive and non-discriminatory language, and a range of stylistic devices, to communicate their meaning accurately and engage the interest of their intended audience.

Dramatic Arts:

- Assemble, rehearse, and perform a collection of drama and dance works based on themes and issues drawn from a variety of sources from diverse cultures;
- Select appropriate themes that deal with specific situations and that are aimed at a specific audience;
- Organize and carry out a group improvisation;
- Produce pieces that deal appropriately with youth problems (e.g., pieces created through forum theatre);
- Produce work as a member of an ensemble;
- Communicate abstract ideas through drama and dance;
- Demonstrate understanding of the motives of the characters they interpret through drama and dance.

Materials:

- Large paper roll
- Markers

- Tape
- Camera

Method:

Yes Let's! (10 minutes)

Divide the students into partners or a group of three. Any member of the group makes a suggestion, e.g. "Let's climb a mountain". The rest of the group summon up all their enthusiasm and exclaim "Yes Let's!" and mime doing so. And the game continues until each member of the groups has had two or three turns suggesting an activity.

Complete the Image (20 minutes)

Gather students into a large circle. Take a brief moment to explain the importance of not naming an image and allowing for different interpretations. Then ask one of the students to volunteer to come into the middle and offer the class an image it does not have to mean anything at this point, just a shape in space). Next have a second person come in-and without speaking or miming or explaining in anyway (just by offering a frozen image)-complete the image so it tells a story. Then send the first person back to the circle. Ask the students to reflect on what they see now and ask someone else to come in and complete this image. Repeat this pattern for a few minutes and then add a third person to the image and continue. Finally have the students clear the circle and announce that you are now making images about the issue under investigation. Repeat the pattern above but continue adding more and more students.

Wildest Dreams Intro (30 minutes)

Begin by making practice images of the dysfunction of their community (in relation to the social issue). To create the images, begin with one person and then add until no one has anything left to offer. The images may include from two to all of the participants. Once these are made, take a few moments to have the students reflect on what they saw and then try to synthesize them.

Repeat four or five times and then separate students into groups. Each group will also create images of the dysfunction of their community (in relation to the social issue). Have each group create an image where everyone in the group is involved, present their image, and discuss

briefly. Then invite students to add anything to this image either by moving an existing character or adding themselves in. Similar idea to complete the image.

Graffiti-Wall (5 minutes)

A large paper role is laid out in the middle of the floor. Members of the workshop are encouraged to write or draw single descriptive words, phrases or pictures of what they saw in the images presented. Once everyone who wants the opportunity has contributed, the paper role is hung on the wall and the content of it is read aloud by the facilitator.

Wildest Dreams – Stage II (25 minutes)

The end result will be to create one large image that encompasses all of the ideas from the graffiti wall.

Image Activation (5 minutes)

The students in the image will be tapped on the shoulder and they will be asked to put a voice to the image. Here I will be asking them to identify their character's secret thought and or internal monologue.

Final Words (5 minutes)

In the circle, go around and get one word from each student to characterize some of the insights from today's discussion. Encourage students to keep these ideas in mind as we move further into the issue.

Day Three:

Specific Expectations

Language: Writing

- Generate ideas about more challenging topics and identify those most appropriate for the purpose;
- Identify their point of view and other possible points of view, evaluate other points of view, and find ways to acknowledge other points of view, if appropriate;
- Spell familiar words correctly;

Language: Oral / Visual

- Identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expression, gestures, and eye contact, and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help convey their meaning;
- Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by adapting active listening strategies to suit a wide variety of situations.
- Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate speaking behaviour in most situations, adapting contributions and responses to suit the purpose and audience;
- Communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style appropriate to both the topic and the intended audience;
- Use appropriate words, phrases, and terminology from the full range of their vocabulary, including inclusive and non-discriminatory language, and a range of stylistic devices, to communicate their meaning accurately and engage the interest of their intended audience.

Dramatic Arts:

- Assemble, rehearse, and perform a collection of drama and dance works based on themes and issues drawn from a variety of sources from diverse cultures;
- Select appropriate themes that deal with specific situations and that are aimed at a specific audience;
- Organize and carry out a group improvisation;
- Produce pieces that deal appropriately with youth problems (e.g., pieces created through forum theatre);
- Produce work as a member of an ensemble;
- Communicate abstract ideas through drama and dance;
- Demonstrate understanding of the motives of the characters they interpret through drama and dance;

Materials:

- Large paper roll
- Markers

- Tape
- Camera
- Blindfold
- Chair

Method:

Whose Hands are These? (20 minutes)

This game is played in two stages. In the first stage, a player sits on a chair in the middle of a circle blindfolded. One at a time, other players gently touch the player in the center (on the shoulder, the top of the head, or the player may wish to sit with his/her palms out to be touched. The seated player has to guess whether the person touching him/her is male or female.

In the second stage, a player sits in the center of a circle blindfolded, with their hands resting on their knees and palms up. One at a time, other players approach the person in the middle and place their hands palm down on top of the first player's hands. The player in the center tries to determine who it is through examination of the person's hands. Briefly discuss what it feels like to be in both roles

Fill the Space (10 minutes)

Everyone walks around the room, eyes open, relaxed. Be aware of each other. Now, be aware of the spaces in between you and the other people, you and the walls. Fill the empty spaces. Do not let there be any empty space. Now allow the students to move faster, continuing to fill the empty space. Allow the students to move around for a few moments and then freeze them. Ask them to join arms with the person closest to them. Now in partners fill the empty space. Now in threes. Some will have to split up and form new groups (have the students figure it out and count down from 6). Always begin with a relaxed pace and then allow them to move faster. Finally, have the students break off individually again and fill the empty space remaining at an up-beat pace.

Wildest Dreams-Stage III (30 minutes)

One person begins by making practice image of a completely perfect, functional utopian community (in relation to the social issue). To create the images, begin with one person and then

add until no one has anything left to offer. The images may include from two to all of the participants. Once these are made, take a few moments to have the students reflect on what they saw then try to synthesize them. Do this 4-5 times and then separate the students into groups. Each group will also create images of a completely perfect, functional utopian community (in relation to the social issue). Have each group create an image where everyone in the group is involved, present their image, and discuss briefly. Then invite students to add anything to this image either by moving an existing character or adding themselves in. A similar idea to *completes the image*.

Graffiti-Wall (5 min)

A large paper role is laid out in the middle of the floor. Members of the workshop are encouraged to write or draw single descriptive words, phrases or pictures of what they saw in the images presented. Once everyone who wants to has contributed to the activity has, the paper role is hung on the wall and its content is read aloud by the facilitator.

Wildest Dreams – Stage IV (25 minutes)

The end result will be one large image that encompasses all of the ideas from the graffiti wall.

Image Activation (5 minutes)

The students in the image will be tapped on the shoulder and they will be asked to put a voice to the image. Here, I will be asking them to identify their character's secret thought and or internal monologue

Final Words (5 minutes)

In the circle, go around and get one word from each student to characterize some of the insights from today's discussion. Encourage students to keep these ideas in mind as we move further into the issue. Briefly discuss the difference between yesterday's words and today's.

Day Four:

Specific Expectations

Language: Writing

- Gather information to support ideas for writing, using a variety of strategies;
- Identify and order main ideas and supporting details and group them into units that could be used to develop a multi-paragraph piece of writing, using a variety of strategies;
- Establish a distinctive voice in their writing appropriate to the subject and audience ;
- Regularly use vivid and/or figurative language and innovative expressions in their writing;

Language: Oral Communication

- Identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expression, gestures, and eye contact, and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help convey their meaning;
- Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by adapting active listening strategies to suit a wide variety of situations, including work in groups;
- Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate speaking behaviour in most situations, adapting contributions and responses to suit the purpose and audience;
- Communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style appropriate to both the topic and the intended audience;
- Use appropriate words, phrases, and terminology from the full range of their vocabulary, including inclusive and non-discriminatory language, and a range of stylistic devices, to communicate their meaning accurately and engage the interest of their intended audience.

Dramatic Arts:

- Assemble, rehearse, and perform a collection of drama and dance works based on themes and issues drawn from a variety of sources from diverse cultures;
- Select appropriate themes that deal with specific situations and that are aimed at a specific audience;
- Organize and carry out a group improvisation;
- Produce pieces that deal appropriately with youth problems (e.g., pieces created through forum theatre);
- Produce work as a member of an ensemble;

- Communicate abstract ideas through drama and dance;
- Demonstrate understanding of the motives of the characters they interpret through drama and dance.

Materials:

- Tape
- An assortment of easily handled props, such as a small table, some chairs and a book
- Camera
- Notebook
- Pencil/pen

Method:

The Power Game (20 minutes)

Place a chair, desk, book and other small props in the middle of the circle. Invite one person to enter the circle, arranging the objects to make a naturalistic or abstract scene in which one chair appears to be the most powerful object. Objects can be moved or put anywhere within the space. Invite other students to redesign the space so that different objects seem more powerful.

Next, one student enters the space and makes a frozen image, assuming a high status position. Other participants are invited to enter one by one and freeze in position, each trying to assume a higher status than everybody else in the stage picture.

After each image, discuss what was powerful about it, what strategies worked the best and how the students felt when they assumed power and when their power was overridden and finally what does power have to do with?

Fear/Protector (10 minutes)

Students stand in a circle. Ask the students to choose, without talking, students they are going to pretend to be afraid of. Then ask the students to choose again, without talking or making it obvious, a different person they are going to pretend to be their protector. Their goal will be to keep their protector in between them and the person they are afraid of. They can use the entire room.

Wildest Dreams-Stage V (35 minutes)

One person making practice a image of the middle ground between the first dysfunctional community and second utopian community pictures (in relation to the social issue). To create the images, begin with one person and then add until no one has anything left to offer. The images may include from two to all of the participants. Once these are made, take a few moments to have the students reflect on what they and saw then try to synthesize them. Do this 4-5 times and then separate the students into groups. Each group will also create images of the middle ground between the first dysfunctional community and second utopian community pictures (in relation to the social issue). Have each group create an image where everyone in the group i\s involved, present their image, and discuss briefly.

Discussion/Final Images (15 minutes)

Are there any images missing? Is the next step after the last image perfection or are there more steps? Create one or two more if the class feels there are more steps.

Wildest Dreams-StageVI / Writing (15-20 minutes)

Students have two writing choices

- Describe how they have personally identified and been affected by the dysfunction of the community, explaining not only why they relate to the first image but also backing up their explanation with any significant events, etc. They will also describe the process and changes required to move on as a community from a place of dysfunction towards the next symbolic yet sequential step on the continuum of images.
- Describe each phase of changes that has to be made beginning with the first sequential image after our main dysfunction until the last step before we have reached a utopian community. Include the story of self and how they can personally be a part of creating the changes.

Day Five:

Specific Expectations

Language: Oral / Visual

- Identify a range of vocal effects, including tone, pace, pitch, volume, and a variety of sound effects, and use them appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences to communicate their meaning;
- Identify a variety of non-verbal cues, including facial expression, gestures, and eye contact, and use them in oral communications, appropriately and with sensitivity towards cultural differences, to help convey their meaning;
- Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate listening behaviour by adapting active listening strategies to suit a wide variety of situations, including work in groups;
- Demonstrate an understanding of appropriate speaking behavior in most situations, adapting contributions and responses to suit the purpose and audience;
- Communicate orally in a clear, coherent manner, using a structure and style appropriate to both the topic and the intended audience;
- Use appropriate words, phrases, and terminology from the full range of their vocabulary, including inclusive and non-discriminatory language, and a range of stylistic devices, to communicate their meaning accurately and engage the interest of their intended audience.

Dramatic Arts:

- Assemble, rehearse, and perform a collection of drama and dance works based on themes and issues drawn from a variety of sources from diverse cultures;
- Select appropriate themes that deal with specific situations and that are aimed at a specific audience;
- Organize and carry out a group improvisation;
- Produce pieces that deal appropriately with youth problems (e.g., pieces created through forum theatre);
- Produce work as a member of an ensemble;
- Communicate abstract ideas through drama and dance;
- Demonstrate understanding of the motives of the characters they interpret through drama and dance;

Method:

Speed Gestures (15 minutes)

Have the students line up against a wall. Ask someone to offer an open-ended gesture but also fill it with emotion. Have the student present the image three times, each time starting from a neutral position. Then starting at the end of the line each person will come to the center and face the first person (person A). Person A will repeat their gesture just once and person B will quickly respond with another gesture and a sound and then to the end of the line. Short exchanges with no words continues down the entire line. There is no way to do this wrong as long as the gestures are responses to the first.

Next a new person A offers a new gesture and person B responds with a gesture and sound that grows directly out of the gesture. Person A then responds with a new gesture and sound that grows directly out of B's gesture.

Finally a new person A offers a new gesture and person B responds with a gesture and a word or phrase that grows directly out of the gesture. Person A then responds with a new gesture and a word or phrase that grows directly out of B's new gesture. And person B responds with a final gesture and a word or phrase.

Encourage students to respond promptly and move through the line fairly quickly. Person A must accept the interpretation person B gives to his/her gesture as reality and respond to it. B's cannot repeat other B's gestures. As long as what you are doing is a response to the same gesture, there is no wrong way of doing this.

Create Improvised Scenes (30 minutes)

Begin by asking students to stand behind an image from the middle ground photos. They should choose an image they can relate to the most or one which particularly resonates with them. This is how they will be placed in groups. It is not important for the groups to be even but if one person is standing alone then ask that person to choose a different image. Next, have the students sit in their groups and briefly explain their feelings about the image and what they identify as

happening in the image. Students will then be instructed to create short (2-3 minutes) improvisation scenes that build to a crisis. The scene should include all of the group's ideas. It does not have to directly relate to the image, but it must relate to the issue under investigation. At this point there should not be a solution in this scene, only a crisis.

Present scenes (15 minutes)

Mini Forum (40 minutes)

Students will present scenes again. Then the other students as the audience will be asked, what do we do? As the scenes are played back over and over, the other students watching can shout out "stop", come in and replace a character to attempt a solution. In character, the students will respond to the intervention as accurately as possible. After each intervention, we talk about what worked and what did not work and the realities about what changed.