University of Alberta

Exploring Popular Theatre in Education: A Participatory Project in an Alternative Education Program for Pregnant Teens and Young Mothers

by

Lindsay Ruth Hunt

A thesis submitted to the Faculty of Graduate Studies and Research

in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the degree of

Master of Education

Department of Secondary Education

Fall 2010
Edmonton, Alberta

Examining Committee

Dr. Diane Conrad, Department of Secondary Education

Dr. jan jagodzinski, Department of Secondary Education

Dr. Diane Wishart, Department of Educational Policy Studies

Abstract

To shift the emphasis with regards to what is important in education, beyond achievement tests, it would be helpful to consider other possibilities for engaging students. Popular theatre as form of popular education is explored as an option for providing this better "way in". I considered both critical and feminist pedagogies while being guided by the following questions: What are the possibilities and limitations of a popular theatre project implemented within an alternative school context? Why should we make space for such processes in schools? Through a participatory study using popular theatre within an alternative program for young mothers and pregnant teens, ethnodramatic scenes are presented, depicting themes that arose within the program. There were successes and failures; however, what was most notable were the constraints of the school system that may not allow for such processes to exist within current educational structures. Suggestions for future projects are proposed.

Acknowledgements

Completion of this thesis would not have been possible without the support of some very important people.

This project would not have been possible if it weren't for the participants in the study and the school program coordinator and teachers. I am so happy to have spent time within the program, and to have met all of the wonderful students and staff. Thanks so much for your willingness to participate and openness to jump into some "weird drama stuff!"

I would like to thank my family and loved ones. My mom and dad (Sharon and John) have always believed in me and lovingly supported my endeavours by continuing to remind me that I "can achieve whatever I aim for" and for that I am forever grateful. I thank Dave for his love and guidance through this process. Without his encouragement, pep talks, cooking and helpful advice I don't think I could have managed to complete this thesis.

I would like to thank my friends (who are also very much loved) for putting up with me and encouraging me during the more stressful times. My social network has been key to this achievement, in that they kept my sanity intact and kept me in good spirits, encouraging me to continue on and complete the work. Additionally, to Richard, I would like to thank him specifically for his professional support, his friendship and mentorship.

I would like to thank my supervisor, Diane, for her ongoing support and incredible patience. I came to the University of Alberta because of her research and am so grateful for her belief in my work. My defense committee also played a very important role in the completion of this piece of work. Thanks to my committee!

Lastly, I would like to acknowledge the University of Alberta for the financial support during my studies. I am extremely grateful for the support.

Table of Contents

Chapter One: Introduction

My interest in exploring the potential of using popular theatre in education as a research topic originates from two main sources: my training and experience in working in theatre and development, more specifically popular theatre; and my concern for how the formal North American education system is determined by the ideologies of governing bodies, to the detriment of students' experiences and development. With the combination of these interests I wanted to consider how popular theatre could and should be implemented within formal education to the benefit of students. Drawing on years of doing popular theatre projects with youth, in and out of school contexts, I was anxious to take a detailed look at how practitioners such as myself, and supporting teachers, can implement popular theatre projects in school. I was also interested in considering what might limit such projects from meeting their full potential in schools.

I am happy to be presenting this thesis research as it is similar to work that I have been actively engaged in for the last seven years. I am proud to take a critical look at this work, to provide a study that might contribute to further research and practice in this area.

In this introduction I take a reflective look at how my research interests emerged from both my lived experiences as a high school student, a popular theatre practitioner and a researcher, and provide an introduction to the popular theatre project I undertook for my master's research in an alternative school program in a western Canadian prairie city for pregnant teens and young mothers

As well, as a context for the study, I provide a description of current trends in education in North America.

My Work as a Theatre and Development Practitioner

In high school I was very much involved in theatre, and more specifically, improv (improvisational theatre). This came as a surprise to my family, as I was a very shy child. Nonetheless I found my way into theatre and drama in school thanks to the encouragement of friends who were already taking part in the drama programs. Once committed to learning and exploring the art, I naturally made connections to the potential for personal development for young people, due to the increasing benefits I was experiencing by being involved. Increased self esteem, confidence and willingness to take creative "risks" resulted in a greater understanding of who I was and my potential, both in and out of the classroom. It was a freeing experience to have a creative outlet, such as theatre in high school, which even someone who was terribly shy could access.

My involvement in the Canadian Improv Games, a national high school improvisational theatre tournament, lead to increased skills which resulted in our "team" planning and implementing workshops for other students as part of a city-wide student leadership conference. The tenets of improvisational theatre; such as teamwork, listening and taking risks, lent themselves well to looking at what leadership is and how it can be fostered through creative exploration. Along with the discovery of what theatre could do for someone on a personal level, I was introduced to the term "theatre in the community". A guest artist visited one of

my Language Arts classes to present on her work in using theatre to address cross-cultural understanding in rural Saskatchewan. I was introduced to theatre as a tool for community development and social change. This presentation was a defining moment for me, and from that time on I endeavoured to work in this area, to learn about how theatre is used for purposes beyond strictly entertainment.

In completing a Bachelors in Fine Arts in "Theatre and Development", where the coursework included looking at the uses of theatre and drama for 1) personal and community development, and 2) more politically, for inciting discussion and potential change around social justice issues, my interests tended towards the latter. As such I pursued further training in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) and have since found myself working as a popular theatre practitioner/artist whose practice is based in *Theatre of the Oppressed.* This work will be explained in greater detail in chapter three. In short, it is a form of theatre that aims to address injustices and the potential for oppressed populations to gain agency around issues affecting them.

A Developing Interest in Education

Throughout my popular theatre practice, over the last eight years, I have found myself working with youth most of the time. This is not to say that this is the work I sought out, rather it was simply what work was available. Regardless of the origins of *Theatre of the Oppressed* –from social activism amongst adult populations in Brazil, in Canada there seems to be an emphasis on this work for

youth programming and “youth issues”. For the most part, as adults, it seems we are too busy working at regular jobs along with other commitments to consider involvement in a theatre project. For adults, then, developmental theatre is not a priority, whereas youth are seen as a “problem” that adults need to fix. Youth crime, bullying, gang involvement, negative self esteem are a few of the issues that we associate with youth and which we attempt to address through creative means in and out of school. As a popular theatre practitioner I have worked with youth populations on the above stated issues along with any youth concerns that emerge from the process. However, herein lies a major problem. In working with youth in schools, more often than not, constraints are placed on what can and cannot be addressed through the creative exploration, and the level of freedom that students have within the theatre process. In working in schools, practitioners, such as me, often have to deal with the overarching rules of the institution and the administration’s ideas of what issues are to be addressed through the program. In such a restricted situation the integrity of the work falters.

It is precisely my concern over the integrity of the work upon which this research project focuses. It stems directly from my experiences working in schools with such restrictions. As such, my research questions for this thesis is as follows:

What are the possibilities and limitations of a popular theatre project implemented within an alternative school context?

Why should we make space for such processes in schools?

I believe in the work and am passionate in investigating it as I have had many positive experiences with students in school settings. I have witnessed students, who otherwise would not engaged in school, connect deeply with the popular theatre process. I aim, through this study, that more teachers, practitioners and administrators may see the value in integrating such processes into formal educational contexts.

Popular Theatre Project

The popular theatre project for this study ran over the course of two weeks in an alternative school program for pregnant teens and young mothers, as part of their Language Arts class. Over the course of ten one-hour sessions I worked with a group of young mothers and pregnant teens, using interactive drama games and exercises to create short pieces of theatre based on their thoughts, feelings and stories. I include a detailed description of the project's methodology and methods. I interpret the findings of the research through interpretation of ethnodramatic scenes, written based on my field notes and reflections of the project. The popular theatre project acted as a program for the youth, a participatory research project for them investigating their own lived experiences and as a case study for the use of such work in education.

Outline of the Thesis

I am presenting this thesis in six chapters, with this Introduction acting as Chapter One. Following this outline, the reset of this introduction chapter

describes the current state of education in North America. The remainder of the thesis is as follows:

Chapter Two – *Popular Education as Curriculum*, presents a review of the literature relevant to the study, including critical pedagogy, popular education and critical feminist pedagogy.

Chapter Three – *Popular Theatre as Popular Education,* provides a thorough definition of popular theatre, it tenants and a discussion of how it can be implemented as a form of popular education in schools.

Chapter Four – *Popular Theatre with a Program for Young Mothers and Pregnant Teens: Methods and Methodology,* presents a description of a two week participatory arts based research study, the popular theatre project in a Language Arts class for pregnant teens and young mothers in an alternative high school program in an urban setting in a western Canadian prairie city which I facilitated.

Chapter Five – *Findings and Interpretation,* presents the findings and analysis of the participatory project in the alternative school program written as a series of ethnodramatic scripted scenes followed by discussion of the issues raised.

Chapter Six – *Conclusion,* I provide some reflection as researcher/facilitator on the process of the project. I address the research questions – the possibilities and limitations of popular theatre in school and

why we might want to make space in schools for such projects. Finally, I pose subsequent questions for further exploration.

North American Educational Trends

If the goal of North American schools is to provide a meaningful and beneficial education for *all* its students then there is good reason to give it a failing grade (Ungerleider , 2003). Simply put, in many significant respects, today's North American school systems are at odds with the population for which they are supposedly providing (Paul, 2004; Neill, 2003). In this section I aim to explore the present state of education in the North America, more specifically the Canadian context. To begin, it is important to take note of the situation in the USA in order to avert similar troubling situations in Canada. In the United States, the most recent *Race to the Top* program (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html) and the preceding policy, Bush's *No Child Left Behind Act* (NCLB, 2001) are accused of promoting conservative and neo-liberal political interests of privatization and commercialization in using education as a means to economic "progress" (Karp, 2006; Ayers, 2010). Karp points out that "the goal was not to extend the federal government's historic role as a promoter of educational access and equity, but to replace it with a conservative agenda of punitive high stakes testing, privatization, and market 'reform'" (p. 181). The cost of this *modus operandi* is that the US education system has "left behind" a large portion of the American public (Neill, 2003; Paul, 2004). Upon further analysis of the NCLB Act, Karp makes a persuasive case for it actually acting as a reform that is overlooking the needs of

particular students of racial/cultural minority status along with students of low socio-economic status. Under the guise of preparing everyone for college, the rhetoric places importance on equality in education, however, while there may be an increase in the number of students prepared for college, even more students are being pushed out of the education system altogether (Karp, 2006).

No Child Left Behind (NCLB, 2001) claimed to put emphasis on "accountability" within education, and to hold "high expectations" for learners while preparing them adequately for their lives within the market economy once leaving school. In doing so, with increased standardized tests and a curriculum that predominantly "teaches to the tests," many other aspects of a well-rounded curriculum were/are forgotten. The high stakes movement in the US took/takes power from teachers and schools, not allowing for attempts at more democratic approaches to education (Neill, 2003). The more recent USA federal education program, *Race to the Top*, it is being deemed nothing but a "re-branded" NCLB (Ayers, 2010, p. 8), with the same focus on competition and standardization.[i]

Standardization: Curriculum and high Stakes testing.

Simmons (2004) describes standardized testing as,

> an assessment strategy that evaluates all students and all schools on the same basic skills and, therefore, might reasonably indicate which schools are high performers and which are not. Standardized testing is not a new strategy for providing this proof. The United States has produced reams of articles criticizing standardized testing and its effect on students, teachers,

> and education. Other countries, Canada being one, are jumping on the standardized testing bandwagon, leaving many wondering whether due consideration has been given to the American experience (p. 37).

Standardized testing and competition as signifiers of a "good" education define education as a means to an end that does not meet the needs of all students – a trend that is also, unfortunately, to be found within the Canadian education system (McAdie, 2004). As McAdie points out, "the tests represent a distinct shift in focus from learning to performing, from thinking to performing or responding" (p. 152). As opposed to students having the freedom to explain their thoughts in creative ways, in standardized tests, answers are strictly limited by length, or even distilled down to multiple-choice answers. As such, standardized tests "do not allow for creativity, for differences, for explanations, or for more than one right answer" (McAdie, p. 153). Standardization is a clear movement toward the "banking system" (Freire, 1970/1988) of education, which is criticized for not promoting individual, critical thought or democratic educational experiences.

Proponents of large-scale testing argue that it increases the consistency amongst schools and promotes greater accountability (Volante, 2007). However, the importance put on large-scale testing leads to problematic realities in the classroom, including instructional focus on some subjects at the expense of others and rote teaching and learning practices such as worksheets and drills. With a narrowed focus on subject areas covered there is a risk that objectives for the testing override the initial objectives stated within the curriculum (Simmons,

2004). Additionally, research suggests that while scores may improve over time with testing, student learning doesn't change (Volante, 2007).

Standardization in education does not only manifest in testing, but also within the curriculum as well. Specifically in Canada, each provincial government oversees the implementation of public education, deciding what is included in the curriculum and how the curriculum is to be implemented, often discounting the diverse lives, cultures, interests and learning styles of the students. Instead of engaging the students in a learning environment where they can "see themselves" in the curriculum, a strict subject based curriculum is imposed regardless of whether it is relevant to the learners or not. This stringent approach to learning can encourage an inequitable environment, void of respect for the diverse lives of the students (Goddard & Foster, 2002).

Competition.

Competition and schooling have become closely interrelated. Kohn (1986), speaking about the sense of competition in the USA but also referencing the fact that the situation is similar in other countries, states:

> Our economic system is predicated on competition while our schooling, from the earliest grades, trains us not only to triumph over others but to regard them as obstacles to our own success. Our leisure time is filled with highly structured games in which one individual or team must defeat another. Even within the family there is rivalry – a muted but often

> desperate struggle that treats approval as a scarce commodity and turns love into a kind of trophy (p. 2).

Competition, in today's society driven by the free market, is engrained in the population, to a degree where the education of youth is heavily steeped in rankings and ratings, both personally and collectively manifesting as competition amongst schools. This is a trend in both the United States and Canada. Specific to the US's NCLB (2001) Act and the more recent *Race to the Top* program (http://www2.ed.gov/programs/racetothetop/index.html), the importance on competition and academic achievement was placed at the forefront with the objective of increasing accountability within the schooling system (Hunter & Bartee, 2003). If a school falters in the rankings of academic achievement amongst its students, it is at risk of losing its funding and being shut down. NCLB is based on the market-driven contextual framework of choice and competition in public education, which is substantiated by standardized testing. If a school or program does not reach a certain benchmark with its students test scores, it is then deemed ineffective. These ineffective schools and programs then lose funding or are shut down, in order to save taxpayer dollars (Chapman, 2007).

Criminalization of youth.

Alongside US style standardized curricula and testing and increased importance on competition amongst students and schools, trends that Canada has also been influenced to adopt (Ungerleider, 2003), there are other trends in the direction of education in North America that should be of concern. Particularly

troubling is the criminalization of youth (Giroux, 2003). Giroux paints a picture of zero-tolerance[ii] in the United States with regards to "deviant" youth activities and behaviours, recognizing this as, in part, a result of the state of fear to which the September 11, 2001 attacks contributed. While the stated concern of the US administration shortly after the attacks was focused on potential threats outside of the borders, the restrictions and surveillance of citizens within the country were mostly ignored or "covered up" by government and media. Concurrently, an increasingly hostile attitude toward youth emerged (Giroux, 2003). A prevailing "culture of fear" masked the social policies that claimed to address the safety of the citizens. Giroux (2003) describes how this affected youth and schooling:

> In a society deeply troubled by their presence, youth prompt in the public imagination a rhetoric of fear, control, and surveillance – made all the more visible with the 2002 Supreme Court decision upholding the widespread use of random drug testing of public school students. Such random drug testing of all junior and senior high school students who desire to participate in extracurricular activities registers a deep distrust of students and furthers the notion that youth have become a generation of suspects. (p. 554)

Youth increasingly are being deemed as threats to the social order, and are "defined within the languages of criminalization or commodification" (Giroux, 2009, p. 29). Instead of being seen as a social investment with the aim of fostering their ability to contribute to a democratic society, youth's lives are being shaped by global corporations and "the punishing state" (Giroux, p. 28), where their

future is deemed as “bleak” and hopeless. This “punishing state” in the hopes of controlling the youth population and decreasing the supposed “threat” they pose, the increased censorship of student expression within schools is an all too familiar result (Cambron-McCabe, 2009).

With its high stakes testing accompanied by the increased punitive nature of schooling, *Race to the Top* and NCLB have failed to be accountable for valuing and respecting youth, resulting in “a disparate system of punitive accountability” (Laitsch, 2005, p. 22). As Canadians, while we would like to distinguish ourselves from the US by insisting that our education system is not as problematic, this is not the case (Shaker & Grimmett, 2004). Conrad (2006) addresses the punitive nature of our own Canadian system, in describing how justice is not being served to our youth in schools. While also considering the merits of Canadian education in relation to that of the US, we certainly need to look critically at how our system is not meeting the needs of students. Which begs the question: What needs should be met? In an attempt to address this question I will first take a closer critical look at the Canadian education system.

The Local Context: Alberta and the Rest of Canada

Standardized testing in Canada varies from province to province depending on what the provincial government values and sees as fit. While Saskatchewan has completely eliminated any provincial achievement tests, it still administers the Canadian Test of Basic Skills (CTBS) (www.assess.nelson.com), a nation wide testing program. As for the rest of Canada, a Canadian Education

Association (Dunleavy, 2007) survey reports the following in terms of educational reform:

> Over the past ten years, reform agendas at the provincial, territorial and often school district level have centred on government commitments to greater account- ability and improved student achievement. Based on these three foundations, many provinces and territories have:
> • established some form of standardized, province-wide student achievement tests;
> •implemented province-wide school and/or district improvement initiatives, commonly focused on student achievement in mathematics and literacy;
> • developed or revised curriculum policies to standardize learning outcomes (p. 3).

Alberta places significant importance on standardized tests, in the form of the Alberta Achievement Tests, (Minister of Education, Alberta Education, 2009). Every year, the Fraser Institute in Alberta (http://www.fraserinstitute.org), a private company, provides a ranking of schools directly based on the test results. These results are then presented to the media, who subsequently relay a "news story" about how schools throughout Alberta rank in comparison to one another. What is lost in terms of this over-emphasis on rankings and competition is consideration of the needs of the students themselves. There is no consideration of what might be going on in a student's life at the time of the test, i.e. family stability or level of parental support, or how the student responds to the style of

teaching in the classroom. In fact, a number of teachers, knowing the importance of the ranking, find themselves "teaching to the test," which often allows other aspects of the curriculum to fall by the way-side (Wilgosh, 1993). This is problematic in that students are in danger of not receiving a well-rounded education.

In investigating the current state of public education and its future direction in Canada, the role of political parties and their interpretations of the purpose of education need to be considered (Ungerleider, 2003; Nezavdal, 2003). Politicians have a "need to be seen to be decisive, results-oriented people" (Ungerleider, p. 245). This coupled with the timeline of the electoral process, engenders reforms that are "results oriented," without adequate time to be researched and implemented before the next election, when new reforms might be proposed. As Ungerleider notes, "Initiatives mounted during a politician's term must also begin to show results before the next election. Failure to keep promises or to show results for initiatives originating from one's office is a sign of lack of concern, weakness, or insincerity" (2003, p. 145). These initiatives, often in the form of a sweeping overarching policy that does not necessarily consult or consider the educators who are in the classrooms, have the potential to result in teachers not feeling valued in decision making processes. This quick, results oriented, top down approach to educational policy-making is fundamentally flawed.

Alberta Education is a proponent of the use of standardized tests and, at the time of writing this, the education system is facing funding cuts, school

closures and the loss of jobs. Contrarily, one of Alberta Education's Goals as outlined on their website reads as follows:

> Schools play a supportive role to families and the community in helping students develop desirable personal characteristics and the ability to make ethical decisions. Schools also help students take increasing responsibility for their learning and behaviour, develop a sense of community belonging and acquire a clearer understanding of community values and how these relate to personal values.
> (http://education.alberta.ca/department/policy/standards/goals.aspx)

While this goal is a commendable one, I would argue that Alberta is not presently living up to this goal. Cuts to education in the past few years, along with the most recent budget (in February, 2010), one that did not increase funding to education despite increases in student numbers, provide a clear message as to the lack of importance of education to the powers that be. With increased enrollment, dwindling funds, and an overemphasis on standardized tests within a rigid curriculum, the goal as stated above seems one that is far beyond the reach of Alberta's educational system as it stands.

To achieve this goal, and to broaden and shift the emphasis with regards to what is important in education, beyond achievement tests, it would be helpful to consider other possibilities for engaging students and connecting their lives to their education, thereby making education relevant to their lives and providing a better "way in" for students. Popular education offers such a possibility. In the

following chapter I review the literature on critical pedagogy and popular education. Additionally, I touch upon feminist pedagogy and how it intersects with critical pedagogy.

Chapter Two: Popular Education as Curriculum

Critical Pedagogy, Feminist Pedagogy and Applications

I am approaching this research project through a lens that is critical of the present day education system and engaging in a practice of research that is defined by both critical and feminist pedagogy. Popular theatre, as further discussed in the following chapter, has a strong base in critical pedagogy, specifically the work of Paulo Freire (1974/2007). In approaching the project for this thesis research it was also necessary to consider the feminist perspective with regards to the population and the philosophical approach to which the staff at the alternative school in which the research project took place, adhered.

Critical pedagogy.

Paulo Freire (1974/2007) defined a need for "dialogical education" and a call for critical consciousness, drawing upon the work of critical theorists[iii]. He states, "our traditional curriculum, disconnected from life, centered on words emptied of the reality they are meant to represent, lacking in concrete activity, could never develop a critical consciousness" (p. 33). His critique is that traditional curriculum does not mean anything to the participants and thus does not develop active participants in a culture making process important to them. Rather, education should act as a way to develop critical thinking about the world and a readiness for participation in the democratic process (Freire, 1974/2007), thus moving away from the "banking system" (Freire, 1970/1988) of education; in which those considered as having more knowledge bestow that knowledge unto

those who are considered to know nothing. Further, Freire (1998) states, "projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry" (p. 68).

Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970/1988) is a seminal work when considering critical pedagogy. Drawing upon the philosophies of Hegel and Marx, Freire addresses the state of the oppressed/oppressor in a political context, and speaks about what sort of education is required for "praxis" and transformation of society. One key element to create such necessary change as outlined by Freire, requires a focus on the subjective, or one's own perception and experience of the world. Freire states, "to deny the importance of subjectivity in the process of transforming the world and history is naïve and simplistic" (1998, p. 51). He goes further to point out that to deny the value of subjectivity is to deny that there are people in the world.

Freire's consideration for the subjective, which was key to his theories, was influenced by the social philosophers, more specifically, Hegel (1977). Hegel proposed a certain "subject-object dialectic" that not only acknowledges the importance of both subjective and objective "ways of knowing", but goes a step further and develops a "theory of mutual recognition" where through a dialectic relationship between the knower and the external world knowledge is gained. It is key to Freire's position on education, that through knowledge of one's broader social situation, individual and collective freedom can be gained. The movement toward a sense of subjectivity in order to inspire transformation, in which the oppressed prevail and are in a sense "liberated," requires the oppressed to be

aware of their position in the world and their situation. Expanding upon the process towards such awareness Freire (1998) states, “the correct method lies in dialogue. The conviction of the oppressed that they must fight for their liberation is not a gift bestowed by the revolutionary leadership, but the result of their own conscientizacao” (p. 64). “Conscientization” is a political and educational movement that enables people to overcome what they think is their reality, or their “false consciousness” (Rosen, 1996) to a position where they realize their situation in the world and are therefore better equipped to make change, thus inspiring “praxis” – reflection and change (Mutnick, 2006)

Critical pedagogy promotes theory and practice that lead students toward a critical consciousness and critical thinking. Shor (1992) defines critical consciousness as referring to, “the way we see ourselves in relation to knowledge and power in society, to the way we use and study language, and to the way we act in school and daily life to reproduce or to transform our conditions” (p. 129). He summarizes the goal towards achieving critical consciousness into four objectives:

1. Power Awareness: Knowing that society and history are made by contending forces and interests, that human action makes society, and that society is unfinished and can be transformed…
2. Critical Literacy: Habits of thought, reading, writing, and speaking which go beneath surface meaning, first impressions, dominant myths, official pronouncements, traditional clichés, received wisdom, and mere opinions, to understand the deep meaning, root causes, social context, ideology, and

personal consequences of any action, event, object, process, organization, experience, text, subject matter, policy, mass media or discourse…

3. Permanent desocialization: Understanding and challenging artificial, political limits on human development; questioning power and inequality in the status quo; examining socialized values in consciousness and society which hold back democratic change in individuals and in the larger culture; seeing self and social transformation as a joint process…
4. Self education/organization: Self-organized transformative education to develop critical thought and cooperative action… (1992, p. 129-130)

Shor continues by providing a means in which these ideas can be presented within Western education, namely promoting a "desocialized dialogue" (p. 130). What Shor intends is to promote dialogue amongst the students that critically questions "the social behaviors and experiences in school and in daily life that make us into the people we are" (p. 114), thus examining everything from our learned behavior to "existing knowledge and power relations…" (p. 114). Shor proposes work in the classroom that includes reflective work such as journal writing and a focus on cooperative work amongst students.

Shor continues with recommendations for a classroom practice that values critical learning, promotes dialogue and encourages thoughtful interactions amongst students and between students and teachers. What Shor is exploring is similar to hooks (1994) "engaged pedagogy". In other words, a pedagogy that is relevant to students' lives, reflective of their realities, and responsive to their

particular personal and social circumstances. Thus engaging in popular education practices, outlined further below.

Giroux (2001, 2003, 2009) has also considered critical pedagogy and broadened its scope by addressing social, cultural, and media concerns. Within his work in education Giroux promotes a "radical pedagogy" (2001). In Freire's forward to Giroux's (2001) book, he states:

> At the very least, radical pedagogical work proposes that education is a form of political intervention in the world and is capable of creating the possibilities for social transformation. Rather than viewing teaching as a technical practice, radical pedagogy in the broadest terms is a moral and political practice premised on the assumption that learning is not about processing received knowledge but actually transforming it as part of a more expansive struggle for individual rights and social justice (p. xxvii).

Giroux (2001) further defines radical pedagogy as one which has an aversion to domination, in all its forms, while focusing on the need to work toward "modes of critique fashioned in a theoretical discourse that mediates the possibility for social action and emancipatory transformation" (p. 2). Giroux's stance against all forms of authority is certainly radical in relation to the status quo. Giroux makes an argument for the need to acknowledge history, sociology, and psychology in the analysis of education and schooling. As such, he states that presently schools "are seen merely as instructional sites. That they are also cultural and political sites is ignored, as is the notion that they represent arenas of

contestation and struggle among differentially empowered cultural and economic groups" (p. 3).

Critical pedagogy applications.

Popular education, based in critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970/1988), calls for critical thought and subsequent action around issues pertinent to the learners' lives; it is "of the people" where "people themselves can define their own content and can create their own forms of education" (Arnold, 1985, p. 5). Popular education is a process that allows for the examination of present situations in people's lives and how education relates to the social conditions in which they live. Heavily steeped in the work of Paulo Freire, in the 1960's and 70's. Popular education can be defined as a realm of education that seeks to improve "people's capacity for social change through a collective problem-solving approach emphasizing participation, reflection, and critical analysis of social problems" (Bates, 1996, p. 225 – 226).

Often located within the realm of adult education, and specifically considered most applicable for populations who are marginalized in some respects, popular education promotes a dialogical educational relationship. Another presupposition of popular education is that it is a more "informal" method of education, which is rooted in community-based practice and education for social justice (Greene, 1998). However, the interest in defining and comparing what is "formal" versus "informal" stems from an obsession with standards and accountability, as problematized in the previous chapter.

Freire (1970/1988), one of popular education's best known exponents, contributes to popular education through his critical pedagogical learning principles (Lankshear & McLaren, 1993). These principles, as summarized in Lankshear and McLaren (1992), citing McLaren (1999) include the following two points which are particularly relevant to the discussion here:

1. "Learners must learn how to actively make connections between their own lived conditions and being and the making of reality that has occurred to date" (p. 51).
2. "Learners must come to understand how the myths of dominant discourses are, precisely, myths which oppress and marginalize them – but which can be transcended through transformative action" (p. 51).

These two principles, in relation to popular education, connect directly to the objective for one to gain an understanding of one's reality and actively pursue its change. The principles move toward social action that challenges the systems that have marginalized people in one way or another, and toward creating change – their own "making of reality".

In implementing a popular approach in the classroom, there is much to be considered. Popular education is a democratic education, not "banking education", rather, students have a say in classroom practice. Rather than being passive recipients in their education, they are active participants (den Heyer, 2008). However, that said, the teacher still plays a significant role in leading such a curriculum, "balancing the need for structure with the need for openness" (Shor, 1992, p. 16).

As Shor (1992) suggests,

> To be democratic implies orienting subject matter to student culture – their interests, needs, speech, and perceptions – while creating a negotiable openness in class where the students' input jointly creates the learning process (p. 16).

Such a learning environment promotes equality, diversity, participation, and dialogue (Shor, 1992, p. 17). Through the co-development of the emerging curriculum, students are encouraged to connect their individual lives to the broader historical and social issues, promoting critical dialogue on power inequities in society. It is not structured by an imposing curriculum mandated by broad governmental forces with competitive testing objectives that stifle student engagement. Instead, it examines subject areas critically, with the aim of helping students to become social critics, and relies on student interests and backgrounds to drive the educational process (Shor, p. 16).

The next section provides a brief introduction to feminist pedagogy, and an exploration of a "critical feminist perspective", including critiques of critical pedagogy from the feminist perspective.

Feminist pedagogy.

Feminism, as both an historical movement and theoretical movement, critically investigates gender difference and the subsequent oppression of women. While there are a number of "movements", as feminism is not a static, dogmatic way of thinking, it is difficult to pin down (Weiler, 2001; Lather, 1988). Feminist

pedagogy is a feminist project, but not a feminist project defined by any one "wave" of feminism, rather from the "feminisms" (Weiler, 2001, p. 67). Feminist pedagogy, as a feminist educational intervention, is broad in scope but is ultimately concerned with "the historical, economic, and political contexts in which women have lived" (Weiler, p. 67), thus is ultimately a political project concerned with how women engage in education. Weiler (2001) defines feminist pedagogy as a pedagogy that:

> emphasizes the importance of consciousness raising, the existence of an oppressive social structure and the need to change it, and the possibility of social transformation (p. 68).

This definition makes apparent the connections between critical and feminist pedagogy, which I discuss in more detail below. The following points are unique to a feminist pedagogy and are worthy of consideration in relation to my thesis research project in working within an educational program for young mothers and pregnant teens.

Feminist pedagogy, as it emerged within the 1960's and 70's, is characterized by its overt concern with patriarchy and race within education, and by countering the grand narratives that have defined society from a predominantly white male perspective (Weiler, 2001). The tactics to counter such a potentially oppressive narrative is to value the different voices that might otherwise be unheard. The notion of difference and stories are central to a feminist educational

project. Weiler (1991), in addressing feminist theory, on which feminist pedagogy is based states:

> Feminist theory, like other contemporary approaches, validates difference, challenges universal claims to truth, and seeks to create social transformation in a world of shifting and uncertain meanings (p. 449 – 450).

Feminist pedagogy is demonstrated within an educational setting that values difference and respects diversity of personal experience, where the teacher and student share the power, where cooperative experiences and community building are of great importance and where the individual voice is considered a valid way of knowing (Welch, 2006). As a whole, the feminist educational project challenges "traditional views and practices" (Welch, p. 176), as these "traditional" practices (e.g. standardization, competition) that society accepts as the norm ultimately do not put adequate importance on the valuing of diversity and individual voice.

In looking at what defines feminist pedagogy, it is important to note that such a perspective is closely entwined with critical theory and critical pedagogy, if not completely defined as a critical theory project (Gur-Ze'ev, 2005). With this in mind, I will put forth the perspective from which I approached this thesis research, that of a "critical feminist perspective".

A critical feminist perspective.

A critical pedagogical perspective offers the potential for education to transform individuals and society. Critical pedagogy, in order to meet the needs of present day communities and situations, needs to be coupled with other relevant theory, thus making it more applicable and meaningful to education today. In considering the importance of feminist theory and pedagogy as it relates to critical pedagogy, as covered earlier in this chapter, I will review prominent ideas and theories for a critical feminist pedagogy; how critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy coincide in a move toward more of a "popular education" approach to the present day education. In particular, an arts-based approach using popular theatre as critical feminist pedagogy offers ways of opening up opportunities for expression and for movement toward a more equitable structure within education.

Feminist & critical pedagogies: Critiques & intersections.

Feminist theory and pedagogy often consider critical pedagogy as a necessary consideration for work in education. However, along with acknowledgement of its importance, critical pedagogy has not gone without scrutiny on the part of feminist pedagogical writers (Weiler, 1991; Ellsworth, 1989). While these writers are appropriately critical of critical pedagogy it is important to note that they still do consider critical pedagogy important in furthering their own feminist pedagogical perspectives. For me, their criticism is a step toward reconciling and aligning feminist and critical pedagogy in order to make real change within education.

There have been some key criticisms of critical pedagogy from a feminist perspective (Weiler, 1991; Ellsworth, 1989). Feminist pedagogy finds that critical pedagogy does not adequately address the individual's experience within her/his context, rather that it proposes a "universal" understanding of oppression (Weiler, 2001). In speaking about critical pedagogy and its' goals of liberation and opposition, Weiler (1991) states:

> As universal goals, these ideals do not address the specificity of people's lives; they do not directly analyze the contradictions between conflicting oppressed groups or the ways in which a single individual can experience oppression in one sphere while being privileged or oppressive in another (p. 450).

Taking into consideration this critique, I locate myself, in relation to my research, as does Kelly in hers, as a "critical feminist ethnographer" (Kelly, 2000), within a "feminist pedagogy of difference" (Weiler, 1991) which embraces both critical and feminist ideologies. As Weiler notes, "both Freirian and feminist pedagogies are based on political commitment and identification with subordinate and oppressed groups; both seek justice and empowerment" (p. 173). Feminist pedagogy, rather than resting on universal claims, recognizes, "the standpoint of subjects as shaped by their experience of class, race, gender, or other socially defined identities" (Weiler, p. 173).[iv] The notion of "difference" for Weiler (1991) is that of debunking the claim that there is an "inevitable unity of 'women'" (p. 459) and that difference of class, colour, sexuality etc. all raise different

considerations when addressing oppression. Weiler suggests that recognizing these differences can "enrich Freirean pedagogies of liberation" (p. 459).

Grounding my practice in critical and feminist theories that are similar in some senses, but also quite clear in their opposition, can amount to an educational experience that both respects the individual's subjective position, as well as the power that a critical collective consciousness can have. Weiler (2001) states that such a pedagogy:

> suggests a more complex realization of the Freirean vision of the collective conscientization and struggle against oppression, one which acknowledges difference and conflict, but which, like Freire's vision, rests on a belief in the human capacity to feel, to know, and to change (p. 174).

Despite some conflict with critical pedagogy as outlined by feminist theorists (Ellsworth, 1989; Weiler, 1991), some suggest that feminist pedagogy is a historical example of critical pedagogy in action (Weiler, 1991). This position is one that Weiler holds as true and thus defines her feminist stance as "feminist critical pedagogy" (Gur-Ze-ev, 2005). In addressing Weiler's position Gur-Ze-ev (2005) states:

> the two pedagogies share an assumption that human existence, in specific material conditions, is framed within repressive conditions which are part of consciousness; both pedagogies understand consciousness as something which is more than the sum of dominant discourses. Both view consciousness as having a critical potential, and both conceive human

> beings as subjects and as functioning within historical horizons. At the same time, both are committed to a vision of emancipatory possibilities, to a better world where justice prevails in the end (p. 57).

bell hooks (1994) too presents important arguments in how critical and feminist pedagogy should intersect to work toward a more "radical pedagogy," one that includes, but is not limited to, critical and feminist perspectives. Radical pedagogy, states hooks, is a "movement against and beyond boundaries. It is that movement which makes education the practice of freedom" (p. 12). As such, hooks is "teaching to transgress" in an "engaged pedagogy" (p. 15), more demanding than either critical or feminist pedagogies alone.

hooks (1994) considers critical pedagogy as being complimentary to feminist pedagogy, however, neither can exist in their conventional form. There is a need to work toward a more radical pedagogy by considering and drawing upon both perspectives. Such a "radical pedagogy," as explored in hooks's book *Teaching to Transgress* (1994) states the need for personal narrative and expression as well as a larger collective experience, moving toward a critical understanding the world.

Focus on personal narrative.

Critical feminist pedagogy encourages that the uniqueness of the individual must be recognized, celebrated and seen as a valuable component of one's education. As such, each individual's presence should be acknowledged and valued (hooks, 1994). In doing so value should be put on the sharing of personal

narratives by the students as well as the teachers. hooks recommends, “it is often productive if professors take the first risk, linking confessional narratives to academic discussions so as to show how experience can illuminate and enhance our understanding of academic material.” (1994, p. 21). She speaks specifically about a university setting, but this can be applied to other educational contexts.

I believe a critical feminist pedagogy offers great potential for working to improve both educational experiences for students and the educational system as a whole. By valuing students’ unique voice while simultaneously attempting to “challenge and transform unequal relations of power” (Kelly, 2000, p. 183) marginalized groups may better understand their positioning while also helping to envision and work toward positive social change (Kelly, 2000). This approach can encourage a truly democratic experience for students while strongly valuing their voice and their expression. Critical pedagogy and feminist pedagogy as complimentary approaches can support and even enhance one another. This critical feminist perspective can be put into action through a popular education approach that values such a theoretical perspective. This perspective is one that is being implemented in education to some degree already, albeit within more “alternative” settings, as detailed below.

Applications in Schools: Margins and Mainstream

On the margins.

With ever-increasing importance put on standardization and subsequent competition in schools, as described previously, there is growing potential for

students to be marginalized and not have their needs met within the mainstream system.

Students who otherwise "don't make it" within the mainstream system are at risk of dropping out, and/or being relegated to alternative programs that better meet their "unique" needs. More often than not, these alternative programs offer a learning environment more conducive to the particular needs of marginalized students, thus allowing for more creative learning practices to occur. It is within these spaces that a "sub-altern counterpublic" can be fostered, defined as: "discursive arenas where member of subordinated social groups invent and circulate counter-discourses, which in turn permit them to formulate oppositional interpretations of their identities, interests, and needs" (Fraser, 1997, p. 81). A space that allows a group to develop, and is free to practice more critical processes can potentially better meet the needs of the students, and allow for dialogue, critical thinking and a "way in" to connecting students' education with their lives outside of school (Kelly, 2003). While popular education movements are usually relegated to work with adults and informal settings (McLaren, 1999), there are elements of popular education occurring in alternative programs for youth otherwise "unable to make it" in the mainstream (Kelly, 2003). Kelly (2003) applies the concept of "sub-altern counterpublic" to education, putting forth the notion that alternative school programs can act as engage groups to develop into sub-altern counterpublics, with increased capacity to explore alternative ways of engaging students, encouraging them to think critically about their education and their lives.

It is on the margins that work can occur which is truly challenging and that can positively affect youth (Kelly, 2003). In my research, I wondered why it is that these type of learning environments, more closely aligned with a students lived experiences, only exist on the margins, only for the students who "can't make it" within the mainstream?

Presently there are numerous special education schools/programs (http://www.learning.gov.ab.ca/educationsystem/choices.asp#alternative) that meet the needs of students who otherwise "don't fit in" to the mainstream schooling system. Whether it be a disability, a behavioural issue, or a circumstance such as pregnancy, there are programs that aim to meet these students' special needs. These school programs often exist within the realm of public education, but focus on the specific needs of the students. For example, the Bridges program in Calgary, Alberta provides education for students with severe emotional and behavioural difficulties, while the Transitions program caters to students with mental health issues (http://www.cbe.ab.ca/Programs/spec_ed/se-emot-behav.asp#bridges). Such specialized programs are wide-ranging in their foci and varied from province to province.

There has also been a trend in the development of charter schools, as an option apart from the public school system. These schools don't necessarily cater to youth who are having difficulty in the public school system, but rather are spaces where families who desire a focus in the education of their children other than what the public school provides, can send their children. Particularly, in Alberta, there has been a conscious move toward the charter schools movement

(Monar, 1996) in order to meet the private interests of families, i.e. religion. charter schools in Alberta resulted from significant cutbacks in funding under the Klein government in 1994 (McConaghy, 1996). This further demonstrates how continuous cutbacks and attempts at streamlining and standardizing education within the mainstream public systems resulting in alternative approaches in response to the dire situation. While these alternatives exist to the benefit of the students attending them, there is something fundamentally flawed in public education for there to be deemed such a need. The charter school is a dangerous trend in taking the onus off of the public school for addressing the needs of all students. Molnar (1996) describes the current flaw in public education as follows:

> The charter school movement represents a radical rejection not only of the possibility of the common school, but of common purposes outside the school as well. The struggle is not between market-based reforms and the educational status quo. It is about whether the democratic ideal of the common good can survive the onslaught of a market mentality that threatens to turn every human relationship into a commercial transaction (p. 15).

Ungerleider (2003) points out the "challenge with choice" (p. 193), in reference to the upsurge of charter schools and alternative programs and their supporters who believe that charter schools are "innovative" (p. 193) and more responsive to students' needs. Ungerleider cites charter school critics stating the following:

> charter and voucher school options will increase segregation of students from different backgrounds and erode the public school's capacity for socializing students for democratic citizenship (p. 194).

Within alternative educational spaces, however, educators have the opportunity to implement more creative approaches to curriculum than what is occurring in the mainstream system. These alternative schools are the "last chance" to explore other options in order to keep marginalized youth in school. A much wider variety of strategies result to engage students in their education. These schools and programs exist on the margins of what is "mainstream." It is within these spaces that a "radical openness" (hooks, 1990) can and should occur.

In alternative programs, there is greater opportunity and instances for educators who are truly attempting to connect with the students. While this may not be the case for all special programs, it is worth noting that certain flexibility exists in deviating from the mainstream, when attempting to engage students who do not "fit in." Rather than relegating alternative strategies to alternative schools, however, I advocate for the transfer of these strategies into the mainstream schooling system.

Moving into the mainstream.

I have argued that the move toward standardization is doing a disservice to students in not preparing them for, or valuing them as, active members in society. Rather, they are simply trained, through memorization, "teaching to the test" and constant evaluation, to graduate in order to contribute to society by getting a job

that allows for them to become a part of the "status quo." This approach does not appreciate the ideas and experiences of young people as members of society with the power to contribute, not only when they become adults, but also while they are youth. The measurements currently used to gauge a "successful education" only contribute to perpetuating, not questioning the "status quo."

It is important for students to see themselves in their education and to be treated as valuable, thoughtful members of society. Presently, that is not happening. There is a consistent de-valuing of education and students, as is evident by the cutbacks in funding for education. This sends a message about how our province, our country, our western society values education, and what is seen as the role of education in our society.

Students have diverse lives outside of school, coming from different home circumstances, and public school presently does not successfully meet the diverse needs of today's student population. Public school should have a responsibility to be relevant to students, and promote learning that is thoughtful, critical and engaging, with the aim of helping students to become, as stated above, "social critics". There should be an opportunity to approach learning from a perspective that allows students to explore and connect with the curriculum in an environment that supports discovery, conversation, and critical thinking.

Not only is there a shortfall in how schools connect with students through the curriculum, but there is also a lack of connection with the families of students. Ungerleider (2003) points out that rarely are parents, families or the public

"engaged in meaningful discussions around the purposes of public schooling" (p. 103). Ungerleider warns against this tendency:

> If people are not more fully involved in discussions about public schooling, they will rely on the impressions formed from informal conversations with neighbours, from reports about conflicts in the public media, and from politically motivated and misleading reports from groups like the Fraser Institute. Misinformed about the complexities, strengths, and weaknesses of the schools they think should serve them, their confidence in public schooling will continue to erode, and with it their support. (p. 104)

While Ungerleider may not be advocating specifically for the use of popular education methods, the need he is expressing with regards to public involvement can be met with a popular education approach. Popular education has its roots in the involvement of the community (McLaren, 1999). Often popular educators are referenced as "community educators" insinuating a collective, community-based, dialogical form of education. If the importance of family and community involvement is identified as a need then one can look to popular education, and more specifically a Freirian (1970/1988) perspective for achieving such participation. McLaren (1999) in summarizing Freire's learning principles states that, "new makings are a collective, shared, social enterprise in which the voices of all participants must be heard" (p. 51). The "new makings" are possibilities that emerge for the community involved in the educational process (McLaren, 1999).

A more popular approach to curriculum would also allow for students to gain a better understanding of each other, as fellow learners. In order to foster a positive environment for a more popular education based classroom, significant opportunities must be offered for members of the class to define themselves as a group in which members trust and respect each other, so that they not only see themselves and their lived circumstances reflected in their educational experience, but also have the opportunities to see their peer's lives more clearly.

Yet another concern for fostering a trusting and respectful environment in schools is the issue of bullying in schools. This issue is addressed by offering students greater opportunities to learn about each other, to hear each others stories and value differences amongst them. Cassidy and Jackson (2005) lament, in response to bullying "schools are required to establish rules of conduct for students attending in order to assure a discrimination free learning environment" (p. 449). They point out that implementing "zero-tolerance" practice in response to bullying is, however, a negative effect. As opposed to a "zero-tolerance" environment, a place where students can engage with each other and value each other's experiences has greater potential for fostering a respectful educational experience.

With a focus on critical pedagogy and its applications in the classroom, questions of power and knowledge, oppression and social justice, can be brought to the forefront, and empower students in and out of the classroom to be active, critical participants in the world (McLaren, 1994). An education that embraces

critical pedagogy can address injustices and ultimately result in social action necessary to deal issues of oppression. McLaren (1994) states:

> The development of an incipient critical consciousness on the part of students must be followed by its transformation to social action through public engagement and participation. Guiding this transformation must be a commitment to authentic democracy and social justice, a commitment that is undertaken in solidarity with the subordinated and the disenfranchised. A language of possibility must be spoken in public spaces such as schools, where authentic dialogue can take place between teachers and students about decisions that affect the quality of human life (p. 239).

I have argued above that there is a fundamental flaw in the way legislators are presently approaching education. By applying some specific learning principles, as outlined by popular educators base in critical pedagogy and critical feminist pedagogy, into the public schooling curriculum, there is potential for students to become critical thinkers who are engaged in the world, with the desire to participate as valued citizens.

In the following chapter I will consider the use of popular theatre methods as popular education and how popular theatre methods might be applied within the mainstream public education system.

Chapter Three: Popular Theatre as Popular Education in Schools

Defining Popular Theatre

Popular theatre is a term that is difficult to define, and has been defined by writers and practitioners in varying ways. Prentki and Selman (2001) define it as the following:

> In the case of popular theatre, "popular" implies that the *process of making and showing the theatre piece* is owned and controlled by a specific community, that the issues and stories grow out of the community involved, and that that community is a vital part of a process of identifying, examining and taking action on matters which that community believes need to change (Prentki & Selman, 2001, p. 9).

The work that one person describes as "popular" might be defined as something else by another, i.e. community theatre, community performance or theatre for social change. For the purpose of this chapter I will consider Kidd and Byram's (1979): definition "people's theatre speaking to the common man [sic] in his language and idiom dealing with problems of direct relevance to the situation" (p. 3).

Recently, the term "applied theatre" has been used to describe modes of theatre and drama occurring within a community context, "that is responsive to ordinary people and their stories, local settings and priorities" (Prentki & Preston,

2009, p. 9). Applied theatre is an umbrella term that is used to describe practice in educational and/or community contexts. Prentki and Preston further define applied theatre as meeting certain participative relationships with participants, as theatre "with", "for" or "by" a community. Popular theatre can be situated within this definition. However, to be more specific, I would argue that popular theatre must meet all of the participative relationships ("with," "for," and "by"), and not just one or the other. Therefore, popular theatre is theatre for the people, by the people, with the people. It is a participatory process, where the community involved takes ownership of the artistic medium. Popular theatre, "operates on the principle that anyone can learn to play a role, improvise dialogue, or handle a puppet" (Kidd & Byram, 1979, p. 4).

Prentki and Selman (2001) emphasize the importance of process in popular theatre when stating, "the theatre is always part of the process of identifying and exploring how a situation or issue might be changed" (p. 8). In other words, it is a process of "conscientization", a popular education concept as coined by Freire (1970/1988). A group or community can use the popular theatre process as part of a broader goal of raising awareness, building cohesion and understanding on a topic of concern for them, and ultimately bringing about change. A participatory arts process, such as popular theatre, allows for the group to critically investigate their concerns within a safe and creative environment, to discuss and discover possibilities, to enact broader change for their community.

From where popular theatre emerged is uncertain as the upsurge of this form occurred around the world at different times. However, one notable

movement in its development occurred in Brazil through the work of Augusto Boal (1979/2000, 1992). At a time when community organizers and educators, "sought participatory and emancipatory approaches to education and community research" (Prentki and Selman, 2003, p. 10), Boal was devising his *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979/2000), a form of theatre that aimed to give voice to the concerns of oppressed people, and to incite dialogue around an issue in hopes of initiating change. Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* came about from the identified need for a process that would allow for, in his terms, "rehearsal for revolution" (p. 141). Even though northern, "practitioners have increasingly adapted and invented [the form] to suit northern contexts" (Prentki & Selman, 2003, p. 10), the work of Boal is a mainstay in the realm of popular theatre. Boal's intentions and philosophy around the work has influenced many practitioners and educators who are working in the field of popular theatre. Notably, David Diamond of Headlines Theatre in Vancouver, BC, has developed *Theatre for Living* (2007) which draws heavily on Boal's work, as do other practitioners and companies. For this reason, I will reference the work of Boal in relation to the popular theatre form that I employ.

Popular theatre is deeply rooted in the popular education movement. If we consider Augusto Boal as a pioneer in the field of popular theatre, his practice was heavily influenced by his work with Paulo Freire (1970). Notably, the need for a dialogical movement in education and art as a means for bringing awareness and action on certain issues, is one concern that both Freire and Boal aimed for in their practice and writings. As Prentki and Selman (2001) note:

> Freire emphasizes the importance of dialogue in any transformative educational process, an emphasis which has found frequent echoes in the rhetoric of development, if not always in its practices. This emphasis was given a specifically theatrical application through the theory and practices of Freire's compatriot August Boal as outlined in his book *Theatre of the Oppressed*, the very title of which reveals the major influence of Freire. (p. 12)

In a popular theatre project, the dialogue in the lead up to the creation process, the process itself, the performance and the follow up are all key, as it is often embedded in a broader community development purpose, not necessarily meant to stand on its own. I would argue that this broader community development process can be included in our educational institutions if we do, indeed, consider the implementation of more popular education methods within our schooling system.

Tenets of Popular Theatre

I outlined in the previous chapter, the current crisis in education (Ungerleider , 2003). We do need to consider alternatives in order to find engaging processes for students, for them to become active citizens in the their communities and the world. If we situate the educational system within the scope of community development processes, practices such as popular theatre and other arts can act as a way for students to critically engage in their education, and ultimately in their world.

Popular theatre, as a community based process, and Boal's work, often considered within the realm of adult education, share some key tenets with popular education. I will address four major common themes here: Dialogue, community, volunteerism and praxis.

Dialogue.

The notion of dialogue in popular theatre is significant. As stated above, dialogue occurring before, during and after the creation process is key. In particular, Boal's (1979/2000) work, as he developed it, aimed to create a space in the theatre itself where dialogue could occur through action on stage. With "direct participation of the spectator" (Boal, p. 131) a performance turns into a critical discussion on the subject matter of concern. Boal states, "the spectator is encouraged to intervene in the action, abandoning his [sic] condition of object and assuming fully the role of subject" (p. 132). In addressing the notion of participation in *Theatre of the Oppressed* Boal explains Forum Theatre, a form of theatre he developed to address community issues, as such:

> The procedure is as follows: First, the participants are asked to tell a story containing a political or social problem of difficult solution. Then a ten-or fifteen-minute skit portraying that problem and the solution intended for discussion is improvised or rehearsed, and subsequently presented. When the skit is over, the participants are asked if they agree with the solution presented. At least some will say no. At this point it is explained that the scene will be performed once more, exactly as it was the first time. But

> now any participant in the audience has the right to replace any actor and lead the action in the direction that seems to him [sic] most appropriate (p. 139).

It is then that the discussion around the social issue ensues, with "spect-actors" (the audience as participants) exploring other possibilities in regards to the problem presented. This level of participation and discussion through improvised "interventions" takes on a completely dialogical tone, allowing for collective exploration and understanding on an issue that affects the population.

Boal's (1992) work is not only limited to Forum Theatre. The rest of his "arsenal" (p. 60) calls for participation and dialogue. The form does not intend to propose answers to a community's problems or struggles, but instead focuses on posing questions that incite dialogue. Boal (1979/2000) emphasizes the use of the theatre to incite this dialogue, though warning against simple "talk, talk , talk…":

> Anyone may propose any solution, but it must be done on the stage, working, acting, doing things, and not from the comfort of his [sic] seat. Often a person is very revolutionary when in a public forum he [sic] envisages and advocates revolutionary and heroic acts; on the other hand, he [sic] often realizes that things are not so easy when he himself [sic] has to practice what he [sic] suggests (p. 139).

Boal's many forms of theatre, such as, Forum, Image, Legislative, Newspaper, or Invisible Theatre (1979/2000), are all rooted in critical pedagogy, encouraging and inciting dialogue around issues of social justice and oppression.

Community.

Popular theatre is very much process oriented, with the process embedded in community. However, to speak of community, it is necessary to define what the concept means. The term carries a number of definitions but for the purpose of my practice and this research study I refer to Bhattacharyya's (2004) explanation of community:

> Understanding community as solidarity (shared identity and norms) serves to define the concept in a distinctive and intrinsic manner, making it possible to distinguish a community from all other types of social relations. We can say that any social configuration that possesses shared identity and norms is a community. The term is thus freed of the incidental baggage of territoriality, ethnicity or level of industrialization of the economy (p. 12)

As for popular theatre and the importance of community, it is not simply about the product, or the play, portraying community concerns. There is often consultation or research done within the community to decipher what is of importance to the population. If a group of theatre workers or a theatre facilitator enter into a community with a topic or concern already in mind, without the necessary consultation, that theatre project may not fully meet the tenants of popular theatre. The notion of "intent" is key in defining what theatre is "popular". Prentki and Selman (2001) state, "popular theatre practitioners place their goals firmly within the range of intentions which seek to effect positive

community change" (p. 30). They go on to demonstrate how these intentions are closely aligned with community development work:

> In addition to theatre practice, including a variety of styles, processes and theatrical expressions, the ideal popular theatre practitioner is also knowledgeable and practised in community facilitation, community development, and the theories and practice of community change (Prentki & Selman, 2001, p. 30).

The intent to work closely with a community around concerns of their choice is key to popular theatre processes. The creation process is often with members of the community and the performance and dialogue inspired by the theatrical piece occurs, as in popular theatre, "with", "for" and "by" that community (Prentki & Selman, 2001). The popular theatre process may be a part of a larger community development process or used as a tool that offers all of the steps of a community development model (Prentki & Selman, 2001). The community development process involves:

> the community coming to the view that there are aspects of community life which it wishes to improve; the community conducting a self-study and identifying areas for improvement; the selection of priority areas for improvement; efforts to reach those goals…; the evaluation of results achieved and the setting of new goals (Prentki & Selman, p. 37).

Either way, whether implemented as a component to a community development process, or as the process in and of itself, the connection to

community development is undeniable for popular theatre practice. By exploring issues, identifying and mobilizing, popular theatre, and specifically Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979/2000), has the potential to spur on action amongst the participating population. Martin (2006) speaks about this in terms of Boal's work and its connection to political theatre, in that it isn't simply a "feel good" process, that theatre can indeed be "applied" to political intentions and mobilization around such purposes. In fact, Boal (1998) addressed such political intentions through his Legislative Theatre work (1998), with the specific purpose to of using the interactive process of theatre to suggest and implement governmental legislation and policy change.

While the population concerned is actively participating in the creation of the theatre, the process is just as important as the product, and vice versa, as the product can act as a further conduit for community dialogue, specifically when referring to Forum Theatre and its interactivity (Boal, 1974/1979). During the process of popular theatre creation not only an awareness of certain issues is amplified, but the potential for action to change a troublesome reality is explored. This potential for "action" by a community, through consciousness raising, has been termed "conscientization" (Freire, 1970, p. 39). In a popular theatre process there is room for participants to either be involved in "consciousness raising", where "there may not be any immediate call to action" (Prentki & Selman, 2001, p. 38), or "conscientization" where there is follow through on action taken. This is further theorized through the concept of "praxis", as explained below.

Volunteerism.

Volunteerism is another central tenant of popular theatre. Despite the techniques for building trust, in popular theatre, at times participants may still be uncomfortable engaging in process. It is integral to popular theatre work that everyone involved know what they are entering into and that their participation is voluntary (Diamond, 2007). Likewise, the participation of a community must be voluntary. Diamond writes about how Headlines Theatre's Theatre for Living predominantly works from invitation (2007). He sees the company (Headlines) as part of the community and not a separate entity that decides on their programming. In seeing themselves as part of the greater community, the company waits for invitations from the community to work with them on issues about which they are passionate. Diamond states, "a *Theatre for Living* project happens because a community *wants something* and has imagined that whatever it is they want can be achieved through theatre" (p. 52).

The notion of the community extending an invitation to the theatre worker exemplifies the tenet of "volunteerism" in community education and popular theatre. Not only do the participants need to be informed and willing to engage in the process, the entire community does as well, and furthermore, it should be the community inviting in the practitioner.

Praxis.

Diamond (2007) demonstrates this notion of action necessary for *Theatre of the Oppressed*-based work by calling on Gramsci's notion of "praxis" – "the

creation of intentional feedback loops" (p. 176) that involve planning, reflection (analysis) and action. This is a prominent concept for Freire (1970/1988) as well in his educational theories. Diamond situates the idea of the "loop" within the workshop context. It could be possible that this action be instigated during the workshops and reach beyond, resulting in the participants exercising some agency within the larger community around the topics explored in the process. This could occur through a dialogical performance, such as Forum Theatre, and/or any other activity that takes action on the issues at hand.

Implementing Popular Theatre in Education

An exploration of what popular theatre is, and its purpose reveals how it aligns with critical pedagogy and popular education. Popular theatre's voluntary nature, its emphasis on dialogue, community development and the potential for action (praxis) on issues of significance to the population involved, make the alignment between popular theatre and popular education evident. Like popular education, popular theatre, is explored within the realm of adult education (Bates, 1996; Noble, 2005), however, in my experience it is more common amongst work with youth. In adult education, where more freedom exists to explore alternate processes, popular education processes can be more freely implemented. Contrarily, in formal education settings with youth, the possibilities are not as open due to the stringent regulations and curricular goals and objectives.

With the limitations of formal educational settings in mind, I believe it is important, nevertheless, to explore the possibilities of using popular theatre with

youth in school settings. As I argued in the previous chapter, the use of popular education processes within education should be explored, as the present system is not meeting the needs of students. Popular theatre as a form of popular education should be considered as a viable option to engage students more thoughtfully during their school experiences.

As a means to implementing a more popular education approach, popular theatre can act as an arts-based way to uncover students' lived experiences. As a pedagogical tool popular theatre acts as, "an effective means of collectively drawing out and examining participants' experiences toward producing new understandings" (Conrad, 2004, p. 3). Within a school program, popular theatre could act as a creative, fun way to connect with students. While, in my experience, people often feel theatre to be threatening, popular theatre operates in such a way, as described in more detail below, to provide a "way in" for everyone. This can occur, for example, through games, storytelling, and Image Theatre (Boal, 1992). With many "ways in" a responsible and skilled popular theatre practitioner should be able to engage all participants in the process.

The following is a brief overview of strategies used by practitioners to engage participants. Games, storytelling and Image Theatre are techniques that I use in my practice; including in the study discussed in this thesis. Most are drawn from the work of Augusto Boal (1992).

Games.

As popular theatre is intended for community contexts the intent is that anyone can do it, anyone can take part if they are interested and concerned about the subject matter or issue that is being addressed through the process. However, even if participants have agreed to take part, there is often hesitation in the form of shyness or fear. This fear often subsides, in my experience, through the use of games. Community-based theatre processes often use games to engage a group in working together and for inciting dialogue on the theme at hand. More specifically, practitioners such as Boal (1979/2000) and Diamond (2007) use games to act as metaphors for how the participants relate to the topic in question. After the participants finish a game or exercise often the facilitator will ask how they felt about it, what their thoughts were on the game, and how the activities during the game relate to their lives and/or the topic. For example, if they felt fearful during the game, they might relate it to broader fears they experience in their lives.

As Diamond (2007) explains,

> The games are themselves images – each person will experience them privately, filtering the game through their own life experiences. They are creating links in the working group, building group awareness and trust, but they can also, in surprising ways, unlock access to the issues that the group wants to investigate (p. 91).

Boal (1992) states, “the games … deal with the expressivity of the body as emitter and receiver of messages. The games are a dialogue” (p. 60). Specifically, *Theatre of the Oppressed* work is deeply rooted in games, or “gamesercises” (p. 60) as Boal defines them. He locates these games in 5 categories: “Feeling what we touch” (p. 62), “listening to what we hear” (p. 88), “dynamising several senses” (p. 106) “seeing what we look at” (p. 120), and “the memory of the senses” (p. 161). These games and exercises, while focusing on an individuals’ senses, are played in a group, exploring the senses in relation to each other and going through the potentially vulnerable process together, thus building a cohesive group. While, other practitioners might use other categories for their use of games and exercises in the process (see for example Diamond, 2007) the intent is to build respect, trust, and to instigate critical dialogue within the community through the games, as the games act as means to connect with the self and foster communication amongst participants.

Storytelling.

Storytelling is a necessary step in many participatory drama processes that rely on participant input. This is the case for popular theatre practice because the creations come straight from the community that is engaged in the process. The work in based on the communities’ thoughts, feelings and stories. Therefore, to engage in storytelling as a component in the broader popular theatre project is natural. Specific to *Theatre of the Oppressed*, participants are encouraged to connect with each other via sharing their own stories and perspectives, which is also a relevant factor in approaching the work from a feminist perspective, as

discussed in the previous chapter. This step of sharing on a personal level is important to the group in order to discover commonalities and shared concerns, which are then explored from a collective perspective through Image Theatre.

Image Theatre.

Much more specific to Boal (1992) is the use of Image Theatre. While Boal coined the term and laid out specific techniques and considerations for its use, many practitioners and educators use the techniques, or adaptations thereof, in their own community-based processes. Boal includes Image Theatre in the "theatre as language" (1979/2000, p. 126) stage within his arsenal of the *Theatre of the Oppressed.* The idea of the "theatre as language" is that the theatre process is living in the present and relevant to the participants' lives, as opposed to depicting situations from the past or as a "finished product" (p. 126). Image Theatre is then a way for participants to use their bodies to "speak" (p. 126) their ideas, thoughts, experiences or feelings physically, as opposed to relying on words. These ideas can be communicated by using one's own body to express ideas by taking on frozen positions or by "sculpting" others: "The participant is asked to express his opinion, but without speaking, using only the bodies of the other participants and 'sculpting' with them a group of statues, in such a way that his opinions and feelings become evident" (Boal, 1979/2000, p. 135).

Image Theatre is comprised of a series of wordless exercises that incite participants to create physical embodiments of their thoughts, feelings and experiences. These frozen images are then "dynamized" or brought to life (Boal,

1992) through the use of numerous techniques. The dynamization allows for conversation around the ideas expressed in the images. For example, in addressing a particular issue relevant to the group, a participant might be asked to sculpt the "actual image" (Boal, 1979/2000, p. 135), an image that represents their struggles within that issue or community concern. They might then be asked to sculpt the "ideal image" (p. 135) and then a "transitional image", "to show how it would be possible to pass from one reality to the other. In others words, how to carry out the change…" (p. 135). There are numerous ways of using Image Theatre, to explore ideas, gain trust amongst the group, provoke discussion and even start devising the beginnings of a larger piece of theatre.

Image Theatre is a non-threatening way for otherwise silent participants to gain a valued "voice" in the process due to its non-verbal nature and often collaborative process. Images can be created based on one person's idea or a group can work together to devise an image representative of the groups' thoughts on an issue or theme. Without speaking participants can make huge statements. Diamond (2007) states:

> It is possible, even on the first day of a workshop, to create an environment in which the group consciousness can express itself, sometimes at a subconscious level, using the language of image (p. 93).

Boal states, in regards to Image Theatre, that nothing in the process is "obligatory" (1992, p. 164), and as such, numerous popular theatre practitioners use the work as they see fit. In my experience, artists/practitioners/educators use

Image Theatre techniques to explore issues and topics without solely basing their work on *Theatre of the Oppressed.* Boal has informed numerous other popular theatre practices through his arsenal, his writings, practice and overall philosophy on how theatre can be used.

Challenges for Popular Theatre in Schools

There exist a number of limitations when discussing the use of popular theatre within formal education. In fact, using popular theatre as a form of popular education in school would require a complete re-imagining of what education ought to be (Ibanez-Carrasco & Meiners, 2004), what curriculum is and how it is implemented (Freire, 1974/2007; Aoki, 1993; Jardine, 1996). As such, there is a major disconnect between formal education and community-based arts or theatre processes. This disconnect resides in the fact that formal education is compulsory, thus not allowing for students to opt out of experiences if they choose to, whereas, as discussed above, volunteerism is a tenent of popular theatre.

With alternative schools and programs embracing more diverse measures to engage students (Kelly, 2000), the use of drama and theatre and other arts in these contexts is more prevalent than in mainstream schools (Bayliss & Dodwell, 2002; Turner, 2007). When such processes do occur within mainstream schools, in my experience, it is a process often instigated by one teacher who happens to acknowledge the value of such a project. As experiences allowing students to express ideas and thoughts about their lives and concerns are valuable for them, I propose that more supportive structures within schools needs to be established so

as to embrace such popular theatre processes to their full potential. In approaching education with an increased focus on the tenets of popular theatre (and popular education), students have the potential to critically engage with each other on matters relevant to their lives, and have a say about what processes best meet their needs in the educational journey. Students and educators should see schooling as a community-based project, and see themselves as a community. As Diamond (2007) is invited by a community to work with them, schools could invite what they think they require into the larger process of engaged learning.

If the case is to be made to include a popular theatre project within the curriculum as a form of popular education, in order to maintain the integrity of the work, certain considerations would have to be taken into account: The importance of popular theatre crossing subject area boundaries, freedom for students to explore, the lack of opportunity for volunteerism in school, adherence to tenet of the "praxis," the tension between the need for safety in school and the need for risk-taking in popular theatre.

Cross-curricular approach.

In my experience as a popular theatre practitioner, when one speaks of including a popular theatre program within school the tendency is to assume it will take place in a drama class or for an after school extra-curricular activity. The assumption that popular theatre should take place in a drama class, often taught as part of skill development, as an "introduction" to the art of theatre, or as an extra-curricular activity, limits the potential for the popular theatre project and limits

access to it by a wider range of participants. Alternately, if the education system were to embrace a more community-based educational approach, there would be more room to explore the possibilities of using popular theatre projects within classes other than drama. This possibility is rare today because of the strict government mandated standardized curriculum that does not allow teachers the freedom to implement alternative processes in their classrooms.

I suggest that popular theatre projects incited by students' needs, with the support of teachers and administration, should be available to the broader population of the school and valued as a key component to education, thus, not restricted to a specific subject area. In one of my recent projects as a practitioner, I worked with students in an alternative school setting; students signed up for the project and received school credit for their experience, without being graded specifically on their individual contributions. This situation proved fruitful for the participants, and for the school, as the core group performed a Forum Theatre play to the rest of the school population, instigating critical dialogue on key themes in all their lives. As Vine asserts this experience confirmed that, "Forum Theatre techniques could be applied in order to develop decision making, self-assertion and advocacy skills" (1993, p. 122).

Freedom for students.

In any popular theatre process in schools, it is important that there be freedom for the students to explore without the constraints of what may be deemed "appropriate" by school authorities. The popular theatre process cannot

effectively occur in a space where rules and regulations do not permit students to express what they are truly feeling and thinking about the subject matter to be explored – an environment that is heavily censored. With *Theatre of the Oppressed* in particular, where power relations that are often explored, perceived threats to the institution can limit the potential of the work. A foray into exploring the power relations that students are experiencing in their lives might include critiques of the institution in which the school program is occurring. Such exploration has to be encouraged and not limited by school administration. It would be near impossible to look at what is relevant to students' lives if they were not "allowed" speak their thoughts and feelings about their experiences in the education system, a system in which they are immersed for approximately six hours per day for five days a week.

The same is true for other aspects of students' lives. It would severely limit the potential of a program if reference, for example to drugs and sex were censored, if indeed those were factors in students' lives. Appropriating popular theatre work to fit within the potentially strict regulations of a school is often an unfortunate reality, but by no means ideal. In order to gain the full benefit of the work for the participants, the school must not be fearful to uncover issues that are relevant to students, although they may not normally be deemed "appropriate" to the school setting as currently conceived by decision makers such as school board trustees and parents. Also, if participation is graded it would act as a significant constraint on the freedom of students, as they would potentially be attempting to

adhere to the criteria of the grading as opposed to engaging in the process honestly and openly.

Volunteerism.

While doing popular theatre work in schools, if the participation is not voluntary, which would be the case if students were being graded, it is at complete odds with an important tenet of popular theatre, that of volunteerism. This would result in a lack of freedom on the part of the students contributing to a process therefore not in line with the original philosophy of popular theatre.

In my early experience if students did not want to take part I would attempt to negotiate with the teachers as to what the student might do during that time, often resulting in them having to sit alone and work, which was often interpreted by them and the other students as punishment for not participating. These instances were troubling and not conducive to popular theatre work. This is a problematic situation in implementing popular theatre in schools, and must be an important consideration on the part of facilitators and teachers.

Praxis.

In schools where *Theatre of the Oppressed* or other forms of popular theatre are being used, there is sometimes a notion that the collective creation process is enough in and of itself; that the experience for the students allows for enough of a positive benefit that there is no need to take it any further. Popular theatre work, however, should extend beyond the collective creative process alone. The form is meant to "disturb" through entering a state of "disequilibrium"

(Diamond, year, p. 172) and this "disturbance" must not be left without any follow up, reflection or future plans of action.

For example, in school, if the students were exploring issues of bullying through their popular theatre process, it could result in an interactive performance opening up the conversation to the broader school population, and/or enactment of any other "anti-bullying" strategies students saw fit.

Safety & risk taking.

The necessity of providing a space where students can be "free" in their explorations depends heavily on the roles of the facilitator and the supporting teacher(s). In *Theatre of the Oppressed* work, the facilitator role is often called the "Joker" (Boal, 1979). Diamond (2007) describes the role of the joker as:

> to create working space that is a safe place for the participants to be able to enter disequilibrium. They must want to do this. It is in the risk-taking that the people find themselves off-balance … It is in this collective disturbance that creativity exists (p. 172).

The joker has a responsibility to maintain a safe space for these risks to be taken, and there certainly are ethical considerations to take into account while treading in potentially dangerous waters within a school setting. However, with the proper supports in place, i.e. teacher, school counselor and a skilled facilitator, the risks can amount to truly empowering work on the part of the participants. If the work is subdued in order to not tread into these potentially dangerous waters, it could simply amount to doing creative drama work and not addressing any

issues that are relevant to the students. Students need to be able to feel comfortable to take risks in order for the process to engage them in a form of popular education, as derived from critical pedagogy. Diamond (2007) states:

> This is key to the group transformative process. The disturbance that the image or the play creates in the community in turn creates the potential for a journey from disequilibrium to equilibrium, in which both learning and transformation can occur (p. 172 – 173).

This necessity of a space where students can be free to express themselves authentically calls into question the practice of grading. Presently it seems as though every experience students are having in their formal education is being graded for evaluation. This is certainly a limitation in doing popular theatre as students may not feel free to explore within the process honestly if they are conscious that their participation is being evaluated. Participants' personal experiences cannot be measured as good or bad, thus the watchful eye of "evaluation" must be reconsidered. Acknowledging the effect of grading on the students, students may not be honest in their contributions thus affecting the potential of the whole project.

Conclusion

This chapter gave a brief overview of how popular theatre can be defined, with a more specific introduction to *Theatre of the Oppressed* as a form of popular theatre. With a focus on the tenets of popular theatre, as I have defined them in my practice based predominantly on the work of Augusto Boal, those of

dialogue, community, volunteerism and praxis. I then discussed the techniques used to engage communities in a popular theatre process. In looking at possibilities for implementing a popular education focus in schools, popular theatre – through both the process of creating and presenting, could be seen as a useful tool to engage students in conversations about their lives, making school more relevant to them, if limitations existing within the current school context could be overcome. However, within the present formal education system, there are barriers to this work being done as originally intended. There are numerous considerations for the use of popular theatre in education, which call into question the broader educational systems policies, as well as governmental and societal values in terms of education. While popular theatre and applied drama are being employed within the school system, what is of utmost concern to me as a popular theatre practitioner, are the concessions that must be made away from popular theatre's original philosophy in order for it to "work" within an institution such as a school.

In the next chapter I report on a popular theatre project that I implemented within an alternative school program. While the program was successful in many respects, the flexibility of the work is called into question.

Chapter Four: The Project - Methods and Design

Popular Theatre Within an Alternative School Program

This chapter describes the methodology and program design for the popular theatre project I undertook with an alternative program for pregnant teens and young parents for this master's research study. The popular theatre project explored engaged students in critical conversations about their lives and how they envisioned education playing a role.

Often, students who are unable to "make it" within a regular school system, for any number of reasons ranging from behavioural issues to being new to the country, are placed in alternative education programs, in the hope that these programs might adequately meet the students' specific needs (Blake, 2004). These programs can act as a way to either encourage their engagement in school or to potentially stigmatize the group of students even further. While an alternative program can provide support and contribute to "group identity and solidarity" (Kelly, 2000, p. 92), it can also increase student segregation. As for inclusive schooling, students can be encouraged to "fit it", yet their difference might not be acknowledged, which could be a detriment to the student. For example, Kelly (2000), in reference to teen-aged parents within an inclusive environment, states:

> Yet were these school adults simply to ignore the differences of the teen mothers from other students, then the teen mothers might not receive due consideration of their heavy responsibilities and, as a result, might fail their courses or be asked to leave school due to poor attendance (p. 92).

One particular benefit to an alternative program is outlined by Kelly (2003). The author argues that while true democratic experiences are missing within the mainstream school system there are opportunities to present students with such democratic experiences in an alternative program. Her study dealt with a program for young parents called TAPP (Teen Aged Parents Program). She states, "this fine grained study of a specific program also illuminates larger issues critical to the building of a democracy in which various groups, especially those that have been treated unfairly as 'second-class citizens' (such as women, racial and ethic 'minorities,' and workers), are given a fuller voice in public dialogue" (Kelly, 2003, p. 125).

Specific to alternative programs for pregnant teens and young parents there have been accounts of drama projects used with the students to encourage education around their situations (Kelly, 2000; Haedicke & Nellhaus, 2001). However, as these studies took on purely observational roles, providing accounts of the processes from an outsider's perspective, there has yet to be an account of popular theatre specifically being used as a participatory research method with such a population from the perspective of a facilitator of this project does. Additionally, as a popular theatre facilitator I sought a research method and a method of presenting and discussing my findings consistent with my philosophy of practice.

The following is a brief overview of popular theatre as participatory research and ethnodrama as an arts-based means of analyzing and disseminating research.

Popular Theatre as a Participatory Research Method

This study took a participatory research approach (Brown & Strega, 2005; Heron, & Reason, 1997; Park, Brydon-Miller, Hall & Jackson, 1993), more specifically employing popular theatre as a participatory method (Conrad, 2004; Kidd & Byram, 1978).

Participatory research, as a qualitative method, aims to reduce the hierarchy between the researcher and the researched, by inviting those being researched into the role of co-researchers (Kelly, 1993), therefore enacting a participatory community-based process. Participatory research is distinctly connected to the emergence of popular education (Freire, 1988) and Freire's "conscientization methodology" (Kelly, p. 10) and is viewed as "both a means of creating knowledge and as a tool for education" (Conrad, 2004, p. 7). Its development from popular education is seen in its focus of research conducted "for", "with" and "by" the community as opposed to research "on" the community (Ibid., p. 7). Rather than fostering a hierarchical relationship between researcher and researched, participants are co-researchers who are "involved in the research process from beginning to end, in the attainment, creation, and dissemination of knowledge" (Conrad, 2004, p. 7).[v]

Often compared to action research – or a variation thereof, participatory research is unique in its view on society. Kelly (1993) cites Brown and Tandon (1983) to make a distinction between action research and participatory research:

> Action research rests on a consensus model of society that favors reform as a change strategy, whereas participatory research assumes a conflict theory of society, holding that in situations of extreme inequality, changing social structures will be necessary to make the social world more egalitarian and just (p. 10).

Participatory research is aimed at social transformation, to promote critical consciousness, through learning that is dynamic and "two-way" (Kidd & Byram, 1978, p. 1), and full participation on the part of the community involved. With such a particular view on conducting research, participatory research is not simply a method, but rather a philosophy aimed at combating injustices and fostering spaces where marginalized groups gain a voice. What is notable is the wide variety of methods that can be implemented in such a research project:

> Striving to end the monopoly of the written word, participatory research has traditionally incorporated alternative methods including photography, radio, poetry, music, myths, drawing, sculpture, puppets, and popular theatre, as meeting spaces for cultural exchange (Conrad, 2004, p. 8).

Participatory research (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991), as "deliberative democracy," sees participation as not only a method, but also as a goal. It values learning as a two-way transaction as opposed to the one-way "banking system." It places the researcher as facilitator and participant; and views research as a way to achieving critical consciousness, thus moving toward social transformation (Kidd & Byram, 1978).

Popular theatre can serve as an arts-based means (Diamond & Mullen, 1999; Leavy, 2009; Finley & Mullen, 2003) of gaining insight into participants' experiences, a collective meaning-making activity. Participatory research aims to better the lives of the community (Fals-Borda & Rahman, 1991), in this case the students in the alternative school program. The popular theatre process as a participatory research method (Kidd & Byram, 1978), involved participants in a creative exploration into their own lived experiences. To interpret and represent the process I used ethnodrama (Saldana, 2003).

Popular theatre defined as "people's theatre speaking to the common man in his language and idiom and dealing with problems of direct relevance to this situation" (Kidd &Byram, 1978, p. 3) is a natural fit for participatory research. In *Popular Theatre: A Technique for Participatory Research* (Kidd & Byram, 1978), the authors drew comparisons between the philosophy of participatory research and the practice of popular theatre. Noting that popular theatre is both an art form and a means of discussion. They discern that popular theatre is particularly useful in "conscientization programmes" (Ibid. p. 4) such as participatory research projects. Popular theatre as a participatory process, involving community members sharing knowledge and collectively analyzing the community's concerns, is an especially relevant means to engage in participatory research. Conrad (2004) states the following about popular theatre as participatory research:

> Popular Theatre, as a method of participatory research, involves shared ownership of the research process and community-based analysis of

issues, all with an orientation toward community-action (Conrad, 2004, p. 8).

Challenges for participatory research in school.

There is some concern expressed about if or how participatory research can be effectively conducted within a school context with youth (Kelly, 1993). As with popular theatre, participatory research, with its emphasis on power dynamics, might come up against resistance in a school setting from either school authorities or students, considering the power structures in education. Often, a methodology considered as a possibility amongst populations of adults, it is not considered a valid process by those involved in formal research with youth (Kelly, 1993, p. 10). Whereas in educational action research is commonly conducted in classrooms with teachers analyzing their own classes, students' voices are not valued. As Kelly notes, "students often become the primary objects of, rather than allies in, research" (Ibid. p. 10).

The concern of how and where participatory research can be conducted, in particular in relation to the issue of youth and classrooms, does not mean that it should not be undertaken. Rather, with the right kind of effort, "high school students can fruitfully be made co-researchers" (Kelly, p. 11), and it should be encouraged, as youth are so often marginalized and their voices not valued or considered when investigating issues related them and their education. Kelly (1993) calls for a certain modification when working with youth in schools. She states, "participatory researchers need to steer a careful course, away from the

hierarchical and potentially exploitative relationship between researchers and those they research without resorting to a false denial of researchers' inescapable authority and the responsibilities it carries" (Ibid. p. 11).

Ethnodrama

Ethnodrama is part of an arts-based movement toward "alternative approaches to . . . representing research in the social sciences" (Conrad, 2004, p. 9). This is consistent with the arts-based element of my research (Conrad, 2002), wherein art is believed to be a legitimate way of creating and sharing knowledge (Diamond & Mullen, 1999). In ethnodrama, findings from the research process are shared through scripted dialogue, either for the purpose of reading or performing for an audience. Engaging in artistic means to disseminate research findings can be both entertaining and informative, thus intellectually engaging, emotionally evocative and aesthetically sound (Saldana, 2003). Saldana explains further:

> An ethnodrama, the script, consists of analyzed and dramatized significant selections from interview transcripts, field notes, journal entries, or other written artifacts. Characters in an ethnodrama are generally the research participants portrayed by actors, but the actual researchers and participants themselves may be cast members (p. 218).

The script is made up of characters based on the participants in the research, by utilizing field notes, reflective journals, and what the participants say about themselves through interviews (Saldana, 2003). The scenes or play is then

written to express the research, rather than replicate exactly what occurred. When the script(s) are subsequently performed for an audience, the form would then be referred to as "ethnotheatre" (Saldana, 2003, p. 218).

The Research Site

The alternative school program, for which I will use the pseudonym "Young Moms Program" or "YMP", in which the research study was set, was located within a mainstream urban public high school located in a western Canadian prairie city. The alternative program (YMP) was an attachment to the regular mainstream public school program, which had approximately nine hundred students from grade nine to twelve. YMP served students from grades nine to twelve with a total program population of approximately twenty-five to thirty young female students. YMP existed within the broader public high school, but was a unique space specialized for the population it served, that of young mothers and pregnant teens. It was developed within the public high school in the early 1970's to meet the needs of this unique population and was run by the municipal public school board. The students received instruction in academic and alternative education programs according to the provincial curriculum. The students that I met came from different parts of the city, with a number of them living either near the school, or in the inner city.

The physical space (a wing of the high school) in which the program was housed was a small, comfortable and more informal space in comparison to the larger public high school to which it is attached. YMP is a small extension of the

public high school, consisting of a few small classrooms with tables and chairs, a chalkboard and couches. The space also includes a kitchen, a "living room" area with couches and chairs and a large common area that is used for communal lunches and other gatherings. The relaxed environment, openness of the staff and flexibility with approaches to learning was apparent and the students clearly appreciated and thrived in this space.

YMP catered to young women in high school who were either pregnant or had young babies and/or children and was run by one program coordinator and three teachers providing instruction. Students were supported through both group and individualized instruction in academic curricula, according to the provincial standards, and alternative educational curricula. The alternative education curricula included wellness classes (including prenatal), life skills classes, career guidance and modified programming. In addition to the curricula, YMP offered a food program, where meals were prepared for and by the students in an onsite kitchen, and access to the services of a sexual health nurse, a daycare service, an ongoing support program for victims of abuse, and a donation centre. Additionally, a social worker was available three days per week to provide support and counseling services to students with personal matters, school difficulties, mental health issues, and referrals to outside agencies. A large percentage of the students in YMP were of Aboriginal descent, for which the program brought in an elder once a week to do cultural programming and be with the students for support. The fact that so many of the programs' students were of Aboriginal descent, is a matter worthy of serious consideration. In our work

together, due I expect, to the limited time we had together, the issue of their cultural backgrounds and the fact that so many young Aboriginal females were young mothers, did not come up. Nor was I in a position to raise the issue. As a responsible facilitator/researcher, given the limited time available for adequately addressing the matter, it was not a discussion that I felt ethically entitled to initiate, and so I did not pursue it within the research. I would, however, strongly suggest that further research is needed in this area.

The alternative program (YMP) offered a safe, compassionate environment for these students who wanted to complete their high school education and develop skills as parents. At the time of the study, all of the program staff were women, and the philosophy implemented by the program coordinator was that of a feminist perspective in that they were aiming to empower the young women.

Research Design

For the research, in consultation with both the program coordinator and the class teacher, I, as the researcher/facilitator planned and conducted a popular theatre program as part of the Language Arts program. The program lasted ten days in December 2008, with each session running just over an hour. There were between three and eight young women involved as participants on any given day. Participation in the popular theatre program was encouraged, as it was part of their regular Language Arts course, however, it was made clear that participation in the formal research was voluntary. Their decision to participate in the research

or not, would not affect their inclusion in the popular theatre program. To further address the popular theatre tenet of volunteerism, I also emphasized that participation in the program could include watching and supporting and that by no means would they be judged or graded according to their level of engagement in the activities. This was a condition that the class teacher and I agreed upon prior to the start of the project. I obtained appropriate ethics approval and parental/guardian consent where applicable. The aim of the popular theatre process was to provide insight into students' lived experiences of school and their level of engagement in their education. This was intended to help them become more aware of their situations as teen parents in school, to inform my ongoing practice with them, and my popular theatre practice in relation to the research questions:

> *What are the possibilities and limitations of a popular theatre project implemented within an alternative school context?*
>
> *Why should we make space for such processes in schools?*

In this way, the study served both the needs of the school and my research interests. The study aimed to evaluate their experiences of the program and its future potential.

Popular Theatre Design

For this study I used the popular theatre activities as the means to generate material ("data") for the research. For the most part, I derive most of my practice as a popular theatre/applied drama facilitator from *Theatre of the Oppressed*

(1979/2000), as introduced in the previous chapter. Although I deviate from Boal's "arsenal" (1992), the philosophy of his work, in that it was meant to incite conversation as well as personal and community transformation, was consistent with my endeavours. The participants' thoughts and feelings on the subjects that they chose to talk about and create images and scenes about, were the essence of the participatory research (Park, 1993). The sessions began with team building, trust exercises and informal discussions and which led into Image Theatre (the creation of tableaux to represent experiences) and then the sharing of experiences through personal storytelling and the creation of scenes.

For example, on the second day of the program we played "energy clap", a game where the group stands in a circle and passes an imaginary ball of energy to each other by clapping their hands toward someone else in the group. This game is one that is often used for team building. We then moved into an Image Theatre exercise called "complete the image". In this exercise participants rotate in and out of the middle of the circle continuously making two person images. We began this exercise with no theme and then added a theme of their choosing. They chose to work with the theme "being a mother", for which they created a number of images inspired by that theme. The images then lead the participants to tell stories about how they related to the theme. From there, a collective story was created, based on their stories but not depicting any one individual's story in particular. We generally started each session with "getting to know you" games, moved into group building exercises and then shifted into Image Theatre and scene creation, all the while having informal conversations about our experiences and sharing

personal stories. Eventually the group became comfortable enough to use images to tell stories that were relevant to their lives. While it was a slow process, due to nerves and shyness, they became quite engaged in the process. We used the Image Theatre and exercises to draw out the stories, and added narration and titles to the images to create fictionalized stories or scenes. One of these stories entitled "Sophie's Story" is included in the following chapter in the form of a scripted vignette.

Throughout the popular theatre program I made researcher's field notes based on general observations of the program, how the group responded to activities, each participant's input, and the informal discussion amongst the group during the process. I only reported on participants who consented to the research project by signing the appropriate consent forms. As there were participants in the program that did not give consent I did not report on their individual contributions to the drama or discussions. In addition to my field notes recording the contributions of participants during sessions, I conducted one-on-one informal interviews with participants upon the completion of the program. I also maintained a research journal where I reflected on the process including my facilitation. This journal allowed me to reflect on each day's activities, brainstorm ideas for the coming sessions and actively connect the process of the sessions with the theory and philosophy in which popular theatre is steeped.

Interpretation/analysis.

Upon reflection on the collected materials, I identified themes that emerged through the popular theatre process. The themes revealed themselves from the content of the sessions, in my observations and through the context in which the program occurred. The scripts I wrote to represent and explore these themes are partially fictionalized for ethical and creative purposes. Conrad (2004), in using this approach, states, "while the details do not always represent precisely what happened . . . I have tried to remain true to the substance of our work, and tried to capture the spirit of the interactions the scripted descriptions depict" (Conrad, 2004, p. 15). Conrad (2004, citing Clandinin & Connelly) acknowledges that "all interpretive work is inherently subjective" (p. 15), in that the script is written by the researcher or author who is interpreting the material being worked with, in my case the field notes and reflections. Conrad further states, "the scripts are meant to be expressive rather than just explanatory. They are performative texts that bring the processes of academic interpretation and representation in closer touch with the actual performance events" (2004, p. 16). So, rather than scripted moments during the process transcribed word for word, as in verbatim theatre (Paget, 1987) for example, the ethnodramatic vignettes are partially fictionalized in order to be presented as dramatically interesting and emotionally evocative representations, drawn from the research process (Saldana, 2005).

The dramatic vignettes included depict important moments in the group's process, which I identified based on my analysis of the various "data sources" and include instances of performative interaction (Conrad, 2004) that occurred during

the creation process, the actual artistic creations of the students (the actual scenes we created), and their responses to the performances.

In the following chapter, I address the themes presented as ethnodramatic vignettes. I further reflect upon these vignettes in terms of how they were revealed in the overall process, what their significance was at the time, and consider their connection to the broader project at hand.

Chapter Five: Findings and Discussion

Throughout this section I present scripted scenes to "dramatize the data" (Saldana, 2003) gathered from my facilitation of the popular theatre project with a group of young women in an alternative school program for pregnant teens and young mothers. These scenes are depictions of analyzed and dramatized selections from my field notes recorded throughout the project along with insights gained through my journal reflections on the process. The characters are the participants themselves –sometimes playing roles, however, their names are fictionalized for anonymity. The vignettes are "meant to be expressive and evocative rather than just explanatory" (Conrad, 2004, p. 16).

Sophie's Story

One scene that the group worked on was titled by them, *Sophie's Story*. The story was developed through a process using Image Theatre (Boal, 1992). Over the course of three sessions the group developed images of moments of "struggle" for them. From these they developed *Sophie's Story*, a story that they all felt was truthful yet was no one individual's story. The following scene depicts the creation and telling of *Sophie's Story* within the group research process. To re-create the process of telling the story, I have chosen the key moments and partially fictionalized them as per ethnodramatic methods (Saldana, 2003), thus expressing the research findings in a performative (Conrad, 2004) manner.

Sophie's Story was important to the group because their realities were so entrenched in being pregnant and/or having a child. Most discussions that occurred in the group would emerge around this similarity amongst them. This was what they said defined them as a community. They often talked about what was difficult for them and what they most enjoyed. The fictional story of Sophie, a character they co-created, is one that they all related to in one way or another, and one that they thought was important to tell.

***

Sophie's Story

> *Jan, playing the character of Sophie, stands centre stage surrounded by the other participants, watching intently and jumping in and out of the scene as it plays. They react to the scene as it plays out.*
>
> **Jan:** *(as Sophie)* The kids are destroying the house! They are running around everywhere. I just can't seem to gain control.
>
> **Denise:** *(from the side)* She's gonna go nuts!
>
> **Facilitator:** Is this true?
>
> **All:** Yes!
>
> **Jan:** *(as Sophie)* Kids! We're going to grandmas! I can't afford childcare…I am working hard, but I still can't afford it. I have to take them to grandmas house instead.

Two of the girls enter into the scene as the children. Clearly enjoying playing the "children".

Girls: *(as children)* Mama! Mama! *(gleefully destroying the house)*

Jan: *(as Sophie)* I am so frustrated, I can't take all of this. I am too young for all of these responsibilities, all on my own! …GET IN THE CAR WE ARE GOING TO GRANDMA'S!!!

The girls (acting as the children) freeze in fear.

Denise: *(from the sidelines, watching the scene unfold)* Yeah!

All of the other participant/characters cheer from the side, thoroughly engaged with the story that is being told.

Facilitator: Now what?

Denise: She goes to work…late again.

Facilitator: And what happens?

Denise: I'll show you, I'll be the boss.

Denise places herself on stage behind a desk, acting as the boss. Jan, as Sophie, enters.

Denise: *(as boss)* Sophie, please come here. You're late again. I can't run a business with you always being late. This food doesn't serve itself you know.

Jan: *(as Sophie)* I'm sorry, I can explain, I just had trouble dropping off my kids…

Denise: *(as boss)* I have heard this time and time again. And this is the last time…I am sorry, but I have to let you go.

Jan: *(as Sophie)* It won't happen again…I need this job…

Denise: *(as boss)* I am sorry, I understand your situation, but it has become too much. You can pick up your last check on Friday. Have a nice day.

Facilitator: Well, now what? What happens to Sophie now?

Jan: She probably has to go meet with her probation officer.

Alex: And gets in trouble for not finishing her community service hours.

Laura: And is told to go apply for welfare.

Denise: Ha! Yeah, totally.

Facilitator: All of this? All of this in one day?

All: Yes!

Jan: Then she goes home and curls up in a little ball (places herself centre stage curled up on the floor) And cries, cuz she can't take it anymore.

Denise: She's lost her mind…she curls up in a ball in the corner because she can't handle everything.

Alex: This story is too sad.

Jan: It's real though, even if it sucks. Facilitator: What can Sophie do? What does she need?

Denise: She needs a job, she needs to go and apply for work.

Laura: She can pray.

Denise: Yeah, she needs to pray.

Denise sculpts Jan into a praying position.

Laura: Faith is important.

Jan: *(as Sophie)* Dear God…

Laura: It's good to just talk…get things off your chest

Alex: ...Takes a weight off your shoulders

There is a change in tone, from quite serious, to a more joking feel.

Jan: …Amen *(stands up)* How about a million bucks?! Sophie could win a million bucks and everything would be perfect!

All: Amen!

Denise: Oh hey, I know!

Laura: Like that's gonna happen.

Denise: We can dream can't we?

Laura: She needs to clean her house, have it presentable for the support worker, so that the support worker can help her get back on her feet. So the worker can see that she is committed to making things work.

Denise: If you start with one little thing, one change, the rest will follow. It'll get easier as you go.

Laura: She can get counseling. There are places that are out there that wanna help. Like, KidsFirst.

Alex: No, they suck...Sophie needs to schedule. Plan her days, stay committed to what she needs to do. It takes a lot of discipline, but it's honestly what she needs to do. There's no one else to help her but herself. This story's still pretty sad…

Facilitator: So, what happens next? What about…

Jan: My boyfriend probably comes back!

Jan, as Sophie, walks across the stage and opens up an imaginary door. Denise is on the other side, playing "the boyfriend"

Jan: Oh my god! Boyfriend!

Laura: *(calls from the side)* Call him Ronny!

Jan: Ronny! You're back! I'm not alone anymore!

Denise: *(as Ronny, obviously enjoying playing a macho guy)* Yeah baby, I'm back. *(hugs her)* I'm back baby, and I have a job.

Laura: And he makes lots of money!

They all laugh at this.

Laura: And he loves you, and he'll never leave you again!

They all laugh again.

Jan: Well, maybe it could happen. He could help out, we could all be a big, happy family.

Laura: He isn't going to change…sure he comes back for a bit but he is just going to leave again…I would punch him in the face if he came back, after what he did to me…

Facilitator: Well, what do you value in a relationship, a family?

Jan: Watching movies, relaxing, no stress, all together.

Alex: At Chuck-e-Cheezes, playing games together.

Denise: We'd all help each other out. We'd all commit to working on the relationship, or the family.

Facilitator: Are these possible to have?

Denise: For sure! It's just hard, when there are other people in your life who might drag you down, or your depressed. Or you are just in a shitty situation to begin with, with money and stuff.

Alex: Yeah, it's all good to hope and dream, but when does that stuff ever happen?

Facilitator: So, do you have hope or something to look forward to?

Alex: I dunno.

Facilitator: Maybe we'll talk about goals some day.

Denise: Cool! Hey, listen I gotta go. I have a doctor appointment.

Jan: *(to facilitator)* Are you coming to the program's Christmas lunch tomorrow? It's really great. Awesome food and our elder's husband is coming to sing.

Facilitator: Absolutely, sounds great! Let's do a quick closing circle, and we'll call it a day.

They pull their chairs together and proceed to close the session.

***

Sophie's Story depicts a fictional story that the participants developed over the course of three one-hour sessions. While the story is not that of any one participant, as the group was creating it there was continuous agreement as to the truthfulness of the situation depicted. Whether the participants nodded in agreement, verbally agreed, or responded with laughter, they made it clear that they related to the character of Sophie and understood her struggles.

Three themes running through *Sophie's Story* that I discuss below are: 1) a lack of social and emotional support in their lives; 2) the struggle with romantic relationships and the role of the father of their child; and 3) the importance of faith and hope in their lives. These themes surfaced in the analysis of *Sophie's Story*, and are worthy of further investigation considering their prominence in the process of creating the scenes.

Lack of social & emotional support.

The fact that a number of the young women in the group felt as though they were lacking emotional and social support was evident throughout the workshops. There was a concern about daycare, social assistance, employment conditions, and family support. An ongoing concern about "feeling all alone" was prevalent. However, in their discussion about YMP, the alternative program they were attending, they all agreed on numerous occasions that it was a support in their lives, through the flexibility of schedule, the presence of a social worker, the availability of donations to take home, and compassionate teachers. With this support in place there was a determination to take control of their lives for

themselves, resulting in a greater confidence and ability to deal with their struggles. It became clearer and clearer that yes, they were lacking in support outside of the classroom, but the school acted as a "safe haven" (Kelly, 2000) for them. This perspective on their school environment is depicted further in the next scene.

The lack of social and emotional support for teen mothers may occur, in part, from the fact that teen mothers are such a marginalized population, seen as not necessarily worthy of such supports, but rather worthy of blame and judgment. As Kelly (2000) states, "it is their marginal status and relative lack of power that make them such good 'catch-all enemies'" (p. 27). As such, teen mothers carry a number of negative stereotypes and representations. Kelly (2000) recounts some of the terms she has heard applied to young mothers: "stupid sluts" (p. 27), "children having children" (p. 31), "teen rebel, teen mom" (p. 32), "the girl nobody loved" (p. 33), "welfare moms" (p. 35), "dropouts" (p. 37) and "neglectful mothers" (p. 38). With so many negative stereotypes about teen mothers, and subsequently limited emotional support, it is difficult for the young mothers to navigate through their lives in a positive way without feeling judged and resented. Kelly (2000) states:

> They may detest living on welfare but know that if they try to combine motherhood, school, and paid work, they will not get enough education to enter the primary labor market. If they enroll their children in day care while working hard in school, they may be criticized for neglecting their

> maternal duties, if they leave school to care for their children full time, they may be branded a dropout and welfare scrounger (p. 46).

The feeling of being a "watched woman," (Victor, 1995, p. 46) in respect to societies' judgment of them, was particularly relevant to the group I was working with. They were aware that they are not viewed in a positive manner, and shared stories of instances where they were made to feel bad for being a young mother. Victor (1995) states, "They are perceived in society at large as incompetent and irresponsible" (p. 47). In order to counter societies' notions of teenage parents it is important to see them as a "culture," because then "we will recognize that they are victims of discrimination" (Victor, p. 46).

Struggles with romantic relationships and the place of the child's father.

The young women in this study aimed to be responsible for their children, which, for them, included finishing high school and getting a job. There was, however, considerable concern about the presence of a man (romantic partner and/or father for their child) in their lives. The participants often talked about their boyfriends, ex-boyfriends or their baby's fathers, depending on the situation, often stating that they wanted things to "work out" so their baby could have a father. Two statements made by participants that were of particular relevance were:

> "I want my baby's dad to meet his little girl"

> "I want my baby's dad to get his life together, grow up and get his shit together"

These statements were made when I asked them to share with the group a sentence that begins with “I want”. I had left the topic open, and they could express anything that they “wanted”. They were clearly frustrated with the role of the baby’s father in the child’s life, or lack thereof. The reality for most, however, was that the baby’s father was not sharing the responsibilities.

For a few of the participants, their relationships to the babies’ fathers were described as emotionally and/or physically abusive; still they wanted things to “work out” and be “normal”. “Normal” was identified as a two-parent household. By their standards they were not normal if they were single. The pressure to adhere to social norms resulted for a number of the participants, as a desire to have a “normal” two-parent family. It was a heartbreaking revelation that these young women were putting up with such negative situations in the hopes of being a happy family at some point in the future. This was not the case, however, with all of the participants. One young woman who had clearly been through too much abuse, stated that she would never allow her ex-boyfriend back into her life. She was able to really think critically about what had happened to her and what she desired in the future. Upon hearing this perspective, the other girls took a moment to reconsider their initial responses to their desire for “normal”. They agreed with and supported this participant’s viewpoint. It was a turning point for a few of them, in terms of learning from each other to question what they ultimately desired in life.

As stated above, there were several references to abuse from either the child’s father or another boyfriend, this tragic reality was discussed amongst the

group as though it were the norm for them. One example was when one participant, in speaking about her ex-boyfriend who, she'd confessed earlier used to abuse her, stated "I look at my baby girl and all I think about is her father and how she needs to have a relationship with him… I never want her to call any one else 'dad'". She wanted to reconcile with the boyfriend and have a romantic relationship with him, even though he was abusive, for her baby's sake, without acknowledging that this experience was likely also abusive towards her daughter. One girl admitted that her boyfriend was her "best friend" even though he beat her. This was an extremely troubling theme that was brought up in the group more than once. As the facilitator I confirmed that it was something that the staff at YMP were aware of.

While specific information on these participants' lives in relation to past abuse was not collected as "data" for this study, one qualitative study (Victor, 1995) connected incidences of teen pregnancies and physical and sexual abuse. The researcher was working with a group of young mom's/pregnant teens as part of a support group within an agency serving such a population. Victor states:

> The topic of abuse surfaced in some form or context at almost every session…Close to 50% of the young mothers had been sexually molested. Sex and their own sexuality had, for many, been an intrusive, at times violent, experience (p. 45).

A past consisting of abuse can lead to difficult romantic and sexual relations and thus result in early, unplanned pregnancies. Furthermore, the desire

for romantic and sexual relationships for young women can potentially stem from the perception that they are "valued only to the extent that she fulfills the sexual desires of others…" (Victor, p. 45) often resulting in early pregnancies. The participants in the drama program all experienced an unplanned pregnancy early on in their lives, and while they mentioned having to deal with abuse in their lives, it was not a subject that they chose to create a scene about. There was a sense that while abuse was a common theme amongst some of the participants they were taking steps to deal it, with the support of staff at YMP.

Faith and hope in their lives.

While most of the participants' situations were less than ideal, the group agreed upon the need for faith and hope for a better future, for themselves and their families. This idea of "faith" was in reference to a god or "creator", but not of any one religion specifically. They saw that having a positive outlook was necessary to get them through their difficult situations in order to provide for their children in a positive and supportive way. However, the young women's sense of hope was not easily come by. In particular, one participant spoke of how she struggled to get off of drugs when she discovered she was pregnant and was working tirelessly to get her life on track in order to be a good parent. She said her child was her first priority and insisted on being hopeful for a better future. This reality, of girls getting off of drugs and staying out of trouble once they decide to keep their baby, was a running theme in alternative program (YMP).

In a sense, getting pregnant and keeping the baby may have very well "saved" a few of the girls. This was significant with this group, in that at least two of the girls felt this way and stated as such. However, it is a phenomenon that is not readily referenced in literature. One study (Victor, 1995) addresses the possibility of having a baby and being "saved" in stating the following:

> Adolescence was a period during which these girls searched for connection, not only in response to feelings of loss, but to the realization that they were physically and/or emotionally abandoned by a parent. The baby represents a logical (unconsciously logical?) resolution to the dilemma of adolescence… (p. 53).

The feeling of genuine hopefulness and that of being saved was also accompanied by a strong desire to dream and fantasize about a better future. While there were sincere conversations about their faith and hopefulness, the group enjoyed being given the opportunity to play with the idea of the "ideal". As seen in the following piece:

> **Jan:** Ronny! You're back! I'm not alone anymore!
>
> **Denise:** *(as Ronny, obviously enjoying playing a macho guy)* Yeah baby, I'm back. *(hugs her)* I'm back baby, and I have a job.
>
> **Laura:** And he makes lots of money!
>
> *They all laugh at this.*
>
> **Laura:** And he loves you, and he'll never leave you again!

They all laugh again.

During the creation of this storyline, it was clear that yes, they wanted to imagine the ideal and hope for it, but there was a certain level of sarcasm and insincerity around it. They enjoyed joking about living in a dream world, but they still maintained their perspective about what is possible when it comes to someone in their life changing. The character of Ronny was a caricature of a number of their ex-boyfriends, someone who had left them, and is a "deadbeat". The participants knew that they are unable to rely on Ronny to change in order to ensure happiness, yet they enjoyed playing through the drama to explore such a prospect.

The above themes reoccur to some extent throughout the following two scenes, confirming their importance. What is most notable in the next scene was the power of the drama process itself.

What's Going on in Here?

This next scene captures the informal nature of the popular theatre program in relation to YMP. While the group in the popular theatre program changed each day due to circumstances within the girls' lives, there was a "buzz" about it throughout the halls. This resulted in students from YMP dropping into the popular theatre program regardless of the fact that they were not in the Language Arts class for which the program was intended.

***

What's Going on in Here?

5 girls are all casually sitting around, not in any particular formation. The facilitator is with them. They are in the midst of conversation.

Facilitator: When I say "goals", what do you think of? Show us.

Alex: Oh, I have an idea! I need everyone. *She proceeds to sculpt everyone into a circle, holding hands.*

Facilitator: What do…

Alex: …you think of in this image? What does it mean to you? *Cutting the facilitator off. Everyone laughs in good spirits.*

Laura: Women, standing together

Kim: World peace.

Denise: Circle. It's a circle.

They stand together, not speaking, just looking at each other. Nobody makes a move to break the circle. Another student (Jenny) peeks in, sees the circle.

Jenny: What's going on?

Alex: It's drama!

Jenny: This is drama? Cool!

Kim: You wanna join? Come in.

The girls make space in the circle for Jenny. They stand for a few more moments in silence.

Facilitator: So, this is a goal for all of you? Do you connect with it?

They all nod.

Facilitator: What are some other snapshots of goal?

Jenny: Wait a second…so, you're just hanging out talking about stuff?

Kim: And playing games and making scenes.

Jenny: And this is a class?

Alex: Totally.

Jenny: Wow. How long are you here for? Can I come tomorrow?

Facilitator: Sure. It's an hour everyday.

Denise: I want to be a teacher…probably of kindergarten, and have a family with my boyfriend.

Jenny: I want to have babies with someone good, someone who will love the child I already have.

Alex: I was really into basketball and other sports. I wanted to play at university on a scholarship. We used to win a lot of games and tournaments at my old school, and my parents really supported me…then, you know, this happened. My parents were pretty disappointed, that was tough, but I think after I have my baby, I am going to start playing again. I mean, this is a set back I guess if I want to get a scholarship and go to university but I really love playing. It makes me feel good, I just love it.

Denise: You will play again, for sure.

Facilitator: Thanks Alex. Anyone else? What's a goal of yours Kim?

Kim: I wanna be famous!

All of the girls start pretending to take photos. Kim poses for the photos.

Kim: Please, no pictures!

Jenny: *(as paparazzi)* Tell us about your latest movie!

Kim: I am not in a movie!

Alex: *(as paparazzi)* Your new reality show! I hear it is very controversial! Or your album, when does that "drop"!?

Kim: That's crap! I am not a reality star!

Denise: *(as paparazzi)* But you're in the tabloids! You're famous!

Kim: *stepping out of the "spotlight"* I want to be famous, I want to be on TV. But for doing something good. Because I think I am a good person, and I want to be known for that.

Facilitator: Is there anyone that you look up to? Someone who is doing something good that you feel is a role model?

Kim: I dunno. Everyone who is famous is famous for doing nothing important at all. They're doing pointless things, but we are supposed to look up to them. It's stupid. I want to do something meaningful.

Everyone nods in agreement

Facilitator: Like what? Who are the famous people you look up to? Actors? Musicians? Writers?

Kim: Um…well, I know a lot of musicians. I look up to a few of them…

Facilitator: What type of music do you listen to?

Kim: I listen to gangsta rap. I really relate to it, because they talk about being "from the streets" and some of them have real messages and some don't.

Jenny: Some objectify women, because that's what they believe or they think that's what they need to do to make money.

Alex: Yeah, some are pretty gross.

Kim: I like the one's who have a message, like a political message…like the one's who are all dead now, from the 80's.

Facilitator: That's where hip hop and rap originated, from a political place, it was meant to have a message.

Kim: Yeah, that's the cool stuff. I want to say things, important things.

Jenny: So, wait, you're doing this thing every day for the next little while? I'm totally coming back tomorrow.

***

This scene, *What's Going on in Here?* presents three themes: 1) drama as support; 2) autobiography/identity through personal narratives; and 3) goals. These were themes that ran throughout the entire program, and are were worthy of noting in the above scene and accompanying analysis.

Drama as support.

The drama program became enticing to other students at the school who were not in the original class in which the program was being offered. Girls would walk by the room and want to come in and join. While they may not have been

immediately willing to join in on the games and exercises, as they perhaps seemed a little “silly”, they were very interested in participating in the conversations. Sitting in a circle and using an image as a jumping off point for discussion about their lives seemed very engaging for them, as they rarely had opportunities to share their stories, thoughts and feelings about being a young mothers and being in school. This in itself, they indicated, was a very powerful opportunity for them. One participant in particular dropped in on the class early in the program and made a point of coming regularly after that, regardless of the fact that she did not have a scheduled class at that time.

As time went by the participants gained an understanding of the drama skills and developed ownership over the process, often explaining things to new participants. Their use of image became more complex, detailed and moved from the literal to the more symbolic, as exemplified in the instance when one participant sculpted a circle to represent her goal. The moment in the image of the circle was one that was significant for the group, as they insisted on standing in the circle together for several minutes in silence. It was an opportunity for them to connect and silently acknowledge one another – providing some of the emotional support they so desperately sought.

The sense of collaboration and support represented in the making of the circle was a theme that ran through the entire program. While telling their own stories each participant listened to the one speaking and then wanted to express their own thoughts, feelings and stories. Often, the participants acknowledged that it was the first time they had talked about such things with others. The sense of

openness and the desire to listen, support and share was central. On a number of occasions participants mentioned that they appreciated getting to know each other better. The drama program gave them an opportunity to learn about one another, to share with and support each other, thus fostering a more inclusive, engaged school environment (hooks, 1994).

Autobiography/identity through personal narratives.

The use of autobiography, through the telling of personal stories, can be deemed a dangerous and risky task within a classroom (Gonzalez, 2007). Within a feminist perspective, however, it is necessary for achieving transformation (hooks, 1994). It is through personal telling and reflection that both personal and broader community change can occur. Such "transformation" is necessary within a critical pedagogical approach to education. In order to create an environment where such self-disclosure can occur, a sense of trust and collaboration must be developed. The popular theatre program that I facilitated managed to attain this. This environment was fostered through the use of *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) games and exercises, storytelling, discussion and a non-authoritative approach by the researcher/facilitator.

Autobiographical dramatization is a means of self-expression that can empower young women (and men) to communicate insights about their lives that they might otherwise keep to themselves. This involves vulnerability through self-disclosure. Gonzalez (2007) addresses this:

> Teachers who employ a feminist pedagogy that encourages such self-disclosure must be vigilant about not coercing it … guided by a protecting teacher, journeying through that 'vulnerable space' can lead students to increased self-confidence (p. 264).

The participants in the group certainly felt vulnerable during the sessions, which manifested in nervousness to participate in the activities. However, when one participant in particular would step up and offer to participate first, or share her story first, it resulted in the others feeling more comfortable to do the same. Eventually, the nerves subsided and the participants were comfortable sharing their stories with each other and supporting each other through the process. This was evident in Alex's story about her past experience playing basketball. While it was not coerced, it was through a group discussion on "goals" that she felt comfortable to talk about it and about how it affected her. The participant that the character of Alex is based on in this scene particularly really enjoyed the drama program, and grew to feel more and more comfortable talking about her past, her present situation and her feelings and thoughts on her circumstances. She was quite new to YMP and was from a different part of the city as most of the other young women, and it was evident, based on my observations, that the popular theatre program assisted her in coming to terms with being there, and having to adapt to her new surroundings.

Goals.

In the discussion with the young women about their goals, one participant expressed that she wanted to be famous. Her frustrations around people being famous for not doing anything "important" became a point for discussion amongst the group. The issue of being famous and famous people was taken up through a discussion of popular media in relation to music/pop culture. This young woman, along with a few other participants, did not value the popular media's notions of what are desired or desirable behaviours. This came as somewhat of a surprise to me, as in my experience, teenagers often do view media uncritically. This young woman had thought critically about the media and was interested in discussing it with the other participants. In speaking about music/pop culture, there was consensus that they would rather watch or listen to media/music that reflected their lives and lifestyles than media/music that was entirely disconnected with their experiences. Hip hop and rap in particular were very popular amongst this group. This particular participant was critical of the type of hip hop and rap that "objectifies women", and said she would rather listen to music that had a message. Along with the desire to see and hear art and music that reflected their lived realities, the group agreed that they could have a say, by producing their own art and music that challenged what we accept as "normal" and popular. In this regard the young women's understanding aligns with the roots of hip hop, in that hip hop "nourishes a counter-hegemonic authority and subjectivity to the force of white supremacy in American culture" (Perry, 2004, p. 44). We talked in

detail about the roots of hip hop. The participants were interested in discussing how it came from a place of challenging the norms.

This concept of challenging the status quo was a hot topic for them, as they were all quite passionate about dispelling stereotypes that permeate society in regards to young mothers. Make the connection between their circumstances and the roots of hip hop was a compelling conversation for them. This was a topic I would have liked to discuss if time had allowed. Ironically, the desire to counter what was deemed "normal" in this instance was in direct conflict with their previous conversations about wanting a "normal" family. This was an interesting observation for me, which, unfortunately, was not taken up with the group in great detail due to time limitations.

I Just Wanna Play

A desire that consistently came up for the group was that of wanting to have "fun". They initially gravitated toward the games, and clearly enjoyed playing during class time. That popular theatre can be fun and allow participants to "play" is analyzed through the following scene.

***

I Just Wanna Play

> *There are three girls, Denise, Laura and Alex, and the facilitator, sitting in semi-circle. Everyone is lounging and making themselves quite comfortable.*

Facilitator: Well, I had made a plan for today but since there are only the three of you, we'll have to change it up a bit. What do you feel like doing? What have been your favourite parts of the program?

Laura: *(who is significantly younger than the other girls, and about eight months pregnant)* Can we just play a game or something? We never get a chance to play in school ever.

The other girls nod in agreement

Alex: Yeah, this program is really the only time we get to.

Denise: Ha ha, yeah, this is way better than class!

Alex: This IS class!

Denise: Well, it's a pretty awesome class then.

Facilitator: Ok. What game would you like to play? Or do you wanna learn one we haven't played yet?

Laura: You know more games? Teach us another one?

Alex: One where we have to work together to do something…

The facilitator proceeds to facilitate a team building game, the girls are all very engaged. The game is "complete the environment". This game starts with one participant silently acting out an activity that is set within a specific environment, i.e.

painting a house. Without speaking, the other participants enter into the scene, to "help" with the activity. This is a non-verbal game and at no point does anyone say what they are doing, They have to rely on non-verbal communication of their ideas. By the end of each round everyone is working on an activity together.

A little while later, after playing some games, the three girls and facilitator are sitting together.

Facilitator: So, you say that you never get to play in school. So, what is school for you?

Alex: What do you mean?

Facilitator: Well, finish this sentence. School is…

Laura: Ok! I get it! I'll go first! School is BORING! And it looks just like this!

The three girls line up their chairs facing the audience, and slouch, looking extremely bored.

Denise: This is soooooo boring.

Alex: This is sooooooo BORING!

Laura: This is sooooooo…

All: BORING!

They all start to giggle. They re-configure their chairs into the semi-circle.

Facilitator: Ok, what else? School is…

Denise: School is hard…it's hard, then boring, then hard, then boring, then fun, then frustrating...

Denise then goes centre stage and mimes activities during her following lines.

Denise: Ugh! There's toothpaste on the sink…I can't wake up, people are fighting in the house in the morning…my baby's crying…I am late for school…I didn't have time to do my homework last night!...I have to work late after school today…pay my bills…my daughter's dad is calling all the time…he doesn't get it…teachers won't listen…they don't get it…

Alex: There's too much to do, to worry about. There's just not enough time or support.

Laura: It's way too hard to disconnect my home life from school. You're expected to ignore your outside life when you are in school.

Denise: *(sits down again)* None of my school stuff is relevant. But I still wanna get my grade 12.

Facilitator: So, is this all true for this school program? The one that you are in now?

Denise: No. This place is way better for sure.

Alex: Classes start later.

Laura: The teachers understand if you are tired. They get it. We can even sleep on the couches in the common room if you need a nap.

Alex: They take donations here. So, there is always stuff for your baby if you need it. You just take it.

Denise: I still have a hard time with the work though, but there is way more help. Smaller classes and stuff. And a daycare, that sure as hell makes it easier to finish school.

Facilitator: What would your ideal school look like?

Laura: It would be made a chocolate!

They all laugh and start describing a fantasy world.

Facilitator: Really? Really, what would it look like?

Laura: Can we just play another game?

Facilitator: For sure.

Facilitator starts teaching them another activity – a trust exercise.

***

The above scene is included here due to its introduction of the following themes that proved to be of great importance to the process: the importance of play and participants' relationship to school.

The importance of play.

This scene addresses the importance of play as often identified by the participants during the program. One girl in particular was very shy to participate in the conversations and the Image Theatre (Boal, 1979/2000) exercises, and would often, instead, request to play games. At one point, while talking about school, her ideal image of school was one "where you play a lot". This notion of fun and play was very important to this group, as they felt they did not have enough opportunity for fun and play in their lives, burdened with the responsibilities that came with motherhood. The quick "transition" from teen to mom is a difficult one, one which requires negotiation around what it means to be an adult and what it means to be a mother who is still essentially a youth (Landbeater & Way, 2001). Addressing the progression from childhood to adulthood, Landbeater & Way (2001) state:

> …events that disrupt this progression are seen as challenging or potentially derailing a child's natural course of development. Bearing a child as a teenager is seen as one such disruption. From a societal perspective, this event represents a decisive and negative turning point in an adolescent's development – one that essentially renames teenage girls

> "teenage mothers," thus abruptly and prematurely ending their adolescence (p. 3 - 4).

Landbeater & Way (2001) explain that while this transition may essentially be abrupt and negative, "there is considerable stability in developmental transitions even as dramatic as this one" (p. 4). While it is a critical turning point it does not erase their past experiences or completely determine their future experiences. Thus, with the appropriate supports, this transition can be a positive turning point for some of these girls' lives. This was evident within my research, as some girls expressed that getting pregnant essentially "saved them" (Furstenberg, 2007; Victor, 1995).

While the young women are mothers, or about to become young mothers, they still are adolescents and developmentally, still yearn for and require "play". The case for the need for "play" can also be made for adults, as seen in the use of games within the *Theatre of the Oppressed* arsenal (1979/2000, 1992) and other creative practices (Nachmanovitch, 1990; Diamond, 2007), however, this is beyond the scope of this research.

During the popular theatre sessions the young women participated in games that required them to collaborate and work as a team. As the group bonded they began to trust each other more and came to see the importance of working together. Notably, every day, some participant would declare how much she enjoyed working with and getting to know others. This sense of collaboration was

important to them, not only in the playing of games, but also in seeing each other as support in school and in their lives.

Relationship to school.

The participants, as depicted in the scene, spoke often about their relationship to school. Their education was very important to them; they wanted to finish school, get a job and be good mothers. Although school was deemed important, they felt that it was mostly irrelevant when it came to the realities of their lives outside of school. This resulted in boredom and frustration. It was not surprising to discover that many students in the program do not finish and leave school before they complete grade twelve, something which came to light through discussions with the coordinator. While YMP provided a better chance of finishing, there was still a risk of their dropping out due to the "irrelevance" of the curriculum to their life experiences.

The fact that the participants were excited about the theatre program and valued learning about each other and speaking about their feelings and beliefs, makes a strong case for the inclusion of such a program on an ongoing basis. The youth saw the popular theatre program as relevant, as it connected their education to their lives – consistent with a critical pedagogical approach.

Other Findings and Interpretation

Interviews.

At the end of the drama program, the students and staff invited me to a special holiday lunch they were having. During that time I was able to connect further with some of the students and get to know them better. Afterwards, I interviewed the participants to gauge their feelings about the popular theatre program I had offered. The interviews were short; for the most part participants were quite shy to speak. There was a consensus among them, however, that the program was fun and that they had enjoyed my being there. They also felt that it would be a good program to include in the school on a regular basis. Below are a few of the comments the youth made that illustrate this sentiment:

> "I really like it because it brought out a lot of people, their personalities, and how they really are instead of being shy and by themselves. And you make a lot of new friends."

> "I really like it, it was neat. Kinda different, cuz I never really experienced drama. And with other people I never talked about my feelings and it was awesome."

> "It'd be good for other students to enjoy it."

One participant in particular spoke about how she found the program useful within the Language Arts (LA) class and noted that she often missed LA, but came more often because of the popular theatre. They all felt strongly about the importance of getting to know each other better and to open up and talk about their feelings. During one interview a participant spoke about a session in which we explored stereotypes of teen mothers and she expressed further how frustrating

it was when people judged her, although she was trying hard to raise her child responsibly.

These interviews helped in uncovering how the participants felt about the program, and were supplementary to the material developed for the ethnodramatic vignettes.

Possibilities and limitations.

Time.

In designing the program, it was agreed that I would attend the Language Arts class once a day for ten school days (two weeks). With each class being just over an hour long, and due to the flexible nature of YMP resulting in numerous late starts to sessions, ultimately the program ran for a total of eight hours. This was a short amount of time with the group, so momentum was difficult to build and sustain. Our momentum only started to build towards the end of the program. In my popular theatre facilitation experience, this is a common situation when doing programming in schools. It presents itself as a challenge, yet the popular theatre programming is flexible enough to deal with such challenges, while still being meaningful.

For YMP to open up ten sessions for the popular theatre program was more than most schools would likely make available due to the rigorous schedule that teachers and students must adhere to in order to meet curricular requirements. These time constraints resulting from standardization in curriculum and testing, as discussed in chapter one, limits the possibilities of including programs outside of

the standardized curriculum that might be positive for students. The time constraints were also true, to a lesser extent, for YMP within which I implemented the popular theatre program. Regardless, of the flexibility and compassion on the teachers' parts, there were still stringent curricular requirements to be met. In addition, the popular theatre program had to fit within the LA curriculum for it to be deemed viable, as opposed to valuing it for its own sake.

School support.

The supportive attitudes of the teacher and the tutorial program coordinator made positive contributions to the popular theatre program I facilitated. The teacher and coordinator were excited to host the program, as the environment generated by the program corresponded with their desire to provide alternative programming. The openness of the staff was appreciated in that the time was given as part of the Language Arts curriculum. The teacher and coordinator felt that the program was a positive experience for the participants and fit within the Language Arts class. Overall they felt that it went well and was worth implementing. They were interested in possibly doing a similar program again. However, funding and time were issues for them in considering it as a possibility.

Facilitator Reflection

The aim of the research was to engage in a popular theatre process with youth to inquire into the questions:

What are the possibilities and limitations of a popular theatre project implemented within an alternative school context?

Why should we make space for such processes in schools?

To prepare for this process I developed plans consistent with my vision for how the process might unfold. However, within the context of the group, the program changed. Accommodating the fluctuations in attendance became a necessity for the program that shaped and limited the work that was done. The reality of the population and their life situations was a determining factor in how the program unfolded. Each day had to be planned and re-planned depending on the circumstances of that particular day. It is important in popular theatre work to take into account the complexities of participants' lives, as it is their lives that are drawn upon for the content of the process. In addition, the flexibility, skill and openness of the facilitator and the other administrators involved are of utmost importance.

In order to meet the needs of the young women day by day, and to provide a program that is responsive to the group, as the popular theatre facilitator, I had to be flexible in my planning. This required extensive knowledge of the form and the group in order to alter plans in a moments notice. The skills and expertise necessary to provide a safe, open and honest space for such participatory work to occur is tantamount and cannot be underestimated. My researcher reflections each day consisted of questioning my role in the process: How far does one go to "disrupt" or "instigate" conversation? When is it necessary to pull back in order to

maintain emotional safety in the group? What is the responsibility of the facilitator/researcher in educating the participants about the broader power structures at play in their lives – the factors that contribute to their frustrations and struggles of which they might not be aware? Reflecting on these questions I have come to a few key conclusions.

Expertise.

As a popular theatre/applied drama facilitator I have made a point of taking part in numerous trainings and educational opportunities in order to better understand the form. Specific to *Theatre of the Oppressed*, I have studied, read, learned through mentorships and training intensives, with the goal of being well versed in the art form, the philosophy and intent supporting the work, and how to be a skilled facilitator. It was and continues to be important for me to consider a wide variety of practices and approaches to the work in order for me to shape my own practice.

This commitment to honing a high level of expertise has proven to be invaluable to my work, including the work done as part of this research project. In order to stay flexible during sessions a facilitator needs to be knowledgeable in the work in order to be able to respond to the group and amend the session plan at a moments notice. For example, during the program at YMP I had to change the plan numerous times due to changes in numbers of participants and to respond to the energy level of the group. A facilitator needs to be responsive in these moments in order to maintain group focus and momentum.

Being a responsible, informed instigator.

The role of facilitator in *Theatre of the Oppressed* can also be seen as an instigator of conversation, or in Boal's terms, the role is that of a "joker" (Boal, 1992, p. 21). This role of joker/facilitator/instigator is that of providing thoughtful guidance through the popular theatre process, while keeping the intent of the work at the forefront. Prentki and Selman (2000) define the goal of popular theatre work as promoting positive community change through "conscientisation". Popular theatre practitioners strive for this through arts based community education and community development work. Prentki and Selman (2001) cite Freire (Cultural Action, 1974):

> Conscientization refers to the process in which men, not as recipients, but as knowing subjects, achieve a deepening awareness both of the socio-cultural reality which shapes their lives and of their capacity to transform that reality (p. 39).

The facilitator then is responsible for engaging communities in dialogue about their relation to the world in order to indeed reach this point of conscientisation either on a personal level or a broader community or social level. If engaging in such a dialogue, what is necessary is the "decoding" the world around us. In using arts to engage in critical dialogue around oppression and how to possibly gain power and agency, a semiotic analysis (Berger, 1984) of our social reality will provide a richer process for the participants.

As researcher and facilitator, I endeavour to engage in my own critical semiotic analysis of our world, to support my work with groups. In order to instigate thoughtful dialogue around issues affecting a community, the facilitator is responsible for being informed on the issues and the broader power structures at play that result the oppression of individuals and communities. To be an informed facilitator, with a critical perspective can better allow for fruitful critical analysis amongst the group that is participating in the popular theatre process.

Conclusion

While there were many positive outcomes for the popular theatre program and the research study, the concerns and constraints inherent in the educational context, outlined in chapter one, also had relevance for the study. The ability to do popular theatre work in schools is challenging due to constraints such as censorship, standardization, and competition. That said, there is some space in alternative programs, such as YMP in which this study took place. The openness of the teacher and program coordinator to delve into this type of work was integral to the success of the program. Without the support of those individuals, the popular theatre program would have been impossible, as the broader school structures do not mandate such work, and, I would suggest, impede it. The space on the educational margins can be (and proved to be in the case of this study) a potential place of "radical openness" (hooks, 2009), and should be taken advantage as such.

In the popular theatre project I facilitated, due to its time constraints and inconsistencies in attendance within the group, not as much was achieved as might have been possible. An objective might have been, for example, for the group to take the collective creations into the young women's thoughts, feelings and experiences out of the classroom to perform for an audience of students in the broader program. This might have had the potential for a deeper sense of ownership and empowerment, and the possibility for building a broader collective consciousness, amongst the group and the audience. How such a performance might effect the broader school population and what the possibilities and limitations are in doing so, warrants further consideration.

Popular theatre as a means for participatory research intended to be personally and collectively empowering for participants, as was the case in this study. The participants' self-esteem developed further and their skills in collaboration were evident. Additionally, with the opportunity to share their stories, thoughts and feelings with each other, there was an exchange that occurred, challenging them to reconsider, in some respects, their initial perspectives on their lives and goals. Through sharing and listening, they, to some extent, developed their critical capacity for questioning the status quo – with regards to how they, as a marginalized group, fit within it, and considered how they could potentially challenge it, e.g.) through challenging stereotypes of young mothers.

This chapter presented the findings and discussion for a ten-day popular theatre program within YMP. The findings were presented through three

ethnodramatic scenes, whose themes were then discussed. While the program had its successes, there were numerous challenges and some definite points for further consideration, which I address further in the concluding chapter.

Chapter Six: Conclusion

Education is in need of a change that is responsive to students' lives and allows for growth in critical thinking and engagement with the world around them. As laid out in chapter one, education in North America is presently promoting increased standardization in both high-stakes testing and curriculum. While this movement has been criticized by educational researchers and theorists (Hunter & Bartee, 2003; Karp, 2006; Ungerleider, 2006) with possible solutions presented via more democratic approaches to education (den Heyer, 2008) or implementation of alternative arts-based processes into education (Conrad, 2004; Haywood Rolling, Jr., 2010), what is lacking presently is action towards systemic change that addresses these concerns.

The change that is necessary is complicated by the fact that curriculum is provincially mandated by the government in office at any given time, which holds specific ideologies about public concerns such as education. Additionally, there is a societal tendency to maintain the "status quo" presently defined by an ever-increasing obsession with competitive free market values (Welch, 2006). To expect transformative change within such a reality is a goal that may be impossible to achieve. Nevertheless, within educational research, we can forge ahead with inquiries that explore what is best for students' learning and for society at large in the hopes that they might provide resources for educational change.

My research project aimed to propose one possibility for change within public education. As others before me have, I proposed a popular education approach based in critical and feminist pedagogy, as a valid and worthy option, not only for youth within alternative school programs but within the broader mainstream public school system as well. Specifically, I proposed popular theatre as a popular education approach with potential for better meeting students learning needs. I approached this study by posing the following research questions to explore:

What are the possibilities and limitations of a popular theatre project implemented within an alternative school context?

Why should we make space for such processes in schools?

These questions did not derive solely from my desire to critique the present day mainstream educational system. Rather, they were of particular interest to me based on my past experiences facilitating popular theatre in schools. Having witnessed the potential for this work in both informal and formal educational settings, I was compelled to engage in formal inquiry into its potential in school settings. I was interested to explore the barriers, on both institutional and governmental policy levels, to making such work possible.

I looked broadly at public schooling: the movement toward standardized testing and curriculum, and other negative trends. I reviewed literature related to critical pedagogy, popular education and feminist pedagogy. While problematizing public education as it presently exists, I looked at a critical

pedagogical approach as a potential option for engaging youth otherwise not engaged with their school experiences. Popular theatre, closely aligned with critical pedagogy and popular education, was the subject of chapter three. Popular theatre can provide a means of inquiring into the thoughts, feelings and stories of a community, and is a participatory community-centred process that encourages dialogue, reflection and action on issues that are important to the population involved. The process, guided by a skilled facilitator, provides a way to examine the lived experiences of the community and opens up possibilities for potential change, or "praxis" (Mutnick, 2006). Popular theatre, in my experience, and confirmed by the literature, has proven to be a positive learning experience for participants, encouraging great personal growth in the sense of increased confidence and critical thinking skills, as well as resulting in an increased sense of community, a broader awareness of the world around them and the potential for making change.

Popular theatre can, as I intended it, act as a form of participatory research (Kidd & Byram, 1978) that aims to challenge oppressive power structures and work toward a more just egalitarian society (Salazar, 1991). To conduct participatory research within a school system through the means of popular theatre has the potential to greatly benefit students by critically examining the societal structures that affect their personal day-to-day lives, thus encouraging active critical citizenship (Kelly, 1993).

The extent to which the popular theatre project I facilitated met these goals outlined for the project is discussed in the sections that follow. In the section "A

Failed Success" I consider the success, or lack thereof, of the project in relation to the limitations imposed on it by the institution. I consider the notion of "transformation" as well as the potential that performance might have had on the project. I then outline implications and recommendations resulting from the project and lastly, I conclude this chapter with suggestions for further research.

A Failed Success

The popular theatre project, as outlined in chapters 4 and 5 was the culmination of my thesis research. These chapters provide a report on the popular theatre project implemented within an alternative school program for young mothers and pregnant teens. This was a ten-session program using popular theatre as a participatory research method. The sessions were run as part of the students' Language Arts curriculum. The research resulted in three ethnodramatic scenes depicting moments in the popular theatre program and stories that the group created over the course of the sessions. These scenes provided insight into what occurred within the program and the themes touched upon by the work of the group.

This project, however, was a "failed success" due, in my analysis, to the limitations that the education system imposes on curriculum. And while there are great possibilities in implementing such a program in a school, in that it proved to have great benefits for the involved students, the limitations potentially overshadowed its' success. Time constraints resulted in my only being able to work with the group for the duration of ten one-hour sessions as well as being

burdened with the requirement of "fitting" within the Language Arts curriculum. The available time was limiting considering that, because of the transient nature of the population, it was difficult to build adequate momentum for the program to meet its full potential. Despite this lack of momentum, there were definite moments of success, where the group was able to come together, find commonalities, play together and express themselves through critical dialogue, all of which they found unique to the program and worthwhile.

What I consider to be other "failures" of the program to meet its full potential are detailed below.

Transformation: According to whom?

The notion of "transformation" is variously defined and difficult to measure – a concept closely linked to critical pedagogy and *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979/2000). It is also significant within the realm of feminist pedagogy. For the purposes of this study and my ongoing practice as a theatre practitioner and educator, I draw from both the critical and the feminist pedagogical concepts of transformation. Simply put, both critical and feminist pedagogies refer to transformation as the process of challenging and changing dominant power relations into more equitable and collaborative relations, reformulating oppressive power structures and enacting "social transformation" (Manicom, 1992; Giroux, 2001; Weiler, 1991). While feminist pedagogy aligns itself with the notion of "social transformation" (Weiler, 2001, p. 13) it also puts great emphasis on the personal process involved. Acknowledgement of personal

experience and feeling as sources of knowledge, can lead to consciousness raising that can then contribute to broader societal transformation (Weiler, 2001). Weiler states:

> The recognition of our own histories means the necessity of articulating our own subjectivities and our own interests as we try to interpret and critique the social world (p. 34).

Whether or not transformation occurred within the context of this research project is debatable, considering the above definitions of "transformation". What was clear though, was the personal growth, which could be deemed "transformation" during the young women's participation in the project. Increased self-confidence and willingness to share ideas with each other was significant, as well as their realization that they could be creative and expressive through the use of drama. While I would argue that a certain "personal transformation" occurred, the broader "societal transformation" was not readily apparent or "measurable" for the purposes of this study (if it ever is). As Weiler (2001) suggests, the articulation and acknowledgement of feelings and experiences play an important role in eventual societal transformation and as such, I think the participants, through connecting with each other as a community, exchanging ideas, and encouraging critical thinking in regards to their lived reality in relation to society, there were indeed steps taken toward potential social transformation.

Further steps or actions to challenge dominant power structures as part of the study was not possible. There was limited time and freedom to aim for such a

goal within the constraints of a school setting. Based on my experience, I doubt that there could ever be the freedom within an institutional setting such as a school, required for processes aiming at community transformation to occur. This is essentially what I view as a major flaw within the current education system.

To perform or not perform?

Many forms of popular theatre, including *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979/2000) are intended for public performance, beyond presenting to one another in the workshop group. This sharing, whether it be through a presentational piece of theatre or an interactive piece such as Forum Theatre (Boal, 1979/2000; Diamond, 2007) is intended to increase the potential for community transformation by reaching a broader population than that of just the workshop group. While this was not an explicit goal within the program I facilitated, as I was aware of the time constraints from the outset, it is something that I, as a practitioner, am constantly considering. In this instance, the program did not unfold in a way that a "sharing" of their work with other students could occur. This reality was perhaps another factor limiting the level of systemic/structural transformation or change that might have been possible during the program.

Performance, as part of the popular theatre process, can include a broader population, thereby further challenging the issues and themes that the workshop group explored. There is potential in performance to affect an audience. As

Kershaw (1992) suggests, performance can apply leverage: "to shift the culture of communities in particular directions . . ." (p. 1), and continues on to state that performance "might bring about more widespread and lasting modifications in culture and society as a whole" (p. 1). A community performance, whether informally in front of a group of fellow students in a classroom, or more formally on a stage, for example, broadens the potential for popular theatre to act as cultural intervention, thus increasing the potential for community transformation (Kershaw, 1992). I see this as a potential area for further research, as it could act as a great possibility for beneficial, critical student engagement through popular theatre.

Implications and Recommendations

This study only touches upon the concern for the state of education in the broader sense. I problematized formal education to set up my very localized research project in the hopes of making a connection to what is practiced in a community setting and how it is constrained by the overarching educational system and what we presently deem as "normal" with regards to standardization in education. This research, in terms of the popular theatre project in the alternative school setting, acts as a localized example of what is possible in implementing an alternate approach to curriculum – not without its limitations. Based on my research, for future endeavours for research or the work of theatre practitioners and teachers in the classroom, I offer some further considerations.

Making popular theatre fit in school and making the school fit popular theatre.

Implementing popular theatre programs within school settings requires a number of important considerations some of which I have discussed in chapter three. Fitting a popular theatre program into a mainstream school setting can be troubling considering the accommodations the form has to endure for it to be deemed appropriate for that setting I question how "flexible" popular theatre, for example *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979/2000), needs to be for it to be suitable for the institution and yet maintain its integrity. By attempting to make a popular theatre project "fit" one potentially loses the intention of the work. Popular theatre practitioners, myself included, find adapting the work to this extent problematic. This concern is relevant to both alternative and mainstream programs. Rather than adapting the work, I suggest the school setting needs to change to allow space for this important work to occur.

Participatory research with students.

Another concern that has arisen for me is the potential for genuine participatory research to occur with students. I have argued (as did Kidd & Byram, 1979) that popular theatre can act as a participatory research method; however, this possibility may be limited within an institution, such as a school, that inherently relies on hierarchical power structures. Kelly (1993) addresses this, expressing that such a research project can never truly be "participatory" within a

school. This is due to the fact that youth, in schools, are not deemed worthy, by society and more specifically school administration, of having such power.

This concern leads me to the notion of democratic schooling in general, regarding not only the need for youth voices within a participatory research project, but in relation to all aspects of their education. At present, there are limited opportunities for students to have a say in their education, or to be taken seriously (Westheimer & Kahne, 1998). This poses an important consideration when working within a school, as a popular theatre practitioner and/or researcher: To what degree are students really having a say in what occurs? And if this is not even a consideration for educators, how might it become one? In the above project, it was important for me to be responsive to the students' needs, in that sense the participants had a say in what unfolded. However, this willingness to be open to the students is rare, depending on the classroom teacher, the time constraints and covering the curriculum. Yet, it is a very important consideration when engaging in participatory work.

Praxis.

Lastly, I come to the notion of praxis. The popular theatre-based research project presented here was predominantly process based, stopping short of taking any sort of community action. As a popular theatre facilitator/researcher, this was unsatisfactory for me. In addition to the research outcomes, there must be attention paid in such endeavours to foster a sense of action compelled by the work done during the popular theatre sessions. This can occur in numerous ways,

such as a performance, already discussed above, as a series of recommendations to administration, subsequent workshops on the issue for the broader student body, the implementation of various media to spread a message or through another creative means. Regardless, the necessity of pushing a group to action is indeed largely the responsibility of the facilitator, provided the work occurs within an environment open to doing so. The environment needs to be set in order to allow space for future "action-oriented" endeavours to emerge from the work. Setting up such a space requires facilitator/teacher/administrator collaboration and agreement on the intention of the work, as laid out in chapter three.

As a facilitator, to advocate for "action-oriented" endeavours to be included in a popular theatre project, one might: 1) plan accordingly with administrators and teachers; 2) allow for sufficient time, space and freedom for the students; 3) arrange for community partnerships before and during the process, depending on the topic of exploration, in order to make further possibilities for action more readily achievable by the students; 4) plan for broader school engagement within the process, a part from the workshop group; 5) plan for a performance, or informal "sharing" of the creative work to an audience of their peers; and 6) always be asking "what next?," as there should be no definitive end to the work, as it should be able to engage students well beyond the creative workshop process.

This particular research study did not achieve "praxis," due to time constraints, planning, and participant retention (as stated previously, the group was inconsistent due to the population involved). As these were realities for this

particular research project, it is important to keep in mind the broader intent of the work when planning the duration and intensity of such a program. It was unfortunate that in this particular instance follow up in the form of further action was not able to occur.

To conclude this research study, I offer the following suggestions for further research:

- Consideration of the potential of performance as part of a popular theatre program in a school;
- The potential for truly engaging students in participatory research;
- Investigation into the notion of transformation in relation to youth both in and out of school;
- Exploration into the extent to which performance can truly act as a cultural intervention for/with youth.

Endnotes

[i] *Race to the Top* is the new education funding/policy initiative introduced by the Obama administration in the USA. Deemed an "education grant" program, attempts to obtain these funds are increasing fierce competition amongst schools. See news article: http://www.csmonitor.com/USA/Education/2010/0601/How-Race-to-the-Top-is-recasting-education-reform-in-America

[ii] Giroux defines "zero-tolerance" as policy that allows for zero flexibility when dealing with its punitive nature, contributing to an environment of fear and criminalization. With zero-tolerance policies in place suspension and expulsion rates increase substantially (Giroux, 2009).

[iii] A notable critical theorist connected to the work of Freire is Jurgen Habermas, who is perceived as having significant influence on critical pedagogy by Morrow and Torres (2002) and Ewert (1991).

[iv] Standpoint theory (Winant, 1987) is a project claiming there is a "distinctively feminist standpoint" (p. 123), in the hopes that it includes the experiences of all women, despite their unique life circumstances. Winant (1987) critiques this theory in that it potentially undermines women's chances at "solidarity" (p. 123). This is a contentious issue steeped in epistemology and philosophy and is beyond the scope of this paper.

[v] Unfortunately, in the case of this specific research project, the participants were not involved as intensively as would have been ideal. Due to the nature of the alternative school program (fairly informal), the transient nature of the students, and the length of the research study (further details on the research site and the popular theatre project are provided in chapter four), their involvement ended after the popular theatre program was complete. This was not an ideal situation, and was certainly a limitation of the project.

References

Alberta Education. (2009). *Guide to education: ECS to grade 12. 2009 – 2010.* Edmonton, AB: The Crown in Right of Alberta.

Aoki, T. (1993). Legitimating lived curriculum: Towards a curricular landscape of multiplicity. *Journal of Curriculum and Supervision, 8*(3), 255 – 268.

Arnold, R. (1985). *A new weave: Popular education in Canada and Central America.* Ottawa, ON: CUSO Development Education.

Ayers, W. (2010, June). *The city of hope statement: Another world is possible/Another education is necessary*. United States Social Forum. Detroit, MI. [Keynote address]

Bates, R. (1996). Popular theatre: A useful process for adult educators. *Adult Education Quarterly, 46*(4), 224 – 236.

Bayliss, P., & Dodwell, C. (2002). Building relationships through drama: The Action Track Project. *Research in Drama Education, 7*(1), 43 – 60.

Berger, A. A. (1984). *Signs in contemporary culture: An introduction to semiotics.* New York, NY: Longman.

Bhattacharyya, J. (2004). Theorizing community development. *Journal of the Community Development Society, 34*(2), 5 – 34.

Boal, A. (2000). *Theatre of the oppressed: New edition* (C. McBride & M. McBride, Trans.). London: Pluto Press. (Original work published 1979).

Boal, A. (1992). *Games for actors and non-actors* (A. Jackson, Trans.). London: Routledge.

Boal, A. (1998). *Legislative theatre: Using performance to make politics.* London: Routledge.

Bowers, C. A. (2005). *The false promises of constructivist theories of learning: A global and ecological critique.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing.

Cambron-McCabe, N. (2009). Balancing students' constitutional rights. *Phi Delta Kappan, 90*(10), 709 – 713.

Cassidy, W., & Jackson, M. (2005). The need for equality in education: An intersectionality examination of labeling and zero tolerance practices. *McGill Journal of Education, 40*(3), 445 – 466.

Chapman, L. H., (2007). An update on No Child Left Behind and national trends in education. *Arts Education Policy Review, 109*(1), 25 – 37.

Conrad, D. (2002). Drama as arts-based pedagogy and research: Media advertising and inner-city youth. *Alberta Journal of Educational Research, 48*(3), 254 – 268.

Conrad, D. (2004). Exploring risky youth experiences: Popular theatre as a participatory, performative research method. *International Journal of Qualitative Methods, 3*(1). Article 2. Retrieved December 15, 2008 from http://www.ualberta.ca/~iiqm/backissues/3_1/html/conrad.html

Conrad, D. (2005). Rethinking 'at-risk' in drama education: beyond prescribed roles. *Research in Drama Education, 10*(1), 27 – 41.

den Heyer, K. (2008). 'Yes, but if we have students think all day when will we get anything done?': two conceptual resources to engage students in democratically dangerous teaching. *Teachers and Teaching: Theory and Practice, 14*(3), 253 – 263.

Diamond, C. T. P., & Mullen, C. A. (1999). The air and iron, light and dark of arts-based educational research. In C. T. P. Diamond & C. A. Mullen (Eds.), *The postmodern educator: Arts-based inquiries and teacher development* (pp. 37 – 64). New York, NY: Peter Lang Publishing.

Diamond, D. (2007). *Theatre for living: The art and science of community-based dialogue.* Victoria, BC: Trafford Publishing.

Dunleavy, J. (2007*). Public education in Canada: Facts, trends and attitudes.* Toronto, ON: Canadian Education Association.

Ellsworth, E. (1989). Why doesn't this feel empowering? Working through the repressive myths of critical pedagogy. *Harvard Educational Review, 59*(3), 297 – 324.

Elster, J. (Ed.) (1998). *Deliberative democracy.* Cambridge, UK: Cambridge University Press.

Ewert, G. D. (1991). Habermas and education: A comprehensive overview of the influence of Habermas in educational literature. *Review of Educational Research, 61*(3), 345 – 378.

Fals-Borda, O., & Rahman, M (Eds.) (1991). *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with participatory action-research.* New York: Apex Press.

Finley, S., & Mullen, C. (Eds.). (2003). Arts-based approaches to qualitative inquiry [Special issue]. *Qualitative Inquiry*, *9*(2).

Fraser, N. (1997). *Justice interruptus: Critical reflections on the "postsocialist" condition.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Freire, A. M. A., & Macedo, D. (Eds.) (1998). *The Paulo Freire reader.* New York, NY: The Continuum Publishing Company.

Freire, P. (2007). *Education for critical consciousness* (M. B. Ramos, Trans.). New York: Continuum Publishing Corp. (Original work published 1974).

Freire, P. (1988). *Pedagogy of the oppressed* (Ramos, M. B., Trans.). New York, NY: Continuum Publishing Corp. (Original work published 1970).

Freire, P. (2000). *Cultural action for freedom.* Cambridge, MA: Harvard Educational Review. (Original work published in 1970).

Froese-Germain, B. (1999). *Standardized testing: Undermining equity in education. Report prepared for the national issues in education* Ottawa, ON: Canada Teachers' Federation.

Furstenberg, F. (2007). *Destinies of the disadvantaged: The politics of teen childbearing.* New York, NY: The Russell Sage Foundation.

Giroux, H. A. (2009). Education and the crisis of youth: Schooling and the promise of democracy. *The Educational Forum, 73*, 8 – 18.

Giroux, H. A. (2001). *Theory and resistance in education: Towards a pedagogy for the opposition.* Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Giroux, H. A. (2003). Racial injustice and disposable youth in the age of zero tolerance. *Qualitative Studies in Education, 16*(4), 553 – 565.

Giroux, H. A. (2009). *Youth in a suspect society.* New York, NY: Palgrave MacMillan.

Goddard, J. T., & Foster, R. (2002). Adapting to diversity: Where cultures collide — Educational issues in northern Alberta. *Canadian Journal of Education, 27*(1), 1 – 20.

Gonzalez, J. B. (2007). Navigating dangerous waters: Teens, plays, and the "feminist way" in a traditional high school setting. In A. E. Armstrong & K. Juhl (Eds.), *Radical acts: Theatre and feminist pedagogies of change* (pp. 261 – 280). San Francisco, CA: Aunt Lute Books.

Greene, M. (1998). Introduction: Teaching for social justice. In W. Ayers, J. A. Hunt & T. Quinn (Eds.), *Teaching for social justice* (pp. xxvii – xlvi). New York: The New Press.

Gur-Ze'ev, I. (2005). Feminist critical pedagogy and critical theory today. *Journal of Thought, 40*(2), 55 – 72.

Haedicke, S. C., & Nellhaus, T. (Eds.) (2001). *Performing democracy: International perspectives on urban community-based performance.* Ann Arbour, MI: University of Michigan Press.

Haywood Rolling, Jr., J. (2010). A paradigm analysis of arts-based research and implications for education. *Studies in Art Education, 51*(2), 102 – 114.

Hegel, G. W. F. (1977). *Phenomenology of spirit.* Oxford, UK: Oxford University Press.

Hunter, R. C., & Bartee, R. (2003). The achievement gap: Issues of competition, class, and race. *Education and Urban Society, 35*(2), 151 – 160.

hooks, b. (1990). Choosing the margin as a space for radical openness. In Prentki, T. & Preston, S. (Eds.), *The applied theatre reader* (pp. 80 – 85). New York: Routledge.

hooks, b. (1994). *Teaching to transgress.* New York: Routledge.

Ibanez-Carrasco, F., & Meiners, E. R. (Eds.) (2004). *Public acts: Disruptive readings on making curriculum public.* New York, NY: RoutledgeFalmer.

Jacob, B. (2001). Getting tough? The impact of high school graduation exams. *Educational Evaluation and Policy Analysis, 23*(2), 99 – 121.

Jardine, D. W. (1996). "Under the tough old stars": Meditations on pedagogical hyperactivity and the mood of environmental education, *Canadian Journal of Environmental Education, 1*(1), 47 – 55.

Karp, S. (2006). Leaving public education behind: The Bush agenda in American education. *Our Schools, Our Selves, 13*(3), 181 – 199.

Kelly, D. (2000). *Pregnant with meaning: Teen mothers and the politics of inclusive schooling.* New York: Peter Lang Publishing Inc.

Kelly, D. (2003). Practicing democracy in the margins of school: The teenage parents program as feminist counterpublic. *American Educational Research Journal, 40*(1), 123 – 146.

Kelly, D. (1993). Secondary power source: High school students as participatory researchers. *The American Sociologist, 24*(1), 8 – 26.

Kennelly, J. (2006). "Acting out" in the public sphere: Community theatre and citizenship education. *Canadian Journal of Education, 29*(2), 541 – 562.

Kershaw, B. (1992). *The politics of performance: Radical theatre as cultural intervention.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Kidd, R. & Byram, M. (1978). *Popular theatre: Technique for participatory research*. Toronto, ON: Participatory Research Group.

Kohn, A. (1986). *No contest: The case against competition. Why we lose in our race to win.* New York, NY: Houghton Mifflin Company.

Landbeater, B. J. R., & Way, M. (2001). *Growing up fast: Transitions to early adulthood of inner-city adolescent mothers.* Mahwah, NJ: Lawrence Erlbaum Associates.

Lankshear, C, & McLaren, P. (1993). Introduction. In C. Lankshear & P. McLaren (Eds.), *Critical literacy: Politics, praxis, and the postmodern* (pp. 1 – 56). Albany, NY: State University of New York Press.

Lather, P. (1988). Feminist perspectives on empowering research methodologies. *Women's Studies Int. Forum, 11*(6), 569 – 581.

Leavy, P. (2009). *Method meets art: Arts-based research practice.* New York, NY: The Guilford Press.

Manicom, A. (1992). Feminist pedagogy: Transformations, standpoints and politics. *Canadian Journal of Education, 17*(3), 365 – 389.

Martin, R. (2006). Staging the political: Boal and the horizons of theatrical commitment. In M. Schutzman & J. Cohen-Cruz (Eds.), *A Boal companion: Dialogues on theatre and cultural politics* (pp. 23-32). New York, NY: Routledge.

McAdie, P. (2004). Testing the limits. In M. Moll (Ed.), *Passing the test: The false promises of standardized testing* (pp. 149 – 155). Ottawa, ON: Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives.

McLaren, P. (1994). *Life in schools: An introduction to critical pedagogy in the social foundations of education.* White Plains, NY: Longman, Inc.

McLaren, P. (1999). A Pedagogy of possibility: Reflecting upon Paulo Freire's politics of education: In memory of Paulo Freire. *Educational Research, 28*(2), 49 – 56.

Molnar, A. (1996). Charter schools: The smiling face of disinvestment. *Educational Leadership, 54*(2), 9 – 15.

Morrow, R. A., & Torres, C. A. (2002). *Reading Freire and Habermas: Critical pedagogy and transformative social change.* New York, NY: Teachers College, Columbia University.

Mutnick, D. (2006). Critical interventions: The meaning of praxis. In M. Schutzman & J. Cohen-Cruz (Eds.), *A Boal companion: Dialoges on theatre and cultural politics* (pp. 33 – 45). New York, NY: Routledge.

Nachmanovitch, S. (1990). *Free play: Improvisation in life and art.* New York, NY: Penguin Putnam Inc.

Neill, M. (2003). Leaving children behind: How No Child Left Behind will fail our children. *The Phi Delta Kappan, 85*(3), 225 – 228.

Nezavdal, F. (2003). The standardized testing movement: Equitable or excessive? *McGill Journal of Education, 38*(1), 65 – 78.

Noble, S. (2005). Mental illness through popular theater: Performing (in)sanely. *New Directions for Adult and Continuing Education, 107,* 45 – 53.

Paget, D. (1987). 'Verbatim theatre': Oral history and documentary techniques. *New Theatre Quarterly, 3*(12), 317 – 336.

Park, P. (1993). What is participatory research? A theoretical and methodological perspective. In P. Park, M. Brydon-Miller, B. Hall & T. Jackson (Eds.), *Voices of change: Participatory research in the United States and Canada* (pp. 1-19). Westport, CT: Bergin & Garvey.

Paul, D. G. (2004). The train has left: The No Child Left Behind Act leaves Black and Latino literacy learners waiting at the station. *Journal of Adolescent and Adult Literacy, 47*(8), 648 – 656.

Perry, I. (2004). *Prophets of the hood: Politics and poetics in hip hop.* USA: Duke University Press.

Prentki, T., & Preston, S. (2009). Applied theatre: An introduction. In T. Prentki & S. Preston (Eds.), *The applied theatre reader* (pp. 9 – 15). New York, NY: Routledge.

Prentki, T., & Selman, J. (2001). *Popular theatre in political culture.* Bristol, UK: Intellect Press.

Rosen, M. (1996). *On voluntary servitude: False consciousness and the theory of ideology.* Cambridge, UK: CentraCet Limited.

Salazar, M. (1991). Young laborers in Bogotá: Breaking authoritarian ramparts. In O. Fals-Borda & M. Rahman (Eds.), *Action and knowledge: Breaking the monopoly with participatory action-research* (pp. 54-63). New York: Apex Press.

Saldana, J. (2003). Dramatizing data: A primer. *Qualitative Inquiry, 9*(2), 218 – 236.

Saldana, J. (2005). Ethnodrama: An introduction. In J. Saldana (Ed.), *Ethnodrama: An anthology of reality theatre* (pp. 1 – 36). Walnut Creek, CA: AltaMira Press.

Sanders, J., & Munford, R. (2009). Participatory action research. In L. Liebenberg & M. Ungar (Eds.), *Researching resiliency,* (pp. 77 – 102). Toronto, ON: University of Toronto Press.

Schutzman, M., & Cohen-Cruz, J. (Eds.) (1994). *Playing Boal: Theatre, therapy, activism.* London, UK: Routledge.

Shaker, P., & Grimmett, P. (2004). Public schools as public good: a question of values. *Education Canada, 44*(3), 29-31. Shor, I. (1987). *Critical teaching & everyday life.* Chicago, IL: University of Chicago Press. (Original work published 1980).

Shor, I. (1992). *Empowering education*. Chicago, IL: The University of Chicago Press.

Simmons, N. E. (2004). (De)grading the standardized test: Can standardized testing evaluate schools? *Education Canada, 44*(3), 37-39. Spry, L. (1994). Structures of power: Toward a theatre of liberation. In M. Schutzman & J. Cohen-Cruz (Eds.), *Playing Boal: Theatre, therapy, activism* (pp. 171 – 184). London, UK: Routledge.

Turner, J. (2007). Making amends: An interventionist theatre programme with young offenders. *Research in Drama Education, 12*(2)*,* 179 – 194.

Ungerleider, C. (2003). *Failing our kids: How we are ruining our public schools.* Toronto, ON: McClelland & Stewart.

Ungerleider, C. (2006). Reflections on the use of large-scale student assessment for improving student success. *Canadian Journal of Education, 29*(3), 873 – 883.

Victor, S. (1995). Becoming the good mother: The emergent curriculum of adolescent mothers. In H. A. Giroux & P. Freire (Eds.), *Repositioning feminism and education: Perspectives on educating for social change* (pp. 37 – 60). Westport, CT: Bergin and Garvey.

Vine, C. (1993). TIE and theatre of the oppressed. In T. Jackson (Ed.) *Learning through theatre: New perspectives on theatre in education* (pp. 109 – 127). London, UK: Routledge.

Volante, L. (2007). Standards based reform: Can we do better? *Education Canada, 47*(1), 54 – 56.

Weiler, K. (Ed.) (2001). *Feminist engagements: Reading, resisting and revisioning male theorists in education and cultural studies.* New York, NY: Routledge.

Weiler, K. (1991). Freire and a feminist pedagogy of difference. *Harvard Educational Review, 61*(4), 449 – 474.

Weiler, K. (2001). Rereading Paulo Freire. In K. Weiler (Ed.), *Feminist engagements: Reading, resisting and revisioning male theorists in education and cultural studies* (pp. 67 – 87). New York, NY: Routledge.

Welch, P. (2006). Feminist pedagogy revisited. *Learning and teaching in the social sciences, 3*(3), 171 – 199.

US Department of Education. (2001). No child left behind act. Washington, DC: US Congress.

Westheimer, J., & Kahne, J. (1998). Education for action: Preparing youth for participatory democracy. In W. Ayers, J. A. Hunt, & T. Quinn (Eds.), *Teaching for social justice* (pp. 1 – 20). New York, NY: The New Press.

Wilgosh, L. (1993). High achievement in a cross-national context: Do we educate for product or process. *Education Canada, 33*(1), 4 – 9.

Winant, T. (1987). The feminist standpoint: A matter of language. *Hypatia, 2*(1), 123 – 148.

Appendices

Information Sheet for Youth Participants

My name is Lindsay Ruth Hunt. I am a student at the University of Alberta. I will be spending some time here in your school as part of my thesis research.

My research involves doing drama with students in an alternative school setting, specifically within a program for pregnant teens and young parents. For the next 2 weeks I will be visiting your classroom to run a drama program. You will be taking part in a variety of drama games and exercises leading into scene creation. I am using this program as research for my thesis project and if you choose to you can participate in the research component of the program. The drama creations will use your ideas and experiences, things that are important and interesting to you, in order to help you learn about yourselves, each other and your shared life experiences. The drama will also help me learn about you, your life experiences, your day-to-day life and how drama could potentially benefit students much like yourselves.

The drama program will be for an hour or so each day within the classroom, as part of your regular curriculum. If you choose to take part in the research component of the program, you can participate for as long as you like. You will not get any special treatment or rewards for taking part and you will not be punished in any way for not taking part. If you decide to stop taking part in the research, I will remove anything specifically about you from the information already collected and you will still take part in the drama activities as required by your teacher for your class.

The drama program is meant to be a fun, thoughtful and educational experience for you, and it is not meant to be therapeutic. However, some activities might provoke feelings for you that are uncomfortable. I will be extremely attentive to your needs at all times, and will be available for you to voice your concerns before, during or after the program hours. Your teacher will also be available for you to talk to and we would refer you to the school counselor if the need arises. I do not intend for any of the work to be harmful to you in any way. In addition, to keep the process safe and caring, confidentiality will be agreed upon amongst the group members.

As part of my research I might conduct individual interviews with participants, and you may take part in this if you are interested. I might ask you questions like: How are you feeling about the drama program? How has the program benefited you? What is your experience like in school? These interviews will be recorded but your names will not be included. I will also ask you to keep a regular journal about your experience within the program. These journal entries will be prompted by questions such as: How did you feel about today's activities? Did you learn anything today?

Since this is research I will be taking notes about what we do. Some of the information gathered might be used in future writing or presentations about the research with you. Things that you say or do might be described in the writing or presentations – or your words might even be quoted. I will also be recording in notes and/or collecting scripts for scenes that are developed as part of the drama program to use in my writing or presentations. Any information gathered that might identify you will only be seen by my supervisor and I – and we promise to keep things confidential. Your name or any details that could identify you will not be included in any writing or presentations – they will be changed or left out. It is important to us that your identities are kept confidential.

If you decide to take part in the research, I think you will find it enjoyable and useful. You will have fun with others, express yourself, develop drama skills and learn new things. You will have a chance to think about your lives, experiences and feelings.

I have been working in theatre in this manner for approximately 6 years, using theatre and drama with communities to explore stories, themes and issues that are of interest to them. My training is extensive, I am aware of the sensitive nature of the work and assure you that I will be leading the sessions in the most professional and respectful manner possible. My first and foremost concern is your experience within the program.

If you want to take part you will have to sign a consent form. If you are under the age of 18 a parent or guardian will be told all about the research and also asked to sign a consent form giving permission for you to take part. You will be asked to give your assent by signing a form too. If you choose to discontinue your participation in the research component of the program the latest you can withdraw from the study is one month after the end of the data collection, prior to the completion of my thesis.

If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact me at any time. My contact information appears below.

Thanks and looking forward to working with you!

Lindsay Ruth Hunt
Department of Secondary Education
442 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5
(403)819-6204
lrhunt@ualberta.ca

Research Supervisor:
Dr. Diane Conrad
Associate Professor
Department of Secondary Education
341 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5
(780) 492-5870
Diane.conrad@ualberta.ca

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty jo Werthmann at (780) 492-2261.

Youth Participant Research Consent Form

To be filled out by participants who are 18 or over.

I, _____, have read/heard the attached information sheet
(print name)
and I agree to (check one or more of the following)

___ participate in the drama program
___ an individual interview
___ being audio taped

I understand that:

- Anything I say or do as part of the drama program including anything created as part of the program - any writing or scripts created may be used as part of the research.
- Confidentiality will be agreed upon amongst the group members in the program.
- All information gathered will be treated confidentially. My name will not be included in any writing or presentations about the research. Any personal details that might identify me will be changed or left out.
- I may stop taking part in the research at any time without being punished in any way. If I decide to stop taking part any information specifically about me will be taken out of the research.
- While the research is intended to benefit me, I will not receive any special treatment or rewards as a result of taking part.
- The latest I can withdraw from the study is one month after the end of the data collection, prior to the completion of the researcher's thesis.

I also understand that information gathered for this research will be used in the following ways according to the guidelines of the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board:

- Educational presentations or performances
- The researcher's thesis, as part of the completion of a Master's program
- Written research reports or articles to be published

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date signed

_____ _____
Witness Researcher

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty jo Werthmann at (780) 492-2261

Youth Participant Research Assent Form

To be filled out by participants who are under 18, must be accompanied by a parental/guardian consent form

I, _____, have read/heard the attached information sheet
(print name)
and I agree to (check one or more of the following)

___ participate in the drama program
___ an individual interview
___ being audio taped

I understand that:

- Anything I say or do as part of the drama program including anything created as part of the program - any writing or scripts created may be used as part of the research.
- Confidentiality will be agreed upon amongst the group members in the program.
- All information gathered will be treated confidentially. My name will not be included in any writing or presentations about the research. Any personal details that might identify me will be changed or left out.
- I may stop taking part in the research at any time without being punished in any way. If I decide to stop taking part any information specifically about me will be taken out of the research.
- While the research is intended to benefit me, I will not receive any special treatment or rewards as a result of taking part.
- The latest I can withdraw from the study is one month after the end of the data collection, prior to the completion of the researcher's thesis.

I also understand that information gathered for this research will be used in the following ways according to the guidelines of the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board:

- Educational presentations or performances
- The researcher's thesis, as part of the completion of a Master's program
- Written research reports or articles to be published

_____ _____
Signature of Participant Date signed

_____ _____
Witness Researcher

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty jo Werthmann at (780) 492-2261

Information Sheet for Parent or Guardian

My name is Lindsay Ruth Hunt. I am a student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. The work I am doing at your daughter's/son's school is part of my research at the University for my Master's thesis.

The title of the research study is: Popular Theatre in School: An exploration of a participatory process within an alternative school program for young parents. I am interested in exploring the potential of the use of drama within an alternative school's curriculum, specifically with pregnant teens and young parents.

For the next 2 weeks I will visit the school each day for approximately one hour to facilitate a drama program as part of the classroom curriculum. If individual youth choose to participate in the research, with your consent, I will collect information from them in regards to their involvement in the various drama activities. These activities will explore their ideas, their life experiences and issues relevant to them. I will be working with the classes' teacher to coordinate time and activities. Staff members and youth will have input into the drama activities.

The program will be implemented within their classroom; however, if they choose to discontinue participating in the research, they will continue in the drama program without contributing specifically to the research. While participation in the drama program is mandatory, as it is part of their regular classroom activities, the participation in the research component is not. Participants will not receive any special treatment or privileges for participating in the research. They are free to withdraw from the research at any time without any penalty. If a youth chooses to withdraw any information already gathered specifically about them will also be withdrawn from the research. However, the latest a participant can withdraw from the study is one month after the end of data collection, and prior to the completion of the researcher's thesis.

For the drama program all restrictions, conditions and expectations for appropriate behavior of the school will apply. In addition, the researcher will be in constant contact with the school's staff and administration to ensure that the curriculum goals are being met through the drama program, and appropriate changes will be made as needed.

It is not the intent of this research to cause any threat, harm or discomfort to participants. Furthermore, participants will be cautioned that while all participants are asked to keep any information from the drama program confidential, I cannot guarantee confidentiality amongst participants.

The drama program is intended as educational, not as therapy. However, the drama activities may still raise issues that cause an individual some minor discomfort or upset. If this happens or if any youth has any other concerns they will be encouraged to speak with myself or another teacher. Ms. Crease-Maclean will be present during drama sessions at all times. The researcher and staff will be closely observing the participants to ensure that no one is negatively affected by the work. Referrals will be made to the school counselor if the need arises. Every effort will be made to ensure the emotional and physical safety of all participants.

If youth are interested in participating further, with your permission, they could also agree to be

interviewed. If they agree to be interviewed they might be asked questions like: How are you feeling about the drama program? How has the program benefited you? What is your experience like in school? These interviews will be audio recorded but individuals' names will not be included in the recordings. The recordings will be used solely for transcription purposes and will not be used to artistically represent the participant.

Since what we will be doing is part of a research study, the researcher will be taking notes, reflecting on what occurs in the drama sessions. Words spoken by participants might be quoted or details regarding what they say or do during the drama activities might be described in future research writing or presentations. I will also be collecting reflective writing, in the form of journal entries from the participants, and scripts that are done as part of the drama sessions to use as part of the research. In doing the research, it is of utmost concern to me that the youths' identities remain confidential. Pseudonyms, not participants' real names, will be used in any data collected. Any information gathered through this research will only be seen or heard in its entirety by the researcher and the researcher's supervisor and kept confidential. Data will be kept in secure locations while in use and destroyed after 5 years. The youth will not under any circumstances be identified by name in any research writing or presentations. Any details that might identify them will be altered or omitted. Drafts of any scripts created will be circulated amongst participants (where possible) and their input will be taken into consideration for the final draft.

Your willingness to allow your youth to participate in the research component of the program would be greatly appreciated. I trust that the youth will find their time well spent, that they would have fun, have opportunities to express themselves, develop drama skills and learn new things. They will have the opportunity to think about their lives, experiences and thoughts and feelings about school.

I have been working in theatre in this manner for approximately 6 years, using theatre and drama with communities to explore stories, themes and issues that are of interest to them. My training is extensive, I am aware of the sensitive nature of the work and assure you that I will be leading the sessions in the most professional and respectful manner possible. My first and foremost concern is your child's experience within the program.

If you are willing for your son/daughter to participate in the research, as he/she is under the age of 18 you are asked to sign a consent form giving permission for him/her to participate in any or all aspects of the research. Your son/daughter will also sign a form giving her/his assent to participate in the study. If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact me at any time. Contact information appears below. Thank you.

Lindsay Ruth Hunt
Department of Secondary Education
442 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5
(403)819-6204
lrhunt@ualberta.ca

Research Supervisor:
Dr. Diane Conrad, Associate Professor
Department of Secondary Education
341 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5
(780) 492-5870
Diane.conrad@ualberta.ca

Parent/Guardian Research Consent Form

I, _____, am the legal guardian of _____
(print name) (print name)

and I have read/heard the attached information sheet and I consent for the above named individual to (check one or more of the following):

___ participate in drama workshops

___ be interviewed

___ be audio taped

I understand that:

- Anything the participant says or does as part of the drama program including anything created as part of the program - any writing or scripts created may be used as part of the research.

- All information gathered will be treated confidentially. The participant's name will not be included in any writing or presentations about the research. Any personal details that might identify him/her will be changed or omitted.

- The participant may withdraw from the drama program at any time during the program without being punished in any way. If he/she decides to withdraw any information specifically about him/her will be withdrawn from the research.

- The latest a participant can withdraw from the study is one month after the end of the data collection, prior to the completion of the researcher's thesis.

- While the research is intended to benefit the participant, he/she will not receive any special treatment or rewards as a result of taking part.

I also understand that information gathered for this research will be used in the following ways in compliance with the University of Alberta Research Ethics Board:

- Educational presentations or performances
- The researcher's thesis, as part of the completion of a Master's program
- Written research reports or articles to be published

_____ _____
Signature of Legal Guardian Date signed

_____ _____
Witness Researcher

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty jo Werthmann at (780) 492-2261.

Information Sheet for Teacher

My name is Lindsay Ruth Hunt. I am a student in the Department of Secondary Education at the University of Alberta. The work I am doing at your school is part of my research at the University for my Master's thesis.

The title of the research study is: Popular Theatre in School: An exploration of a participatory process within an alternative school program for young parents. I am interested in exploring the potential of the use of drama within an alternative school's curriculum, specifically with pregnant teens and young parents.

For the next 2 weeks, I will visit your school each day for approximately one hour to facilitate a drama program. I will be involving your class in various drama activities exploring their ideas, their life experiences and issues relevant to them, and if individual youth choose to participant in the research I will be considering their experiences throughout the program. I will be working with you to coordinate time and activities. You will have input, along with the youth, as to the particulars of the drama programming.

The program will be implemented within the classroom; however, if they choose to discontinue participating in the research, they will continue in the drama program without contributing specifically to the research or they can take part in other activities arranged by you. The research is intended to benefit them, but they will not receive any special treatment or privileges for participating. They are free to withdraw at any time without any penalty. If a youth chooses to withdraw any information already gathered specifically about them will also be withdrawn from the research.

For the drama program all restrictions, conditions and expectations for appropriate behavior of the school will apply. In addition, I will be in constant contact with you and the administration to ensure that the curriculum goals are being met through the drama program, and appropriate changes will be made as needed.

The drama program is intended as educational, not as therapy. However, the drama activities may still raise issues that cause an individual some discomfort. If this happens or if any youth has any other concerns they will be encouraged to speak with myself or a teacher, such as yourself or the school counselor. The researcher is highly trained in this work and will be closely observing the participants to ensure that no one is negatively affected by the work. Every effort will be made to ensure the emotional and physical safety of all participants.

As you will be required to be in the class room during the drama program, I will be asking you to sign a confidentiality agreement to maintain the integrity of the research process and to protect information disclosed by the participants as shared within the research.

Since what we will be doing is part of a research study, I will be taking notes, reflecting on what occurs in the drama sessions. In doing the research, it is of utmost concern to me that identities remain confidential. Pseudonyms, not participants' real names, will be used in any data collected. Any information gathered through this research will only be seen or heard in its entirety by the

researcher and the researcher's supervisor and kept confidential. Data will be kept in secure locations while in use and destroyed after 5 years. The participants in the research will not under any circumstances be identified by name in any research writing or presentations. Any details that might identify you or the youth, including the name of the school, will be altered or omitted.

If you have any questions or concerns, you can contact me at any time. Contact information appears below. Thank you.

Lindsay Ruth Hunt
Department of Secondary Education
442 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5
(403)819-6204
lrhunt@ualberta.ca

Research Supervisor:
Dr. Diane Conrad
Associate Professor
Department of Secondary Education
341 Education South
University of Alberta
Edmonton, AB T6G 2G5
(780) 492-5870
Diane.conrad@ualberta.ca

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty jo Werthmann at (780) 492-2261.

Teacher Confidentiality Agreement

I, _____(print name), the class room teacher of the group of students participating in the study entitled "Popular Theatre in School", as conducted by researcher Lindsay Ruth Hunt agree to -

1. keep all the research information shared with me confidential by not discussing or sharing the research information in any form or format (e.g., journals, transcripts, scripts) with anyone other than the *Researcher.*

2. keep all research information in any form or format secure while it is in my possession.

3. return all research information in any form or format (e.g., journals, transcripts, scripts) to the *Researcher* when my involvement in the research is complete.

4. after consulting with the *Researcher,* erase or destroy all research information in any form or format regarding this research project that is not returnable to the *Researcher* (e.g., information stored on computer hard drive).

5. not discuss the particulars of information as given by the students during the research process as part of the drama program.

_____	_____	_____
(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

Researcher

_____	_____	_____
(Print Name)	(Signature)	(Date)

The plan for this study has been reviewed for its adherence to ethical guidelines and approved by the Faculties of Education, Extension and Augustana Research Ethics Board (EEA REB) at the University of Alberta. For questions regarding participant rights and ethical conduct of research, contact the Chair of the EEA REB c/o Betty jo Werthmann at (780) 492-2261.