THE EVOCATION OF MEANING:

A STUDY OF IMAGE THEATRE IN THREE ELEMENTARY CLASSROOMS

by

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ABSTRACT

Over the course of the 2007/2008 school year, I visited three classrooms to investigate the effectiveness of Augusto Boal's drama method, Image Theatre, with elementary-aged students. In Image Theatre, the practitioners and students use their bodies to create frozen images, which in turn become the focus of collaborative meaning-making. I applied the reflective practitioner methodology in my work as it allowed me to adapt to the rapidly altering situations that arise in elementary classrooms. Through reflecting on my interactions with students, I refined a set of teaching techniques that worked best to integrate Image Theatre into the classroom and ultimately into the curriculum.

My research provides a qualitative analysis of the power of Image Theatre to foster student dialogue, develop empathic learning, and introduce conflict awareness techniques. My thesis highlights some specific exercises and theoretical frameworks that guided my work and produced the most effective results.

The effects of applying Image Theatre to elementary-aged classrooms has not been extensively studied in the past and my research attempts to address this academic gap. It is my hope that future researchers will adapt my activities and further demonstrate the capacities of this theatre technique. Ultimately, I hope that Image Theatre methods can find a place in standard curricula.

TABLE OF CONTENTS

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To all of my students

who made the process of researching for a graduate thesis feel like child's play.

And especially to Sue, Amanda, and Lori,

who inspired me to take the biggest career step of my life

and follow them, happily, into the classroom.

1 INTRODUCTION TO STUDY

The interspersed verses are part of a stream of consciousness caught on paper on September 26, 2007. In reviewing it to ground myself in my motivations to step into this work, I felt this piece would not be complete without it. It is me as I am in transition from a performing educator to an educator who occasionally performs. I am happy to introduce myself, and after years of preparation on stages, in different places, and in charged times, I am happy to finally introduce this study.

As a performer and educator, I toyed for years with message plays[1] that present problems and solutions to an audience and leave no room for exploration. Through the performance art form, whose potential can be internalized, interpreted, and experienced by the entire community (including performers, production staff, audience, students, volunteers, etc.), I sought a more holistic approach.

They never asked why I liked it so much. They never speculated that it helped me through the tough times that they often created. I wasn't into being someone else on stage, I was into being many aspects of myself: I am a Hot Box girl, I am squirrel #3, I am a toy soldier developing a rash from face make-up, I am the goddess of love in a Haitian fairy tale, I am Alice. Many joked, only crazies, only those who crave *something* are into theatre. They never asked why I liked it so much.

Through research, practice, and reflection, I discovered the many facets of Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed, specifically the Image Theatre technique. Boal developed the Theatre of the Oppressed in response to the need for political and economic change in rural Brazil in the 1970s, yet his disciples have since applied his theories to address a wider range of interpersonal and social struggles. Image Theatre is a

means by which a community's collective story can be created and their "oppression[2]"

explored in front of an audience or in a workshop/classroom setting.

"Freeze life in any moment. That is an image." (Diamond, 2007, p. 92)

Specific issues are addressed through frozen images created by participants who then

contribute their own interpretations of the meaning of the images through titles, stating

thoughts, adding bodies in the image, changing the positions of people in the image, and

more (Boal, 1995). Research shows that this technique has worked for many groups of

people from various racial, economic, ethnic, and social backgrounds, (Schutzman &

Cohen-Cruz, 1994; Rohd, 1998) but the use of Image Theatre with elementary-age

students contains few formal studies. The use of drama with elementary school students

has proven beneficial to their social and emotional well-being (Beale & Scott, 2001;

Freeman, 2003; Furman, 2000), thus formulating my research: Can Image Theatre

techniques be used to foster a safe environment for young people to engage in dialogue,

engender empathy, and develop conflict awareness? By creating a dramatic study

grounded in a reflective practitioner approach, I developed a model to support children in

the self-discovery and the social intricacies that they have already begun to encounter, yet

needed a safe method and language by which to navigate.

They never asked why I liked it so much.   I was the one guaranteed something good.
No, they watched, and I loved it. I shared it.   I had a more than a gift,
It helped me fit in. It helped me in my skin.   I had been gifted an opportunity –
It helped me nab the cute ones.   a means by which to put to work the lifework
It helped me move, accept, adjust, cry.   I knew I had to perform.

My experience at the Headlines Theatre workshop in Vancouver, British Columbia in summer 2007 focused on another Theatre of the Oppressed technique called "Forum Theatre." The Forum practice consists of audience members intervening in a staged scene, and literally replacing the characters to present potential solutions to the problems presented. I was fascinated by this method but had not found any studies, lesson plans, or advice on how to perform this with elementary students.

In May 2008, I attended a conference titled "Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed" in Omaha, Nebraska. I attended many workshops about Forum theatre (none of which addressed Forum with any ages below adolescence), as well as many on Image Theatre. At the end of the second day of the conference, I attended a workshop hosted by members of the In Forma Theatre Company of Toronto, Ontario where I participated in many Image Theatre activities. I recognized every game we played as strikingly similar to those I had played it with the students at Cedar Stand Elementary[3]. The workshop did not venture anywhere near the Forum techniques, but remained firmly grounded in the methods of Image Theatre. I could not believe it – the entire time that I was getting down on myself for not finding the right time, recognizing a certain type of energy in the classroom, or prepping enough so the students felt comfortable working on Forum, I had actually been working through and accomplishing Image Theatre techniques! When I returned from the conference, I reviewed my journal entries, lessons plans, and even chatted with my students about what they felt we had accomplished in our time together, and found I had indeed created a effective Image Theatre program that addressed the needs of my elementary students.

The idea behind starting a Theatre of the Oppressed program with younger students came from the notion that if the work was so effective with high school ages, learning the techniques early on would give students more material to draw from as they grew and confronted struggles (Campbell, 1994). Daily reflections, discussions with teachers, and student feedback guided my lessons and adaptations to Boal's processes. Knowing the history behind the method helped me appreciate the value of the work I was doing, as well as the importance of why this method was created in the first place.

Boal's theatre troupe traveled to many small villages performing message plays to empower the locals against their oppressors by presenting their own story to them and allowing them to reflect on it. In the case of the Brazilian communities, their oppressor was mainly the government who had taken the workers' land and then forced them to labour on it. Boal, the director of the theatre company, put into practice the simultaneously-transpiring theories of Paulo Freire, his contemporary and compatriot in the education and representation of the oppressed (Boal, 2002; Freire, 2006). During one village performance, a woman insisted that the actors were not presenting the story honestly, and that she had a better way of acting out the scene. After many failed attempts to instruct the actors on how to perfect the piece, she was invited onto the stage to take over one of the roles herself (Boal, 1995; Boal, 2002). Thus, Theatre of the Oppressed was born. Boal developed his improvisational activities and workshops to create plays that rose to a moment of crisis without offering a solution. The spect-actors (*spect*ators + *actors*) were then asked to intervene on stage to help the characters solve the problem.

Why not the cut-throat, toe-stepping paths that my peers and studio partners pursued in the black boxes, agents' offices, perfect-profiled world of the stage? Somewhere in there, I was introduced to the chief of police when I taught his daughter. He helped me out. He built my set, he took my crappy headshot, told his daughter to be like me, and even tried to sing along with the choral numbers a couple of times. He brought in his friends: the housewife-turned-queen, plumber-turned-townfolk, mailman-turned-godsend, troubled-girl-turned-safari-leader, dyslexic-turned-Babylonian. They all came, and they all intended to step out of themselves – get away from that life/those dishes/those jerks at school/ that broken pipe/the loud church going wife of mine… Surprised by what they stepped into… They *stayed*.

There have been many adaptations of Boal's techniques that have altered some of his fundamentals in order to adjust the technique to fit the needs of different audiences. Boal, for example, intentionally chose to leave out the exploration of the oppressor, replacing only the "oppressed" within the scenes. David Diamond (2007) of Headlines Theatre in Vancouver, British Columbia, practices Theatre of the Oppressed with a different approach. Though he uses many of Boal's tools to help create the piece, and ultimately, to create dialogue within the community, Diamond insists on understanding the struggles of the oppressor in order to overcome our oppressions. This thorough investigation often reveals more than we care to know about our "oppressors" (a term Diamond has deliberately chosen to leave out of his "Theatre for Living" method). Yet by understanding how our conflicts with others can be prevented, addressed, and handled in the future, we are better "rehearsed" for the world and its seemingly unsolvable crises (Dietz, Glancy, & Dobbins, 2006; Koteff & Seigle, 2006).

Literature, studies, and oral accounts have praised Image Theatre's benefits in the most unlikely of places – prisons, elderly homes, drug rehabilitation centers, and psychiatric wards[4] are just some of the venues in which the methods have had a positive

learning effect (Campbell, 1994; Cohen-Cruz, 1994). If the work has been so effective in

those makeshift theatrical spaces, a school setting seemed the most natural stage on

which to place the practice. Image Theatre is most effective when it has a strong theme

in which to ground the images. Though the focus of my study was on the effects of

Image Theatre, I needed to present an *oppression* (as Boal [2002] calls it) or theme for

my students to work on because only through the total exploration of an oppression could

we seek to overcome it. I explain below how I came to be a part of a research project

focused on *conflict* with elementary students, which provided me with a theme and space

to pursue my study of Image Theatre techniques.

      I was embarking on the data collection stage of my thesis when I was asked to be

a part of a research project[5] that allowed me to work in three elementary classrooms for

the 2007/2008 school year. Taking on the role of a visiting teacher-artist[6] to Cedar Stand

Elementary in Vancouver, British Columbia, I presented simple drama games to the

students. Their intuitive and empathic comments, enhanced by their natural enthusiasm

and interest in problem-solving, were well-suited for an infusion of a Theatre of the

Oppressed component into the curricula. These techniques would allow students to

explore more fully different meanings and scenarios on a stage first so as to be better-

prepared when encountering difficulties in life. My own interest in Image Theatre was

informed by the research done on the power of image work to effectively address local

issues, familial conflicts, societal injustices, and social-emotional skill-building within

the schools (Conrad, 2004; Diamond, 2007; Rohd, 1998).

It wasn't the audience, or the lights, it was the
community where there'd not been one.
They created something – with their heads –
though it transcended any plan they'd ever been

"stuck on."
They experienced, like I did,
the power to step out, look back,
adjust as needed, and move on.

Out of all of the Theatre of the Oppressed programs I studied, I have been the most influenced by the project developed by John O'Toole, Bruce Burton, and Anna Plunkett (2005) who have used a "trickle-down" effect in the schools to reach younger students through drama. Their book and program titled *Cooling Conflict* was inspired by their data collection during a multi-year conflict management program (DRACON) put into place in Brisbane, Australia (O'Toole & Burton, 2005). Their book details the positive effects of the Theatre of the Oppressed methods used within public schools. They use an "Enhanced Forum Theatre" method, based on Boal's original, to invite the understanding of the three stages of conflict: latent, emerging, and manifest. Their implementation of peer education starts with Grade 12 students in a drama "key" classroom, the hope is that the "key" class will teach the conflict stages to younger students, who then pass it down to grades below them. As I did not coordinate an actual peer education system, since I was in two different combination classes (Grades 1-3 and Grades 4/5), I was able to experience how the multi-age learning takes place. Needless to say, the older students in the class set important examples for the younger students to follow, and the process of peer education happened naturally in the combined class environment.

I see the oppressor and the oppressed,
I see them all in me, in them, in us as a
collective, ensemble, cast, crew, family – I'm not
stepping out of myself, I'm looking in. I want to
keep going with the train of thought that
mailman touched on when he talked about his
boss taking advantage of his time, I want to
help a young girl who picks her mother up off
the floor at 4pm because she's passed out from
two bottles of wine, I want to see how to
introduce the brother and sister duo to a non-
violent bedtime story –
since every other story they go to bed with
hurts like hell.

I was overwhelmed by Grade 1-5 students' comprehension of conflict. Through exposure in their homes and at school, children are inherently aware of the effects of conflict in their everyday lives. *Cooling Conflict* suggested a language with which to express their concerns and encounters, and it also presented tools for how to handle conflict in its early stages. I felt with this program as a starting point, there was much potential for Image Theatre to help elementary students to explore conflict in their lives.

Having attended a supportive, and somewhat sheltered college-preparatory middle and high school, my knowledge of the world's injustices came from my own seeking, not from the school grounds. To this day, I appreciate the opportunities afforded to me by my family and my school community. I do not take for granted the fact that I was part of a very small group of students from my rural town who were fortunate to move away from the failing public school system into an academically-advantaged environment. I have always wondered about what I missed by going to a private school. My public school friends struggled to meet the expectations put on them to fit in. Not that my school was without its own pressures, but many of my former classmates developed "tough skins" and were taught that physical strength was a bonus, while interest in academics was for outcasts. Had they been offered a program that allowed them to "rehearse" for life's difficulties – not by fighting their way through, but by

communicating their needs, rights, and feelings – would they have been better- and/or more peacefully-prepared for the world?

There are those who've done it. The starters, the pioneers, the stumblers, jokers, fakers, and practitioners. With them, I'll hit the stage again. Pass it on, I say, call the masses, listen to them, feed off of them, dip into their knowledge and donate yours: the broken toilets, the backward words, the house to tend. Command your stage and if they never ask why you like it – play it anyway, because you've got something to share.

There is pressure for schools to make up for the lack of social-emotional support that some children do not receive from home (Catterall, 2007; O'Toole & Burton, 2005). Since that is the case, we as educators must not wait for internal conflicts to manifest in our students before acting on them, we must give them the means of self-direction to a safer place. Human beings are naturally empathic, and we must promote that in any way we can – through literature, through community, and especially through the arts. I place myself into the growing field of drama educators who for years have been presenting message plays to the masses and who are ready for a change. Boal, Diamond, O'Toole, and even Freire (though not with drama, per se, but quite dramatically) push the limits of what we as active members of a greater community are capable of discovering. The Image Theatre model outlined in this study hopefully gave some children the skills to rehearse for and make meaning of areas of conflict in their lives.

1.1 Endnotes

1. Theatre-artists define a *message play* as any play which its director describes as 'worthwhile' or 'designed to make the audience think.' There is a distaste for messages that are forced upon the audience, often creating a sense of disrespect from the playwright toward audiences that would not be able to figure out the minute details without explanation. Anthony Jackson addresses the motivations behind "messages" dictated through theatre: "It is argued that what is conventionally thought of as great dramatic art – while it may be imaginatively rich, [and] aesthetically compelling – will not achieve the social impact […] They can be directly useful to us in 'the real world' […] perhaps capable of influencing that world […] but they may not, consequently, have much shelf life." (Jackson, 2005, p.104)

2. According to Paulo Freire, oppression is defined as "any situation in which 'A' objectively exploits 'B' or hinders his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person." (Freire, 2006, p. 55) James MacGregor Burns (2004) in his book *Transforming Leadership* explains Boal's definition of oppression as "a power dynamic based on monologue rather than dialogue, his goal [in Theatre of the Oppressed] was to inject a second voice – the voice of the people – what would open the system to question and challenge." (p. 165)

3. The names of the school and teachers have been changed to protect their identities.

4. The "Formaat: Workplace for Participatory Drama" based in Rotterdam, Netherlands started by bringing Forum Theatre to schools in 1999, but has since moved into the community in just some of the above-mentioned locations. http://www.formaat.org/inenglish/index.php.

5. Dr. George Belliveau's Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council (herein SSHRC) grant title: Addressing the Role of the Bystander through Drama in Bullying Situations (2007).

6. Please note – throughout this study, I use the terms *visiting teacher-artist*, *teacher-researcher*, and *artist-researcher* interchangeably to emphasize the main role assumed at the specific moment of research.

2 LITERATURE REVIEW

2.1 Bringing out the human emotions

Every theatre artist draws intuitively from the world around her/him to inform her/his practice. Augusto Boal (1995), the creator of the Theatre of the Oppressed, developed a theatre world into which he invited all human beings to "come closer."[1] To begin to understand the essence of Boal's work, one must place his concept of theatre within his definition of a human being. He argues that it is impossible to think of theatre without the presence of human beings and further equalizes human beings to theatre itself. Boal describes a stage filled with light, a beautiful set, and an audience waiting patiently in their seats. Without the presence of humans on the stage, the audience's attention will not be held:

> It lacks the human being, whose absence is permissible only for a short period of time…it only needs someone…to make an appearance and theatre will inhabit the stage. If he or she approaches the table, the theatricality is intensified. If he or she lays a hand on the pistol, the theatrical temperature will rise, and it will continue to rise if he/she points the pistol at his/her head. By this point we will have intense theatre. So, from this we can conclude that theatre is essentially the human being. (p. 29)

So what role do Boal's musings about human beings play in his theories of oppressed peoples and their ability to overcome their oppressions? As humans, we all inherently have the means and stages on which to practice for real life.[2] Forum Theatre was originally played only in rehearsal halls for actors to better understand their characters and to solve "immediate problems" (Boal, 2002, p. 253), yet after Boal was exiled from Brazil and moved to France[3], he discovered that oppressions there proved much more

psychologically self- and socially-imposed rather than physically, as in South America.

Since "no individual consciousness can remain unmarked by societal values," (Boal,

1995, p. xx of Introduction) he attempted to bring those internalized human emotions into

the public eye to help those who were oppressed by such feelings to release them. His

goal was to give the oppressed a "forum" in which to consider various staged options first

before confronting the actual struggles in real life. The actors on the stage perform

scenes that the audience members (spect-actors) are invited to stop at any point. The

spect-actor then replaces the actor and resumes the action, introducing his/her intervening

viewpoint into the scene: "…far from being a witness, the spect-actor is, or must do his

utmost to become, the *protagonist* of the dramatic action." (Boal, 2002, p. 255)

Both Forum and Image Theatre techniques appeal to those without a sense of

what their options are. As an educator, I am intrigued by the empowerment that image

work gives students who struggle to find options and/or articulate in words the

discomfort they feel in difficult situations that are often defined by their aggressive

outcomes. Rather than focusing on the result, Boal stresses finding the preventative

moment that precedes the manifestation of the conflict. Image Theatre invites the student

to "go back [and] pick up a story again at an earlier point in time and find out at what

point the oppressed still had a choice of several solutions (before the scenario wends its

way to an aggressive end)." (ibid)

2.2 Boal's practitioners

There is a reason Boal's work "traverses continents and collides with different

cultural values, political systems, and personal ideals." (Schutzman & Cohen-Cruz, 1994,

p. 14) The tools Boal has given to social justice workers in the form of Theatre of the Oppressed activities have become the root to many of their practices. Many theatre artists, especially, have accepted the invitation by Boal (2002) to spread his techniques, as he himself uses and adapts games dating back hundreds of years. Each facilitator, actor, and spect-actor contributes to the better understanding of our rights as human beings. The practitioners below form merely a small portion of artists in the world who use Boal's methods, and the strength of their interpretations contribute to the better understanding of the usefulness of Image Theatre techniques to address different social justice issues. As Boal says, "Theatre is a form of knowledge; [and] it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, instead of just waiting for it." (p. 16)

2.2.1 The oppressor's oppressor

David Diamond (2007), the founder of Headlines Theatre in Vancouver, British Columbia, is a friend of Boal who for years has been adapting his work to fit the needs of the Vancouver communities. His "Theatre for Living" approach allows his participants not only to work through their issues through Theatre of the Oppressed methods, but to better understand life's complexities by replacing their oppressors on stage.

> I believe the oppressor is always in the audience in some manifestation…If it is our desire to help end cycles of oppression through the use of theatre, then we have a responsibility to create theatre that rings with authenticity for the diversity of the people in attendance. That is, theatre in which both the oppressed and the oppressors see themselves on stage as real people and legitimate members of the community, who are engaged in their own complex struggles. (p. 40-41)

I found this to be especially true in school settings where the students represented in the scenes are often members of the same socio-economic class. Rather than maintaining the "enemy" status of the oppressor throughout a dramatic activity, thus placing blame and creating another form of oppression, my goal in integrating Diamond's work is to help the students examine the conflicts within the oppressor. This empathy and understanding serves to unify rather than divide a classroom. (See *Appendix A: Mr Ocax and Poppy* for an example of a time when one of the Cedar Stand teachers I worked with helped her students to better understand the struggles of an oppressor by reading the story *Poppy* by Avi.)

Ever-sensitive to the "victim," many Boal practitioners have stepped away from Boal's insistence that the oppressor remain unexplored. Eleanor Crowder (1994) encouraged the replacement of the oppressor in her argument during the "Canadian Roundtable" conducted by Boalian practitioner Mady Schutzman, in 1991 in Toronto, Ontario: "[Violence-prevention workers] say that if the oppressed has to make all the changes, it's like blaming the victim." (p. 215) By letting the oppressor remain in that role, they continue to exert an oppression over the "victim" through our unwillingness to consider the reasons behind an oppressive reaction to a situation. Crowder's point was supported by the six roundtable members who continued their discussion introducing ideas of "learning more about the enemy," and "a moment of sensing that what they thought was external to them was really internal." (ibid) Clearly, Boal has been challenged in his exclusion of the oppressor's own representation in Theatre of the Oppressed work.

Diamond was a transcript reader and commentator on the Canadian Roundtable mentioned above, and he goes on to discuss in his own book the constraints put on dialogue when only one side of the conversation is represented. In practice as a Joker[4], Diamond often demonstrates why he chooses to replace the oppressor. He places volunteers in a frozen image by showing the "oppressed" crouched on the floor with the "oppressor" standing behind him with arms crossed aggressively. Diamond himself (as the "oppressor's oppressor") then steps into the image in a frozen yelling pose at the oppressor's back. He explains, quite controversially, that only when everyone understands the true need to explore the presence of an oppressor's own complexities – on the stage, in the community, and in our classrooms – can a dialogue between the two characters (the oppressor and the oppressed) actually begin.

In the same vein as Diamond, many Boal practitioners have begun to question the initial "performance game" (Boal, 2002, p. 243) rule that "only spect-actors who are victims as the character (by identity or by analogy) can replace the oppressed protagonist to find new approaches or new forms of liberation." (Boal, 1992, p. 240) In the updated second edition of his book *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (2002), Boal did change his tactic by adding that by replacing an actor who one does not fully identify with, "we manifestly fall into the theatre of advice [or message plays]: one person showing another what to do." (Boal, 2002, p. 269) He recognizes the need to embody the character in order to bring it to a peaceful place where its oppressions can be explored. Diamond is just one of many who inspire Theatre of the Oppressed practitioners to follow Boal's archetypical forms, but to adjust accordingly to the communities they are serving.

2.2.2 Using theatre to address conflict

A number of theatre artists and researchers gathered in the mid-1990s to conduct a study on the use of drama in a conflict management program. The international DRACON project (DRAma + CONflict) sought to enable students to take control of "their own conflicts and conflict agendas…rather than relying on externally imposed and hierarchical conflict management programs." (O'Toole & Burton, 2005, p. 269) Three of the leading players in the project were John O'Toole, Bruce Burton, and Anna Plunkett, who joined forces to summarize their data in the book *Cooling Conflict: A new approach to managing bullying and conflict in schools*. As the key step-by-step guide that resulted from DRACON, O'Toole, Burton, and Plunkett stress developing a collective "'conflict literacy' in the hope that the learners will be able to use this later in dealing with their own conflicts." (p. 273) The terminology presented introduces students to the conflict stages (latent, emerging, and manifest), lists potential strategies when dealing with conflict (confront, avoid, or mediate), and examines the three parties in a bullying situation (bully, bullied, and bystander). Though not all conflicts necessarily involve bullying (I feel this must be noted as there is such a recent focus on bully-prevention programs in North American schools[5]), these authors effectively expose students to conflict management tools that they can use throughout their lives, not just in bullying circumstances.

O'Toole, Burton, and Plunkett's adaptation of Boal's Forum Theatre, called Enhanced Forum Theatre (hereafter, 'EFT'), follows Boal's format but adds two crucial elements. The first enhancement is a Scene Four (EFT presents the three conflict stages in the form of three scenes, further enhanced by the fourth scene) "where the interactive

16

audience is challenged to find a time and place beyond the scenes depicted where the conflict might better be de-escalated, and this solution is tried-out in action." (O'Toole & Burton, 2005, p. 276) Scene Four introduces an additional character to the Forum who did not exist in the initial scenes – the role of the bystander. This bystander is asked to create mediation/intervention suggestions to diffuse the rising conflict. Though students strongly identify with the bystander role, I have found they often do not know the potential this character holds in diffusing the conflict. Scene Four of EFT gives them an "understanding that they might be able to summon to their aid when they […] have to mediate in somebody else's [conflict]." (O'Toole, Burton, Plunkett, 2005, p. 30)

2.2.3 *"Letting loose an interior monologue…"*

The additional enhancements O'Toole, Burton, and Plunkett made to Boal's original Forum format are called "hot-seating" and "thought-tracking." These two pauses in the scene can take place at any time if the audience feels they need to better understand the character's actions. "Hot-seating" occurs when a character physically steps out of the scene and is questioned thoroughly by the audience on their motivations[6]. "Thought-tracking" is very similar to Boal's (2002) "Stop! Think!" exercise when "at any given moment the Joker stops the rehearsal and […] all the actors have to start speaking in an undertone at the same time, letting loose an interior monologue of everything that is in their characters' minds at that particular moment." (p. 227) Usually "thought-tracking" occurs with *only* one character requested by the audience to verbally elaborate on their actions. The *Cooling Conflict* program further infers that it is crucial for students to fully

understand, and be given the means of clarifying, a conflict before intervening into the Forum scene.

Alistair Campbell's (1994) UK-based theatre group, "Breakout," initially toured message plays, but when Campbell discovered Boal's techniques years into his career, he quickly switched the company's methods. He discovered a similar thought-provoking activity[7] to help the students at the schools he toured better understand the scene they were watching, but also to develop the courage to become part of the action. To help create the necessary dialogue between the actors and audience, he added the visual aid of a cardboard cut out, "comic-book style" (p. 58) Thought Bubble. These bubbles served as an invitation for audience members to "gain confidence through the relative safety of first suggesting from their seats what the protagonists might be thinking or feeling." (ibid) This method works wonderfully for students who first want to practice being active observers of a scene by confirming that they understand the main idea before approaching the stage (Furman, 2000).

Campbell's focus on the creation of dialogue by "empowering the group…to take action (p. 56)" stemmed from the extensive image work he called "The Wheel." The activity consisted of one circle of people within another circle of people, facing each other. Like Boal's "Image of the Word" technique (Boal, 2002, p. 176), one person sculpted the other into a shape/emotion/illustration of a subject pre-determined by the group or facilitator. After images were created on the inside circle, the outside circle assumed the position of what they thought the opposite of the image would be.

In pairs work we came across this repeatedly: if one half of the group was molded to represent the group's impressions, say of fear, and the other to set up an equally subjective but contrasting emotion, such as joy, all we needed to do was ask both partners to take up their images relative to each other and the space would be peopled with bosses and servants, parents and children, angels and devils. (Campbell, 1994, p. 60)

From the image and contrasting image work that was created in the Wheel, dialogues between the two sculptures could be explored. Often, to ask a group of young students to create contrasting emotions, the exercise happens easily, but without a dialogue between the two, the connection becomes irrelevant. It is from this image work that human (and daily school) interactions, so crucial to Theatre of the Oppressed work, can begin to take shape.

2.2.4 The choice to be involved

The "wheel" or "circle" concept has become a commonly-used opening warm-up drama technique (Booth, 1986). It creates a sense of equality and safety to speak in that there is not one person standing before the group. As a ritual used in many drama and social-emotional practices "a context is created that allows children to not only learn and practice social skills but also to bring issues to the circle that are important to them (Koteff, 2006, p. 141)." All children are involved, whether they choose to speak or to sit silently in the circle, which is a very powerful choice by itself.

It is essential in doing Boal's work, and all adaptations of it, that anyone who wants to be involved can be – that is one of Boal's most encouraging messages. Michael Rohd (1998) of Sojourn Theatre in Portland, Oregon, agrees with that sentiment and invites all participants to practice this when following this work. That is the basis of his

Theatre for Community, Conflict, & Dialogue manual – a book on community dialogue based on HIV/AIDS issues, yet extending to all areas of social concern. Doug Paterson states in his foreword that "one of the basic assumptions of Michael's approach is that virtually anyone can participate" (Paterson, 1998, p. xi) and Rohd further invites the idea that "we are all artists and theatre is a language." (Rohd, 1998, p. xix) He explains in his book that "some people get initially turned off of this work because they see it demanding a certain type of person […] Young people respond to honesty, caring, and to someone as interested in listening as in talking." (p. 127) Though this idea seems simple, the inclusion of anyone who wants to participate is a crucial aspect of doing Image Theatre work in schools.

The alternative scenario must also be recognized. At the Theatre for Living Workshop 1, August 2007, David Diamond responded to a question concerning what strategies he used if there was resistance to participate, arguing that:

> People need to do this of their own free will. Inside work, people are free to leave whenever they want…I never tell someone 'just try, come on.' I give space – don't try to convince them. Some will participate, some won't. We'll have a serious talk when it's time to make the play. The workshop is pressure enough, the Joker doesn't want to pressure too. The strongest choice is knowing when you shouldn't do something. (D. Diamond, personal communication, August 8, 2007)

Boal might argue that pressuring someone to participate is just another form of oppression. Students should be freed of oppressions when they are discovering ways in which to explore them. Participating in Image Theatre can be seen as a vulnerable proposition to someone sharing their story and views for the first time. Boal (1995) states that "the simple act of recounting the scene she experienced is revealing her desire to

relive it, to transform it, and to examine its variations and alternatives." (p. 61) It is up to the educator to make the participants comfortable when dramatizing their worlds. They are putting a trust in us to peacefully guide them through a difficult exercise, "so, we must try." (ibid)

2.3 Uncovering struggles through theatre: successful and unsuccessful methods

Image Theatre is just one method through which theatre practitioners are entering communities to help create dialogue. Most methods of "Applied Theatre," defined by Judith Ackroyd (2000) as a shared "belief in the power of the theatre form to address something beyond the form itself," (p. 1) seek to create some kind of understanding between the artist with their cause and the community he/she is serving at large through theatre. Image Theatre, like other forms of theatre used for social justice work, is grounded in its ability and desire to help those participating to uncover their struggles through an art form.

Diane Conrad's (2004) explorations of "Risky Youth Experiences" of First Nations youth used a performative research approach to "understand the experiences of youth from their perspective." (p. 2) Rooted in anthropology and performance studies, she chose to implement this form because of its power to "draw on participants' experiences to collectively create theatre and engage in discussion of issues through theatrical means." (p. 4) Together with her students, a theme emerged from the collected stories and Boalian techniques that resulted in the play titled "Life in the Sticks." Though the play was not brought into the Image or Forum Theatre format, she claims that "the drama raised questions inciting students to examine the issues and their beliefs and to re-

evaluate aspects of their lived experience." (p. 14) She documents a beautiful

performance that was a result of Boal-based workshops, and this inspired me to consider

the power of the idea formation and rehearsal process. I learned very late in the process

that bringing a play into performance should not be the main goal, rather it is the process

through which the plays are created, or never come to be, that the students can often

benefit the most.

A different approach was taken by Andrew Beale (2001) who created a play about

bullying at the request of a school counsellor. "Bullybusters" was part of a school-wide

anti-bullying initiative to deal with the fact that "bullies [will not] change their negative

behaviours overnight, therefore, it is crucial that bullying victims be taught effective

methods for coping with bullies." (p. 3) Beale used a "psycho-educational drama" form,

where positive attitudes were modeled and alternative behaviours demonstrated. The

intention was that students would learn by observing their peers in action and then

"respond to issues more freely because they can discuss them in relation to the characters

and events depicted by the drama rather than in personal terms." (p. 4) In many ways,

this theatre experience contradicted the inclusive power of Theatre of the Oppressed

methods.

The first problem with this method lay in the production of a play created for the

purpose of passing on a "message." Though Beale argues the fact that the familiarity of

fellow students performing for each other (not a professional theatre troupe) created a

sense of solidarity in the cause, he failed to recognize the potentially-resistant response

that often follows "message" plays. Furthermore, the "one-step-removed" idea of

addressing the characters in the play rather than the issue in real life passed a separate

message that the school was too apprehensive to deal with specific issues, and instead chose to create "possible scenarios" written by a teacher. While Conrad (2004) gave a voice to a community of youth by allowing them to create their own means of dialogue through theatre, Beale (2001) represented the authority figure who claimed to know enough about a conflict situation without consulting the students involved. Through guided discussions and the creation of classroom anti-bullying rules, the school further addressed the issues presented in the play, but it is important to keep in mind Freire's (2006) theory of oppressed versus oppressors, that no matter how connected a group feels to an issue, if it is not created with their input, they are essentially denied access to their own cause.

Dr. James Catterall (2004) provides an alternative approach to Conrad's process that "drew on [the students'] experiences to examine issues they identified as relevant," (p. 13) and the main goal of Beale's (2001) play to "present a believable and familiar situation with which middle school students could identify." (p. 4) Though not directly involved with the practical application of drama, Catterall (2004) examined the use of drama in an after-school program "designed to promote healthy interaction and development by building students' skills and motivation for conflict resolution." (p. 167) His quantitative research objectives concerned pro-social changes in behaviour, conditions and processes of learning, and ultimate reflection on the medium collected through pre- and post-surveys. Over a 24-week period, he observed the power of drama exercises to promote healthy relationships and better self-management skills. Unlike other drama education studies, he went as far as to compare students both in the program and those who wanted to be, but were not able to because of lack of space (only 71

students were admitted into the program, 84 non-program students contributed to his study). Catterall found an overwhelming response to the fact that participation in "drama […] is itself empowering." (p. 174) The pure act of creating art together formed a new community within the school that was otherwise disjointed when it began – a powerful notion in and of itself.

2.4 Encouraging the social being

Critical to the social growth that art-making engenders are the means through which drama develops an acceptance of the self and a comfort in sharing that self with others. If conducted in such a way, the community created in the drama classroom is a naturally uncritical atmosphere (Freeman, Sullivan, & Fulton, 2003). Image Theatre, especially, invites students to trust in their instincts to "think of how to create [and act out] safety in the play." (D. Diamond, personal communication, August 13, 2007) It is impossible to do this without a pre-developed sense of trust within the group. Activities can and must be played to develop this sense (Rohd, 1998). (See Chapter Four: Theatre games/exercises, page 44, for further explanation of trust-building activities.)

Freeman, Sullivan, and Fulton (2003) discuss the four components of the development of social skills. I choose to focus on the self-efficacy developed during the first phase titled "Response Acquisition" that states "students observe others portraying appropriate social behaviour in role play and in the act of planning and implementing." (p. 132) Unlike Beale's example where students observe a performance and discuss its ramifications, these authors go on to detail that it is the non-judgmental manner of evaluation that empowers the students to continue their creations. Furman (2000) makes

the further argument that because children (more so than adults) are so extremely "aware that they are creating," (p. 175) and being invited to do so, when given the opportunity to, they will release their inhibitions even more in contribution to the group's collective piece.

Boal (1994) tells the story of an intervention that a teenage girl made at a workshop he gave in 1989 at the Brazilian Congress of Street Boys and Girls. The topic chosen by the 80 participants was family violence. During an escalating scene, the girl's intervention consisted only of grabbing her drug addicted brother by the hand and dancing with him around the stage. Boal did not appreciate the intervention saying it "didn't offer any solution" – the entire audience contradicted him claiming it did: "she made her brother smile." (p. 83) Boal's response in retelling the story was that his interpretation of the intervention was that it was ineffective and insignificant. "And yet, for them, it was so much." (ibid) Children have a natural understanding of the intricacies of relationships. As a visiting teacher-artist, through the use of Image Theatre in the classroom, I hoped to engage and encourage this knowledge. By applying the work of Boal and many Boalian practitioners, as well as the theories of the new generation of drama educators, my goal was to create a model of Image Theatre for elementary students. Since there has been little research done on the effects of image work for this age, I looked forward to contributing my efforts to this growing body of work – and enjoying myself playing some games in the process.

2.5 Endnotes

1. Augusto Boal is notorious for beckoning his audience members to "come closer, come closer." He further instructs all his disciples to invite the audience in the same way (Cohen-Cruz, 1990, p. 47). The home page of the Headlines Theatre website pictures two hands gesturing for the viewers to "come closer": http://headlinestheatre.com/.

2. Boal believed in what he called "the core human factor." Claiming that since the images used in Theatre of the Oppressed work speak so powerfully for themselves, anyone can be creative (Malgobot in Schutzman, 1994, p. 200).

3. Boal (1995) was born and raised in Brazil where he worked as theatre director for the Arena Theatre in São Paulo for 15 years while he developed his Theatre of the Oppressed methods. As a political activist in the 1970s, he was imprisoned and then exiled by the Brazilian government; he subsequently moved to France and revisited his initial theories and practices of Theatre of the Oppressed work.

4. The Joker plays the role of the facilitator (often referred to as the 'difficultator' by Boal) in Forum theatre. Diamond (2007) defines the role of the Joker as one who "creates a working space that is a safe place for the participants to be able to enter disequilibrium." (p. 172)

5. Googling "anti-bullying program" findings in close to 400,000 hits for programs in place, how to start a program, findings from various programs, etc. The CASEL organization (Collaborative for Academic, Social, and Emotional Learning - http://www.casel.org/home.php) produces the *Safe and Sound Guide* that lists programs that promote healthy social and emotional skills. Of the 80 programs thoroughly assessed by CASEL, over 30 programs deal directly with "bullying" in schools.

6. This activity is derived from Boal's (2002) "Interrogation" when "each actor in turn [is]…interrogated by the group (also in character) about what they think of the other characters, what they think about the events in the play, anything (p. 227)." Unlike "Interrogation," "Hot-seating" is conducted by the audience, not by the other actors on stage.

7. Similar to O'Toole, Burton, and Plunkett's (2005) "Thought-tracking" in *Cooling Conflict: A new approach to managing bullying and conflict in schools*.

3 REFLECTIVE PRACTITIONER METHODOLOGY

> These inquiring reflective teachers see themselves as intentional learners. They actively observe what is happening in their classrooms and are willing to revise their plans and expectations in the light of what they observe. (Booth & Wells, 1994, p. 27)

3.1 Reflective practice – A dramatic application to the researcher role

My research was not originally oriented around reflective practice methodology, in which the practitioner regularly refers back to her process of research in order to improve upon her practice. This methodology emerged organically through my classroom activities and personal reflections. The movement towards the methodology began as I examined the data I had collected over the 2007/2008 school year. I found the most useful information came not from other sources, but from my own reflections. Analysis of my journal observations of classroom behaviours and tendencies provided insights that allowed me to alter my intended daily agenda extemporaneously to accommodate my students' needs in the moment. Though I had shared many hours with the students and their teachers in their classroom community, my role was always that of an outsider, or, as I came to realize, a reflective practitioner. By learning from my past experiences and remaining open to sudden changes in my plans as the situation required, I was better-prepared to experiment and maximize my effectiveness in the classroom.

As I read through numerous instances of this adaptive teaching process in my journal, it helped me to hone and personalize the definition of reflective practitioner methodology in my own work. I revisited a passage I had read two years earlier:

Reflective practice […] is a way of life; it is not bounded in the same way as outside models of research. It refers to the nurturing and development of life-long dispositions and the on-going and continuous self-inquiry into one's own professional practice. The reflective practitioner does not bracket off episodes of practice for scrutiny, rather s/he continuously and persistently scrutinises practice on a daily basis across a professional life time. In order to be effective the reflective practitioner strives to be self-knowing as well as other-knowing. (Neelands, 2006, p. 17)

Jonothan Neelands (2006) is a researcher whose interest lies in applying a theatrical lens to reflective practitioner methodology. His extensive theatre background informs his search to find a way to be "on the inside" to better understand the role of researcher and engage with the research subjects. Neelands remarks that "the external researcher tries to find truthful ways of looking through the window of rooms occupied by teachers and learners, [while] the reflective practitioner looks instead for the most effective and ethical ways of living in the room with other teachers and learners." (p. 17) This passage affirmed my discovery that as a visiting teacher-artist, I could fully engage with my students, but as a researcher, I would be *in my own* experience while "looking into" my students' experiences.

When engaged in research, theatre practitioner and theorist, Philip Taylor (1996), claims that "the reflective practitioner stance demands a discovery of self, [and] a recognition of how one interacts with others." (p. 27) He explains that it is this self-discovery that artist-researchers often consider to be the "lifeblood of their work," though they often fail to incorporate it into their research. Taylor compares the process of embodying a character on stage to the reflective practitioner's experience of "an internal dialogue which requires prompt decisions about what the practitioner is seeing and how that seeing should influence behaviour" (ibid). A performer spends years training to

engage in an exploration of their character's deepest secrets and hidden traits in order to give a believable performance. I discuss this comparison of performer and reflective practitioner in the section titled "The theatrical aspect of reflective practice" on page 33.

This method of reflective research, which comes naturally to performers, has often been overlooked in arts education research. One explanation for this may be because artists have relied heavily on scientific methodologies to inform their research in the absence of more developed supportive evidence for arts-based methodologies. Donald Schön (1984) is a pioneer in this methodology as shown in his book, *The Reflective Practitioner*. He studies and offers explanations for how professionals address daily inquiries via an improvisational, trial-and-error approach – essentially exercising judgment while in the moment of discovery and resulting action. While his examination of the reflective practice details the importance of creativity in problem-solving, his evidence is based on the study of five non-arts professions: engineering, architecture, management, psychotherapy, and town planning. Though these professionals are arguably artists within their fields, when comparing their use of the same methodology to that of a performing artist, they can hardly be expected to follow similar journeys in their research.

Taylor (1996) adapts Schön's scientific theories to fit the theatre realm by exploring the "interrogation of [a] character's own truth" (p. 28) rather than trying to grasp the event through someone else's "truth." Essentially, Taylor dispels the need to adopt someone else's view (experience of an event, solution to a problem, inquiry technique, etc.) when one's own view can contribute more to their understanding of a situation. By "transcending the boundaries of a fixed reality" (ibid) – something

performers do when stepping out of their own world and into their character's world – the decision that a performer/researcher makes in the moment is more effective because it is a direct reaction to a new "reality."

3.2 The teacher in the researcher role

By reflecting in my journal entries about the immediate altering of plans while teaching, I uncovered the adaptive nature of my work and realized the need for a methodology that enabled me to engage in and reflect on the *teaching moment* of research. Jonothan Neelands (2006) remarks how it is crucial to the reflective practice that a researcher be self-evaluating and discovering as she performs her research. This comes from the assumption that research is more effective if the teachers are allowed to become researchers themselves. Since the understanding of an event comes from the teacher's "structured spontaneity" in that moment, it is difficult for outside observers to produce accurate data to represent the teacher's experience (p. 30). This idea is further addressed in the section titled "Outside researchers" on page 51, when I discuss the misunderstanding and unexpected bias of an outside observer toward my work in the classroom.

Leslie Patterson and Patrick Shannon (1993) insist that teachers be part of the reflective process because they are fieldworkers "proceeding according to their unconscious or conscious assumptions about the reality of their situations [and making] decisions about data sources and types of analyses that will fit their purposes." (p. 8) They insist that the teacher-researcher role is not utilized enough in the research process. Rather than exploring the reasons for a teacher's subtle shift in her plan, more emphasis

is placed on the effect of the plan's implementation as observed from the outside. Patterson and Shannon reflect on this misdirection of focus:

> Teacher research is not always respected […] because it does not appear to offer the certainty claimed by […] the lengthy teasing out of rules of behaviour and intention that comes with studies. These studies seem completely planned and well-managed, while […] teacher research is organic, sometimes messy, unpredictable, and generative. (p. 9)

By moving beyond the planning, implementation, and evaluative steps of research, I realized that my "reflection not only happen[ed] before and after" the research I performed, but it "inform[ed] the very event itself." (Taylor, 1996, p. 30)

3.3 Not letting the moment pass unnoticed

Not wanting to miss a moment when I was needed to help, suggest, or support my students in a classroom activity, I took extensive notes after my sessions to revisit the students' responses to the activities. I allowed myself to write exclusively about my own reactions to an event, which enabled me to notice moments when I used improvisation to help an activity run more smoothly (for more on improvisation, see the section titled "The theatrical aspect of reflective practice," page 33) Writing after the event provided me the opportunity to compare my post-visit reflections to what I recalled of my students' reactions. This analysis aided in my preparation for 1.) my next lesson, 2.) my next encounter with a particular student, and/or 3.) my re-visit to an activity at another time more fully aware of its intended, satisfactory, or unsuccessful effect.

3.4 The theatrical aspect of reflective practice

Recalling Neelands' (2006) explanation of an external researcher who "tries to find truthful ways of looking through the window of rooms occupied by teachers and learners," (p. 17), I found a union between the instincts I had developed as a performer and those I was discovering as a teacher. I realized my years of training, teaching, and working as a performer prepared me to step into the reflective practitioner role. To better illustrate the effect of this comparison, I have created a table comparing the similarities between the two roles. This table is included in Appendix B.

One theatrical technique I found useful in comparing reflective practice to performance is improvisation. As Taylor (1996) mentions, the "prompt decisions" required of the reflective practitioner in response to a research scenario are similar to those of actors. Actors and reflective practitioners must both be prepared to make on-the-spot decisions to move the scene, or teachable moment, forward. This technique is practiced by shifting away from a script/lesson plan while simultaneously accessing the resources within one's own knowledge base. This is a challenging method, but by working toward a comfortable use of improvisation in research practice or performing, the outcome is more flexible and thus a more responsive research assessment.

3.5 The limitations of the methodology

As with most research methodologies, the reflective practitioner approach presents some limitations, one being that the reflective practitioner relies mainly on her reactions and observations, with the potential loss of insight based on the participants of

the study. I noted this particularly when I reached the data analysis stage of my study and found myself curious about the students' reactions to the activities I was reflecting on.

Another limitation relates to the practitioner's necessary inability to record observations at the time of practice. It would be ideal for me, as a researcher, to record my thoughts while leading the activities, however that would inhibit my ability, as a practitioner, to engage fully in the moment. This tension is inherent in the methodology and while I attempted to overcome it by recording my thoughts directly after class, there was of course some loss of experiential clarity. There is no true substitute for in-the-moment reflections.

4 THE RESEARCH PROJECT

4.1 The study – An introduction

I was part of a research team on a SSHRC-funded project during the 2007-08 school year that enabled me to use drama to address the issue of conflict with three classes at Cedar Stand Elementary. Having studied Theatre of the Oppressed through the Headlines Theatre intensive summer workshop, conducted private readings, and attended the Conference of the Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed (PTO) in Omaha, Nebraska in May 2008, I chose to focus my attention on Forum Theatre, which eventually transformed into Image Theatre.

As previously mentioned (see page 1), I initially explored Forum Theatre techniques, but Image Theatre proved to be more age-appropriate. The age demographics and class dynamics are detailed below in the section titled "The students, the classes" (page 38). Having worked extensively with elementary-age students in other theatre settings, I enjoyed the challenge of incorporating both a new theme and a new drama method. There were no final performances in my classes, so without the pressure to perform our work for others outside of the class itself, I adjusted the lessons according to my students' needs and explored the various potentials of the Theatre of the Oppressed techniques.

An initial roadblock was the lack of research evidence for using Theatre of the Oppressed techniques with younger children. Much of the current literature involves either communities of adults or adolescents. To surmount this obstacle, my preparatory research combined sources concerning the use of drama in elementary classrooms and

those concerning general Theatre of the Oppressed techniques, specifically Image

Theatre. With this approach, I was able to develop conflict recognition and resolution

lesson plans that incorporated the ideas and image-making techniques.

Through a reflective practice and the use of techniques from my training as a

performer, I conducted my research in three classrooms for approximately five hours per

week from September 2007 to June 2008. I witnessed first-hand the academic and social

growth that students experience over the course of one school year and used that to adjust

my lessons during the process. As a visitor to the school, I was invited to attend

additional performances, daily lessons, special activities, weekly rituals, and faculty and

staff functions. I was welcomed into the Cedar Stand community that served as the

bedrock for my research process.

4.2 Why Image Theatre?

> Images are surfaces that reflect the light that strikes them […] all images reflect the
> memories, imaginations, emotions of each observer who looks at them. (Boal, 2002, p.
> 139)

As described in Chapter Two, the Theatre of the Oppressed methods empower

participants to engage in their communities, lives, and lived experiences by "enhancing

[their] ability to know or recognize a given situation, and to help [them] rehearse actions

which can lead to the breaking of the oppression shown in that situation." (Boal, 2002, p.

207) Image Theatre, specifically, invites participants to create images that mean many

things to many people. In my classes, I used Image Theatre activities as a means to

involve my students in a dialogue about conflict. They were given the opportunity to

interpret the image of conflict I placed in front of them, to process the concept of conflict

in their lives, and to relate to their fellow classmates on a visceral level. Without the pressure of having to memorize lines or speak in front of an audience (in this case, an audience of their peers), many students were able to release their inhibitions and "perform." They used their bodies to explore image-making and learned to articulate their emotions when responding to images.

In Image Theatre, the cooperation required to create a unified presentation created tremendous group-building capacity. In my classroom, the children united as image-makers, a connection that was generally effective in overcoming the barriers of language, popularity, family wealth, and race which I had seen act as deterrents in class unity in the past. David Diamond (2007) of Headlines Theatre has argued that it is possible on the first day of a workshop filled with strangers, "to create an environment in which the group consciousness can express itself, sometimes at a subconscious level, using the language of an image." (p. 93) Even when the dynamics in the classroom were challenging, the students understood it was crucial to the Image Theatre practice that we maintain our collaboration.

Because of the nature of the activities that centred on dramatic play, the pressure to act a certain way or say certain things was often lifted by the all-inclusive nature of the work. Boal stresses the importance of every member of the group:

> Those who are outside the image […] are still part of the general image of the group; even if they are 'happy watching,' they are part of the overall image and are taking on the roles of people who are 'happy watching.' (Boal, 2002, p. 192)

I emphasized this point specifically in the classroom by explaining the importance

of seeing an image through one's own eyes because individual interpretations of

an image will be different, even if the observer is sitting out of the activity.

Boal talks about of the complexity of words in Image Theatre. At a time in a

student's education when attention is placed on literacy, the opportunity to step away

from words can be uncomfortable. I sought to find a balance within the safe space of the

classroom where students could release the pressures of verbalization while internalizing

the emotions that the images evoked.

> …We should not try to 'understand' the meaning of each image, to apprehend its precise meaning, but to *feel* those images, to let our memories and imaginations wander: *the meaning of an image is the image itself.* (Boal, 2002, 175)

In guiding the students away from the reliance on words to express emotions, my goal

was to invite more reflection in the moment. If the students thought too much about

creating a "good" image, they often tried to vocalize what they were attempting to

accomplish and in doing so, they lost the power and impulse of the image.

In the process of children offering titles, thoughts, statements, and movement to

the images, I stressed that no choices the students made in "naming" the images were

incorrect. Boal (2002) states that "images are polysemic – they can have many meanings

and we should never reduce those meanings to the 'correct' one, or to the one the sculptor

has 'intended.'" (p. 139) Each student made different meanings from the images and in

the comparison of their various, equally-valued interpretations, discussions formed.

4.3 The students, the classes

  I visited three Cedar Stand Elementary classes twice each week during the 2007/2008 school year. Each visit lasted approximately one hour, and the weekly visits were fairly consistent until the end of the school year when school activities took precedence over the drama time. Ultimately, I was able to accomplish more with the Image Theatre techniques with the older children. Their grasp of the theories behind the power of images to create dialogue was more developmentally advanced, though the younger students were able to enter into the activities without the burden of over-conceptualizing the work.[1] For this reason, I have chosen to focus more on my reflections from my time with the older grades than with the younger grades, though I will include reflections from my experience with the younger grade when it adds helpful dimensions to my findings.

4.3.1 Allison Martin – Grade 4 Montessori

  I visited Allison Martin's Grade 4 Montessori class during the entire school year. "Miss Allison's" class consisted of 24 ethnically diverse students. The courtesy and support students showed each other was noticeable in their interactions with each other and the activities. Despite differences in temperament, comfort in speaking in front of the class, difficulties at home, or cliques that formed – when the students focused on their peers' performances, there was never any mockery or laughter at fellow students. The Image Theatre activities I brought to this class have the potential to evoke delicate personal matters, yet Allison's class participated maturely in the games. Allison's

influence contributed to the success of her students as I detail below in the section titled "The Cedar Stand Elementary teachers," on page 40.

4.3.2 Laura Wilson – Grades 4/5 Mainstream

Laura Wilson had a combination of 28 Grade 4/5 students in her class, approximately half of which were English as an Additional Language (EAL) students. This class was a challenge for me at first. It took time for us to build a comfortable environment conducive to doing drama work. There were many extroverts who participated in every activity, and an equal number of students who rarely spoke during group activities, Check-Ins (see "The daily lessons" below, page 42), or transitional periods. Fortunately, this group found their niche with Image Theatre. They were not afraid to take risks, ask questions, or experiment in front of each other. I searched my Theatre of the Oppressed workshop notes and literature to find more games for this group to try, and the class often gave me suggestions and feedback on which games worked and which did not. There was a touching moment in my last visit with them when one of the beginner level EAL students thanked me for teaching her "very good drama."

4.3.3 Sylvie Brown – Grades 1-3 Montessori

I worked with Sylvie Brown's Grades 1-3 Montessori class the most out of all of the classes, visiting her class twice each week for the first term, and once each week the second term with additional classes toward the end of the school year. Sylvie's class was an ethnically-diverse group of 22 students. Some of the students were taken out for EAL lessons each week, but their English skills were adequate enough to allow them to

participate in drama work without difficulty. However, the age and ability range in this

combined class required accommodations to be made to the lesson plans. I carefully

planned each game so as to challenge the Grade 2-3s enough, while not working too high

above the Grade 1s', or younger Grade 2s', developmental abilities. Sylvie followed the

Montessori curriculum closely, but added many of her own activities to enrich the

students' understanding of the conflict issues I was bringing up in my work with them.

The Image Theatre work I did with the class did not take precedence over the Process

Drama[2], story performance[3], or general drama games, rather the images were used to

enhance the other activities.

4.4 The Cedar Stand Elementary teachers

The support of the Cedar Stand teachers helped to enforce the effects of Image

Theatre with the students. I encouraged them to take part in the activities, so they could

learn how to facilitate them. When participating, they developed ideas of how to use the

drama techniques to enrich their own lessons and suggested ways for me to incorporate

the British Columbia or Montessori curriculum into the drama classroom.

At one point, Laura observed how the whole-group activities were overwhelming

for her students because they were used to working in smaller groups. I shared with her

that the whole-group experience was an important aspect of drama work because it gave a

sense of community, whereas the smaller groups were conducive to exploring specific

elements of a game. (L. Wilson, personal communication, February 12, 2008). At

another point, in Sylvie's class, I noticed her look of confusion about an activity the

students were doing. She later clarified that she did not understand the motive behind it

(S. Brown, personal communication, September 27, 2007). This process of inquiry became an ongoing practice for me and the teachers, one in which my explanations served to confirm and/or further explore my understanding of the goals for each game.

This project gave the teachers the opportunity to observe their students' reactions to challenging activities and to gain insight into positive ways of aiding in their students' learning. During a conversation with Allison, she shared that by taking on the role of outside observer, she learned what triggered a specific student to have a "meltdown." During previous "meltdowns" she had needed to maintain her focus in leading the class and could not give her full attention to what may have caused the student to react in that way, but in this case, she learned how to better handle the situation (A. Martin, personal communication, October 30, 2007). In another instance, Laura told me about one of her students who usually had difficulty staying on task. She noticed how in the drama game he was "able to really focus and create something that worked very well." (L. Wilson, personal communication, February 12, 2008)

I welcomed the teachers' interjections. They often reminded the students that a lesson I was teaching related to something they had learned previously. They could also recognize and praise specific students when they succeeded in a drama activity that may have been too difficult for them in the past. One reflection I found in my own notes was as follows:

> It's great when the teachers help me conduct the games [...] It's not about making the job easier, but about giving the kids the attention they need. What a difference another person makes… (Wolfman-Robichaud, April 1, 2008, Allison's class)

The three effective teachers with whom I worked gave important insight into my research. They knew alternative ways of obtaining and maintaining focus in a classroom, calm and effective discipline techniques, methods to promote empathy in students, and the daily nuances of working with a large group of children toward a common goal. Their input and feedback helped in refining my lesson plans and strategies.

4.5 The daily lessons

Please note: see Appendix C for further descriptions of activities.

4.5.1 Check-in

Each of my classroom visits began with a Check-in. The students and I sat in a circle on the floor and one at a time, everyone was invited to speak. The reasons behind this technique are twofold: it gives students the opportunity to "check into" how they are feeling and share it with the group without judgment or disruption, and it gives me a chance to gauge the general attitude and energy of the room and adjust my lesson plan accordingly before we start activities. They were occasionally asked to say an adjective that described their emotions or concerns at the moment ("happy," "tired," and "hungry" were typical responses of the younger students; the older students were able to better articulate with words such as "excited," "kinda off," or "confused"). Sylvie shared her idea of "Taking Your Temp" in which students explained how they felt on a scale from 1 to 10 (1 meaning "not great" and 10 meaning "fantastic!"). We repeated the exercise every time I visited and eventually the students began to talk comfortably about themselves without my having to ask.

To start Check-ins with a new group, I often suggested a topic for the children to talk about, but as the sessions continued, it became a platform for students to describe any concerns, stories, or emotions that they wanted to share. Some students felt very comfortable speaking in front of others – often they talked about their weekends, their mornings, future vacations. As long as it was appropriate for the classroom, I did not tell them what they could or could not say. Students were also free to pass on Check-in.

> Check-in is getting personal – not a bad thing, and no 'wrong' things are being disclosed. One girl just slapped the floor and Checked-in with a scowl – so we moved on. It's good for them to know that they can pass if they want. Passing is a very valid option. (Wolfman-Robichaud, November 13, 2007, Allison's class)

Usually, students who had chosen to pass many times eventually gained the confidence to speak. This ritual provided the opportunity for students to learn to listen to each other. When one person was speaking, everyone else generally showed respect for what they were saying by giving them their full attention.

4.5.2 Warm-ups

The first activity I led the class in was one of a variety of "warm-ups." This was anything from a song (Joe Button), to shaking out our bodies (Shakedown), to basic stretching. This was an exercise that the students anticipated after Check-in, and they usually jumped to their feet to prepare to warm-up their bodies once we were finished checking in. Even though we did not perform a final show, I let the students know that the warm-ups were preparatory exercises that would lead to being energized for a performance.

4.5.3 Theatre games/exercises

Knowing that we had a number of sessions to work together, I did not start image games immediately. Rather, I chose to work on developing awareness of others and communication through theatre games and exercises before delving into using our bodies to create theatre.

Theatre games focus on the exploration of the body, different senses, listening skills, and working in a group or pairs. One-on-one or pair work allows students to be engaged in an activity for an extended period of time with one other student. Everyone develops skills related to the activity and there is less pressure to perform for a group if it's only between two people. Many of the games are basic group-building activities that are important in theatre, as actors must work to gain a sense of community, a comfort on stage, and a trust in their fellow actors.

I used many silent games as precursors to working on Image Theatre techniques. Silent games help students to focus on using their bodies more in their interactions with each other.

> Although the 'silence' aspect of the games is challenging to this group, I've found that calling attention to the importance of that part of the game is helping. By encouraging the 'thought' and meditative aspect of the silence, the focus is on processing the activities in a different way. (Wolfman-Robichaud, March 11, 2008, Laura's class)

4.5.4 Image Theatre games

As explained earlier in this chapter, Image Theatre allows for many interpretations of one image to promote dialogue. By playing image games with my students, I introduced them to varying degrees of conflict, but also to different ways of

44

communicating without words. The games can be played in large groups (which we often did at the end of a session after smaller groups had "rehearsed") or in smaller groups thus giving each student more opportunities to participate. The students offered insightful interpretations of the images and their commitment to these games often resulted in having to cut the exercise short because they were so engaged in the activity.

4.6 My role and challenges as a visiting teacher-artist

My first priority was not to obtain the data necessary to write a report, but rather to help my students benefit from the activities I presented to them. I developed my strengths as a teacher when I began to observe what was happening in the classroom. At the same time I grew as a researcher because I was reflecting on my visits as a teacher.

Shortly before the end of my time at Cedar Stand, I found a book titled *Teachers are Researchers* edited by Leslie Patterson and others (1993). The book contains several vignettes about the duality of being a teacher and a researcher. In her story, high school English teacher, Marné B. Isakson (1993) writes, "I started looking at people instead of the lesson plans. I became involved in the classroom […] instead of just directing activities." (p. 33) Many of the book's insights applied to my practice and the continuous inquiries I discovered during my time in the classroom.

In my reflections on defining my role in the classroom I took on the role that most applied to the needs of the people with whom I was working.

Am I an artist? Do the students see me as teacher or as someone who brings in games?
Am I qualified to do this work? (Wolfman-Robichaud, June 3, 2008, Laura's class)

The students needed a guide to their explorations of drama work, the teachers needed someone to introduce them to different techniques, and my colleagues on the grant needed me to be "in the field" with the students, collecting data, but also giving them a viewpoint from which to observe the students.

I frequently questioned taking on the role of the "Joker."[4] Jokers are performers who guide the actors and audience, yet they run the risk of being perceived as the group therapist if they attempt to become too analytical. Paul Dwyer (2004) wrote about this when observing a Headlines Theatre production in the mid-nineties titled "Boundaries." He questioned the Joker's role as teacher in a community setting because as a visitor to a school, discussing a complicated topic ("to reduce the incidence of [physical and psychological] violence against women at colleges and universities" [p. 201]), the Jokers/facilitators assumed the roles of "therapeutic guides" without presenting sufficient proof or certification that they were qualified to do so.

The teacher, who has a sufficient amount of theoretical knowledge and holds an important position in relation to the students, is able to cross that line into theoretical analysis if necessary. I was careful not to delve too deeply into a difficult topic and often deferred questions to the teachers who were better-qualified to handle them. As a visitor to the class and out of courtesy to the teachers and school, I maintained an "outsider" role even when I was fully engaged with the students on the inside. Fortunately, the teachers continued the work I introduced to their students by writing about the experience, conducting discussions about what was covered in their drama work, and other methods of reflection.

It was a challenge, but I attempted to remain consistent with the various teaching

styles I encountered in each class. Below is an excerpt from a reflection I wrote

following a visit to Sylvie Brown's class:

> The difference in teaching styles – and my bouncing between them class to class – posed
> a bit of a challenge. Yes, the teacher has given me control when I'm in a classroom, but
> this is their classroom and the kids are used to reacting to their methods. Sylvie has
> serious talks, she tells the kids when she's proud of their work and when they should be
> proud of their progress, but also lets them know if she's disappointed in their
> attitude/disrespect/etc. Allison has a quiet bell, Laura claps her hands. I've had to learn
> to change my tactics. (Wolfman-Robichaud, February 28, 2008, Sylvie's class)

During my visits to Cedar Stand, I always maintained a high level of respect for the

teachers, students, and classrooms. I recognized the importance of the continuity of the

children's school curriculum and of not disrupting that environment. As often as

possible, I incorporated the teachers' lessons into my own lessons, this gave the students

a "throughline"[5] from the work they did with their teacher to the work they did with me.

In general, I found the context of the school, curriculum, and teachers to be vitally

important to the implementation of Image Theatre techniques in the classroom. These

must be taken into account at every stage, from planning to in-the-moment adjustments,

and will ultimately cause wide variation in the successful future utilizations of Image

Theatre in the classroom.

4.7 Endnotes

1. Often in an Image Theatre workshop, too much of the focus is on explaining the image. Discussions about the process and experience are welcome, but since we're working with images and not dialogue, it's important to maintain the basis of the activity. On a few occasions, my students discussed the activities afterwards and I allowed this to happen. If a student could not express the way he felt about an image through words, I invited them to create another image to explain their feelings.

2. I used Process Drama in Sylvie's class as an extension to some of the books we read. We used characters from the books to improvise scenes, to hot-seat characters, and to expand on the stories. Some of the key characteristics of Process Drama, as defined by Cecily O'Neill (1995) are:

   "Its purpose is to generate a dramatic and […] fictional world, which will be inhabited for the insights, interpretations, and understandings it may yield; It does not proceed from a prewritten script, but is likely to be based on a pre-text; There is no external audience, participants are audience to their own acts." (pp. 12-13)

3. I use the term "story performance" to mean an improvisational performance of a text being read aloud. This was conducted in different ways depending on both the story and how comfortable the students felt with the material. Because some stories I read were unfamiliar to the students, they were acting on impulse to the words they heard (complete with soundscapes and physical representations of the sun, wind, snow, etc.) Other times, I read the story to them once and with my occasional help in remembering the details, they gave an impromptu performance.

4. The Joker plays the role of the facilitator (often referred to as the 'difficultator' by Boal) in Forum theatre. Diamond (2007) defines the role of the Joker as one who "creates a working space that is a safe place for the participants to be able to enter disequilibrium." (p. 172)

5. According to Perviz Sawoski (2007) "when objectives were strung together in a logical and coherent form, a *throughline* of action was mapped out for the character." (p. 6) This means for the students that there is a continuation of a curriculum objective that can be better understood if they learn to address it in different ways (through writing, drama, reading, etc.)

5 THE DATA

5.1 The collection of data

Before deciding on a type of data to use for my research, I started a journal to record my reflections. My early reflections followed a four-step pattern:

Reports on specific games and their outcomes:

> We had a rip-roaring time playing Animals (see Appendix C) today, it felt a lot like a hockey match or something […] The head-smacking when something doesn't play out as they'd hoped is very funny. I stressed that it's the job of the kids who sit first to make sure the other people have hurdles to jump over. They take their jobs very seriously, and this keeps ALL parties involved. Also, it makes for lots of cheering, egging on, and general fun. (Wolfman-Robichaud, January 31, 2008, Sylvie's class)

Comments on individual students:

> …One girl was very shy, so I was surprised when she happily rose to the challenge of leading the Leader of the Orchestra (see Appendix C). I felt the lack of coaxing and just letting her go worked fine. (Wolfman-Robichaud, October 23, 2007, Allison's class)

Ideas for new games:

> To extend the activity even more, we could act out the entire scene only using one line. Granted, the other kids would have to sit and watch (a potentially daunting task), but we could work that into some improv….get the emotions down, then the lines!   (Wolfman-Robichaud, October 4, 2007, Sylvie's class)

Overall impressions of the day:

> Success!! Little did I know that our conflict/bystander activity would lead us right into the lion's den of Image Theatre, but I think we can do it! (Wolfman-Robichaud, November 8, 2007, Sylvie's class)

The more time I spent with the students at Cedar Stand, the more I focused my

techniques and reflections on understanding their reactions to my lessons. By the end of

my time at the school, the majority of the data entries reflected on my own performance

and need for improvement as a teacher. I maintained the pattern from the earlier entries,

and added an inquiry-based approach that propelled my reflective practice forward and

shaped my teaching techniques.

5.2 Data analysis

An important analytical tool I made use of during the analysis was NVIVO. This

tool allowed me to view my data in its entirety while highlighting patterns and themes. I

methodically sorted through these patterns with an eye for repeated questions or thoughts

that came up in my journal writing, repetitions in my observations of student reactions to

specific games, and thorough explanations of specific classroom moments. By

examining these results, I began to recognize reoccurring instances of empathy building,

growing classroom community, and effective teaching techniques. It also allowed me to

examine specific reactions to the introduction and implementation of Image Theatre

techniques in the classroom.

5.3 The questions

Leslie Patterson (1993) advises teachers to raise questions about their work to

better define their purpose for research: "moments of inquiry and those of reflection

overlap as the teacher researcher articulates a conceptual framework to direct the

investigation." (p. 8) I discovered this constant-inquiry method when reflecting in my

journals. The questions I posed were not always meant to be answered, but they were there as a guide for further inquiry. Below are some of the questions that helped to improve my practice in the moment and to reflect more fully in hindsight:

- Is it important to progress? (Wolfman-Robichaud, January 29, 2008, Allison's class)
- I love their enthusiasm and their understanding – so how can I craft this program from their minds? How can I get their input? I want to use these transformations to develop and re-develop the activities. (Wolfman-Robichaud, October 2, 2007, Sylvie's class)
- I'm absolutely opposed to guns, but shouldn't we explore them […] instead of my just telling them to stop thinking about them and go on with peaceful things? That's denying they exist! (Wolfman-Robichaud, December 4, 2007, Allison's class)
- Do I approach these kids differently because they're so capable? (Wolfman-Robichaud, March 11, 2008, Allison's class)
- Is it unethical of me to allow the kids to talk about their families? When is it safe to tell our own stories? If theatre supposedly helps these kids prepare for sticky situations, when do I draw the line at fictionalizing their own stories for the sake of the craft? (Wolfman-Robichaud, November 20, 2007, Sylvie's class)
- I'm not sure that my theatre games are heading in the right direction. I can give them the language, but then what? It shows up during math? I test their comprehension skills? How can I see if this has any real effect? (Wolfman-Robichaud, October 30, 2007, Sylvie's class)

These questions proved to be some of the most important research data. I wrote about altering my plan or specific events I observed, but the questions above (and many others) captured the moment of inquiry and the subsequent execution of an idea. I used these questions to guide my observations which, in turn, helped me to focus on specific reactions from the students and hone my skills as a facilitator. By questioning the effectiveness of certain activities, when I repeated games with the students, I recognized their deeper understanding of the activities and the effect of my improved direction.

5.4 Outside researchers

Obtaining outside research was helpful, yet slightly contradictory to the methodology I used in my study. The extra data I collected were three interviews (two student focus groups, one interview with Allison and Sylvie) and the notes and personal conversations with an outside researcher who was part of the SHHRC project.

5.4.1 The outsider's bias

My conversations with the outside researcher and her notes were very insightful for me in that they provided an example of how an outside observer can often have different motives than the teacher-researcher who is conducting the practice. She had many insights that I had not considered, some of which I incorporated into my lessons.

In one instance, when the researcher brought up gender issues in the classroom in relation to a specific activity, I found her concerns did not relate to the outcome I sought in the exercise. In the activity, I facilitated a game whose goal is for two players to choose emotions from a list to act out. They then must persuade each other, in some way, to change their emotion. As an acting exercise, it challenges the student/actor to find many ways of conveying one emotion while attempting to have an effect on another person. This is a very traditional method that directors use to help actors to find their motivations, by asking them to try different tactics instead of settling on one way to play a scene.

The researcher, who had done extensive work in exploring gender issues with adolescents, was uncomfortable watching two students of the opposite sex interact in this exercise. She said that she was "triggered" when the girl physically pushed the boy

though, by societal standards, "he was not allowed to push her back." (A. Showman, personal communication, April 17, 2008) The boy reacted by threatening the girl with his physical size, but it was in a controlled environment clearly understood and denoted by the students. As a result of the researcher's background in violence prevention work, she saw the exercise through a different lens than that of a director working with actors on a scene. My reflection on that day captured both mine and Allison's response to the point the outside researcher raised: "Allison and I both thought that because this was such a safe environment in which the kids could explore, then, Anthony's overpowering and intimidating role was more about him coming out of his shell than overstepping his boundaries." (Wolfman-Robichaud, April 17, 2008, Allison's class)

Though in that instance I did not integrate her viewpoint, I valued the researcher's concern that I was "sending the wrong message" (A. Showman, personal communication, April 17, 2008). It helped me to realize that the lenses through which outside researchers are looking may differ, and that I would need to explain my research direction fully and also accommodate external viewpoints in my study.

5.4.2 The interviews

The interviews I conducted with the teachers and students served as a useful feedback tool to refine my practice and also reassured me that the focus of my study was on track. Various literary sources suggested that I ask the children to use their own words to explain how they would describe the activities we played. This gave me the opportunity to learn what areas of my explanations needed clarification, but also to learn what the students retained about the games.

A few of the children repeated what I said verbatim while others explained their views on the activities. Below, I have noted when a student repeated my instructions (verbatim) or when they embellished the goal of the game in their own words (addition):

> **Sarah**: Why do you think we do Check-in?
> **Student 1**: To see how people are feeling. [verbatim]
> **Student 2**: To see how we're feeling so we can play good games. [verbatim and addition]
> **Student 3**: To see where you went on the weekends. [addition]
> **Student 4**: To know more about people. [addition]
> (Multiple students, personal communication, December 8, 2007)

The students' verbatim responses indicated that they had clearly connected the purpose of the exercise with their own experiences of it. The personalized responses were also encouraging as a sign that the students were personally engaged with the class exercises. The responses I received guided me to change some of my explanations about the activities and to remind the students what to be aware of throughout the course of an activity.

The older group I interviewed suggested new game ideas and commented on the games we played. I asked about an activity that had been difficult for the class. The response I received stated: "It's tough because you have to remember all the steps in the game […] like, if you're not paying attention, you'll just mess up. But if you're actually thinking about what you're doing, it'll be easier." (Anonymous student, personal communication, December 8, 2007) The interviews gave the students a platform to further discuss and share apprehensions they had with each other and I learned to be aware of certain games being too challenging.

My teacher interview gave Allison and Sylvie the opportunity to connect with each other on the effects of drama in their classrooms. They both recognized that the classroom is a safe place to use drama as a practice technique for real life situations.

> It's an area where they're able to be in the least amount of risk […] You do your high-risk activities after they've been scaffolded […] High-risk is when 'this is when it really counts, show me what you can do' but the low-risk is when there's no real conflict, like in the classroom… (A. Martin, personal communication, February 27, 2008)

I learned how the two teachers continued to use the drama techniques to reinforce my exercises and to adapt them as needed to their own lessons. As a visiting teacher-artist, it allowed me to talk with the teachers to ensure that my goals for my visits matched theirs. It also emphasized for me the importance of teacher involvement and support in bringing theatre education successfully into the classroom.

6 THE FINDINGS AND DISCUSSION

6.1 The effects of Image Theatre with children

In re-reading my reflections on my visits to Cedar Stand Elementary, I discovered that while elementary-age students are aware of their bodies, they may not yet be aware of the self-discovery process that can occur by using their bodies to perform. In one of my reflections, I remarked on a discussion I had with Laura Wilson:

> …By embodying the feeling, emotion, sentiment, story, childhood, concern, etc., the kids allow a lot more to come out than they would have if someone just asked 'how are you feeling?' They start to recognize in other kids the exact same feelings that they are having and it may ease them to know they are not alone in feeling a certain way. (Wolfman-Robichaud, Laura's class, February 12, 2008)

Below is a discussion of my findings about the importance of Image Theatre techniques in helping children to develop a sense of confidence in their meaning-making skills and their ability to engage in dialogue about difficult issues.

6.1.1 Building performance confidence

I discovered that by first witnessing examples of images, the students were more comfortable with the process of creating images themselves. When working on Shel Silverstein's book *The Giving Tree,* I gave an example of how to create an image using "Clay" (see Appendix C for full description of this activity) by first sculpting an image myself. As I demonstrated the game, I observed the students' increasing excitement to play it themselves as they watched me work.

I shaped an example of the stump at the end of the story [...] When I asked them to shape their favourite part of the book, most shaped the same stump I made, but that morphed in the second group's go at sculpting. The second group, after seeing the first group and the potential to let go, really did some fun interpretive shapes. (Wolfman-Robichaud, October 2, 2007, Sylvie's class)

Because Image Theatre is an exploratory method of learning, the earlier a student feels comfortable creating something on their own, the more beneficial the process will be. Since most of the students had never created images before, they often felt the need to discuss what constituted a "right" or "wrong" image before attempting to create an image. I noted early on the children's need for affirmation, and in the classroom adapted to this by emphasizing that the images they created were open to interpretation. This diminished the students' need to be correct and please the teacher and instead promoted the self-confidence necessary to create meaning through images.

As the children grew confident in their abilities, I discovered my own inclination to give over-explanations of techniques rather than explaining only the necessary elements of the game. If the students asked questions about the activity, I answered them, but I found it necessary to not directly invite questions. The goal was for the students to explore the intricacies of the exercises through their bodies rather than learning how to create images by verbal instruction. As the image-making process and their confidence in their abilities progressed, the less they asked questions about the instructions and the more I was able to gauge the extent to which my help was needed.

6.1.2 Discovering the bridge between the body and emotions

The first game I played with the older students was Boal's game titled "Complete the Image." In this game, one person forms a frozen image with their body and then another person adds to that image by creating a shape with their body to "complete the image." The first person is then replaced by a third person, who makes a new shape that changes the image.

I only used this game with the older students, and instead of beginning with the idea of conflict, I chose first to focus on the concept of "trust."

> They thought this activity was very funny and giggled nervously throughout the whole thing […] I switched it from 'trust' to 'distrust' and had the whole group enter, they still giggled, but they enjoyed it. (Wolfman-Robichaud, November 6, 2008, Allison's class)

When reflecting on this activity, I realized my interpretation of the students' reaction was not accurate. Initially, I thought the giggling was disrespectful to the student performers, however, I later realized it represented their discomfort in trying a new game for the first time and using the body as a form of expression.

There were some physical connections during the image-making, but it was very respectful and usually only with the hands, top of the head, or feet. At no point did I have to implement a "no-touching" policy because the students were so involved in creating a representational image that the focus was not on each other's bodies. This comfort in physically engaging with peers allowed the students to get beyond any difficulty they felt verbally connecting with peers.

As I have mentioned previously, the standard curriculum focuses on learning to articulate feelings through words and there is a corresponding lack of expression through

the body. In this reflective moment, I learned that Image Theatre provided the bridge between the body and the emotion that is not often practiced in the classroom. The students' reactions, as well as my own, proved the need for outlets of natural, embodied experiences that help students organically discover ways of expressing themselves.

6.1.3 *The importance of balancing confidence with impulse*

Sylvie introduced me to a technique that encouraged the students to prepare for an activity by sitting in silence for thirty seconds to think about the issue after listening to the instructions. This exercise allowed them to build their confidence in their practice and to plan ahead how to conduct themselves in the activity. Since Image Theatre activities challenge the creative expression of the body, it was important for the young children to focus their thoughts on the topic before using those thoughts to inform their bodies.

However, when I used this technique in the older classroom, I discovered that the students thought too much about creating an image, and it removed the instinctive aspect of the activity. I found myself balancing the potential loss of impulsivity that Image Theatre promotes with the need for students to prepare and develop their image-making confidence. For example, I realized that some students were confident revisiting an image that they had created during a previous lesson without feeling the need to change it, while others felt the need to adjust the image to accommodate discussions they had in or outside of class:

> Some kids dove in and rehearsed their images without re-creating them. And some
> needed to start from scratch. Of the kids who rehearsed [the exact same images] – those
> were the ones that later got up to show their images. (Wolfman-Robichaud, November
> 27, 2007, Allison's class)

As my reflections suggest, a specific image often needs to be revisited to clarify its
meaning for the observers, but that need must be balanced with the students' occasional
need to alter the image. If students found it necessary to change the image, I facilitated
these alterations for the class, encouraging students to develop an understanding of how
making slight adjustments would change the meaning of an image. I advised them not to
start over with a new image because they would lose the impulse and rawness of the first
image, but on occasion I allowed for one or two people in the image to adjust their stance
if need be.

6.1.4 Brainstorming to help initiate meaning-making

I observed that some less vocal students were having difficulty with the process of
meaning-making in an activity focused on creating titles, "secret thoughts," or names for
the images. These students in particular were eager to participate, but in many cases,
they had trouble locating the explanatory words to represent their interpretations.
Reflecting on this barrier, I altered the exercise to include a brainstorming session in
which the students came up with verbal associations for the word "conflict." I wrote their
responses on a large piece of paper that we kept visible throughout the exercise. Later in
the activity, if they were having difficulty creating titles for an image, the students could
refer to the list they had created to help them find the words to describe what they saw.
Some of the words they thought of were, "Colliding; Unthoughtful; Vile; Punch; Coarse

Language; Betrayal; Loyalty; and Hopeless." (A. Showman, personal communication,

May 8, 2008). Below are some titles that the students created for an image of a struggle

between three people:

Strong and Weak
The Wishers, the Bulliers, and the Beggars
Action Chain
The Wish-giver
Loneliness

This exercise proved Boal's (2002) claim that "[Images] can have many meanings and

we should never reduce those meanings to the correct one." (p. 139) It also demonstrated

the effectiveness of my brainstorming idea to expand the students' interpretations of the

image while providing them the opportunity to listen to and collaborate with their peers

as they went through a similar, but unique, meaning-making process.

6.1.5 No pressure to perform

I discovered early on that it was counterproductive to try to convince a student to

perform. I found that if a student felt pressured to perform, their inclination to go through

the process of self-discovery through performance was replaced by the need to complete

the exercise as quickly as possible. The embarrassment or discomfort they felt at being

forced to perform prohibited them from gaining any positive effect from the experience.

I noted several students who either mentioned their discomfort performing or

demonstrated resistance of any kind and I allowed them to sit out from the activity. By

observing and recording the subtle changes in these students that occurred over short (one

or several class periods) or long (school year) periods of time, I was able to detect when

they were may be ready to perform for the group.   I permitted them to perform

immediately out of turn once they indicated to me that they were confident. My concern

in waiting for the rest of the students to finish before allowing these students to perform

was that they may lose their courage and miss out on an enriching opportunity.

> The group decided to not show their piece. This is a very difficult activity to do if
> everyone is not contributing at least 50%, and this group felt they didn't want to. I had
> them vote on whether or not to prepare an image and then suggested they be very active
> audience members. (Wolfman-Robichaud, December 4, 2008, Allison's class)

If one member of a group did not want to show their work, I asked the rest of the group to

not perform so as not to put peer pressure on the hesitant students. Fortunately, many

students who at first did not want to perform decided to do so after watching their peers.

Not pressuring students to perform creates the healthy environment necessary for Image

Theatre work, an environment in which students became more supportive of each other's

work and even the most apprehensive students will typically (eventually) choose to

perform for their peers. In addition to building confidence in the children, my confidence

as an educator and researcher developed as I learned how to gauge individual students'

reactions and adapting to their transformations.

6.1.6 *The development of empathy through Image Theatre techniques*

In one instance, when working with Sylvie's class, I took the students through a

process of presenting images of conflict and the development of empathy. Sylvie used a

"Talk Box" into which students placed notes throughout the week about unhealthy

encounters with their peers or acknowledgements for kind gestures. At the end of each

week, Sylvie and her students discussed the notes in the box and considered how to deal with the difficult situations empathically. I was given permission to use the notes for the image work and planned to animate the struggle images using Alistair Campbell's Thought Bubble (this is explained in greater detail in Chapter Two, on page 18, and Appendix C). I created a cartoon-like bubble out of cardboard and held it above the students' heads. The students observing then called out what they perceived the character in the image to be thinking:

> The kids created poses that represented the notes and the rest added thoughts to the Thought Bubble above their heads. I deliberately chose not to let the frozen kiddos add their own thoughts. I wanted them to hear the insights they had inspired with their image. They caught onto [the idea that] there are subconscious feelings that we don't always think about or say aloud. (Wolfman-Robichaud, December 4, 2007, Sylvie's class)

I discovered it was helpful to have the visual of the Thought Bubble reminding the younger students to speculate on the image. Also, as a researcher, it reminded me to consider the students' varying reflections on the activities I presented to them.

When using the Talk Box, a student suggested that I begin the activity with an "Acknowledgement." I initially planned to only use the conflict notes, but this student's comment helped me realize that by starting the activity on a positive and safe note, the students may be more comfortable when we moved onto difficult subject matter. This decision helped when we eventually reached an image of conflict in which the students reflected empathically toward the bully:

> I always started with the 'victim' of the situation, before moving onto the 'bully.' For instance, in the pushing note, they started with the 'get out of my way!' and 'move over!' comments, but someone suggested that they might be thinking other things […] They

changed to 'Come on, let's play tag' or 'Please move, I have to get somewhere quickly' and my favourite, 'I really have to use the washroom!' I must use this – not to suggest that [kids who push] always have ulterior motives, but that there are many components to an action. (Wolfman-Robichaud, December 4, 2007, Sylvie's class)

The "kids who push" image led to a discussion about why people occasionally act in an unkind manner. Similar to David Diamond's (2007) findings that the exploration of the bully leads to a better understanding of how "legitimate members of the community are engaged in their own complex struggles" (pp. 40-41), I discovered that the students naturally understood the feeling of empathy toward other people and that though it is not right to act in a certain way, it is usually motivated by a reason other than "just to be mean." (Multiple anonymous students, personal communication, December 4, 2007) This realization of the source of the other's actions was a critical goal of my research, and the effectiveness of this activity in teaching it led me to both incorporate the Thought Bubble into other activities and revisit the Talk Box activity several times throughout the school year.

When I presented the older students with the Thought Bubble, they quickly grasped the concepts the younger students had deduced from the activity. This ability of older children to understand the concept suggested to me that they were capable of handling more difficult material. I introduced them to an activity that I had learned in the Headlines Theatre workshop titled "I want." It is similar to the Thought Bubble, but the statements must begin with "I want."

I worked with the Thought Bubble to find secret thoughts they may have had:

- Why is he doing that?

- I don't know why I'm doing this.

- Please don't hurt me!

- This can't be right.

- I know what he's doing is wrong, but I can't stop watching.

We continued with 'I Want' statements

- I want…to hurt this person.

- I want…to die.

- I want…to run away.

- I want…to see this. (Wolfman-Robichaud, April 8, 2008, Laura's class)

The most challenging part of the "I want" exercise is the inclination to state "I want *him to do something*." The goal is for the participant to take responsibility for their actions in a scenario instead of "wanting" someone else to do something. These activities provided tremendous feedback for me as a practitioner; I found I needed to adjust my methods constantly to help students reach the point of stating clearly what they needed from any situation. When I was successful, I was able to help the students connect to their emotions and desires. By doing so, they began to develop a sense of when to act according to their own needs and when to feel empathy towards others. Though this technique was one of the most effective at empathy building, it was also a challenging one for me, as the facilitator, as it demanded a high degree of guiding for the students. This may be because the activity is fairly high-level for students of this age group, but its potential for positive results warrants further study.

6.1.7 Evoking stories through image work

One student in Allison's class had the following reaction to the image work:
toward the end of one of my visits, he offered a story to the class that he had wanted to
tell someone but never had. He recalled a time when he and his parents had been driving
through a neighbourhood and from his window in the back seat, he saw two men in an
alley, one of whom was holding a gun:

> He didn't hear shots, but the image stayed in his head. He never told his parents. I asked
> if he thought they'd have done something, or if he thought he should have told them. He
> didn't know how to respond. He'd never told anyone this story. This did not [get rid of]
> the fear that he felt, but it created a safe space for him to talk. That's a very big goal.
> And we reached it. (Wolfman-Robichaud, December 4, 2007, Allison's class)

My personal experience with image work has often evoked memories of related stories
that may have been suppressed, and I discovered that it had a similar effect on children. It
allowed them to process these memories in a group manner, which helped the story teller
and the listeners to explore the experience through a group discussion. In observing how
this technique applies to younger elementary students, I found that establishing a
comfortable environment is a critical prerequisite to success. As I have detailed
previously, I addressed this issue by the methods described in "The daily lessons," page
42. As a part of the overarching goal of encouraging dialogue in children, the sharing of
stories proved to be an important aspect to our discussions in the class.

6.1.8 Encouraging the ownership of practice and the safety of discovery

The students developed a confidence in their abilities as image-makers as we worked through the activities. Their commitment to and the ownership they felt toward the work encouraged their own reflective practice and positive interactions with their peers:

> Things got slightly carried away and silly on occasion, but usually it was self-correcting, either the person who was doing it tried it out and didn't like it OR someone else tapped in and tapped them out. (Wolfman-Robichaud, May 6, 2008, Laura's class)

This benefit carried on past my lessons to affect other interactions the children engaged in. The teachers I worked with used a lot of the material presented in the drama activities for reflective assignments in their own lessons. Through journal-writing, artwork, and class discussions, the children referred to the drama work in their interactions with peers and developed a better understanding of class material. (Martin & Brown, personal communication, February 27, 2008). For instance, after I used the Thought Bubble, one student told me that she pictured some of her friends' Thought Bubbles over the weekend. She claimed that it made her more sensitive to how they were feeling. (Anonymous, personal communication, December 11, 2007)

I observed developmental differences in the Grade 4/5 students that I did not see in the younger students. There was the occasional instance when one of the older boys tried to get the attention of one of the girls, but because the work held the interest of everyone involved, their actions translated into images that prompted dialogues about performing *for* someone, or being aware of others watching you. I found that these interactions demonstrated how Image Theatre was a safe environment in which to explore

67

new interests and to support the natural transitions the older students started to experience.

During one visit at the end of the school year, an outside observer conducted a verbal survey on the students' feelings about the drama work we had done over the course of the school year. She asked them why they thought we were doing the image work around conflict. Some of their responses are below:

> **Researcher**: Why do you think we're doing this?
> - There are things that could happen to ourselves one day, that's why we practice.
> - Sometimes you don't have to say something.
> - To remember that the world is not that peaceful.
> - Making a point without using words.
>
> (A. Showman, personal communication, May 8, 2008)

Early in the school year, I mentioned that the reason for doing image work was to explore another form of expression. I discovered through my own writing and experience in the classroom, that rather than imposing a lesson on the students, I would allow for the learning to occur during the activity itself. The above reactions suggest that they had begun to build an understanding of the motivations behind image work.

6.1.9 My personal challenges

My greatest apprehension in doing image work about conflict was how to approach violence issues. Frequently, I felt uncomfortable watching the images being created because I did not know the origin of the images or how to best handle the

violence being depicted. My goal in exploring these images was to actively address any desensitization the students may have felt:

> We worked on the image of someone being strangled and a gun being held to his head at the same time. There was an on-looker with her arms crossed, grinning as she observed the scene, and another with her hands over her mouth. This is the image these kids chose. I was unsure if we should move forward with a gun image, but it would be oppressive to say you can't choose this, but because I, the teacher, think you shouldn't know about this, I won't work with it. (Wolfman-Robichaud, December 4, 2007, Allison's class)

It would have been hypocritical of me to decide for the students the images to animate. I may never be completely comfortable working with violent images, but as a facilitator, I recognize this as a concern and a reality for many children. However, through my reflections, the more I addressed the difficult topic of violence, the more comfortable I was in facilitating discussions and activities surrounding it. It was important for me to go through the personal challenge of addressing an issue of discomfort by not setting my feelings aside, but instead being a part of the exploration with my students, and thus developing a community consensus on ways to address it. This experience led me to conclude that practitioners of Image Theatre need to be conscious of how their own biases might play out in classroom activities and challenge themselves not to view this as a barrier but an opportunity.

I was aware of mine and the school's ethical responsibility in ensuring a child's emotional well-being. I understood that an Image Theatre facilitator must be careful in not allowing the explorations to go too far beyond a child's comfort level. These children trusted me and probably would have felt comfortable with my challenging them more. However, because of our limited time together, I sought more to maintain a healthy

69

environment in which to explore the activities. Had any situations arisen that would have required more support than I was capable of giving the students, I discussed with the teachers to refer to their judgment to handle those situations.

6.1.10 The importance of the discussion

I found that the students better understood the activity if given the opportunity to talk about the images before creating them. Often, the students were so excited to create the images, that the noise level became very high in the class. Sylvie made the observation that the talking had increased with the increase in complexity of the activities. She, too, had experienced the children talking more in class and was interested in taking this opportunity to listen to what her students were talking about. Sylvie confirmed that they were dissecting the image work as we were making it:

> Sylvie sat with paper and pencil to note what was being talked about in between activities when the chatter picked up, and I allowed the necessary time for the kids to process the activity verbally. I didn't ask them to turn to their neighbour to talk, but as we'd hoped, the 'chatter' was audible excitement or vocal responses to the activities – and it turned out to be general on-task muttering. It's worth questioning why I (and Sylvie et al) feel the need for quiet. Kids need to process these things. (Wolfman-Robichaud, February 28, 2008, Sylvie's class)

Prior to this discovery, I had rarely asked them to talk about the work as a part of our time together but changed my tactic based on Sylvie's findings. After noting this increase in "chatter" several times in my journal, and questioning my classroom management skills in handling the disruptions, I eventually realized that they were eager

to discuss the activity and thus promoted the on-topic discussions after the images were completed in every class.

When reflecting on the appropriate time and methods to encourage the classroom discussions, I read about when Paul Dwyer (2004) saw a production in which the Joker spent too much time giving his opinion and not allowing the audience enough time to process what they experienced. He claims that Jokers generally seek to create a balance between the stage and the audience, but often overly dictate the direction of the conversation instead of letting the discussion happen naturally. He continues that if too much of the discovery happens within the performance, "everyone in the audience is going to want to intervene on stage" (p. 200). Dwyer is referring to the Forum Theatre process where audience members become "more engaged, and critically conscious" (ibid) by replacing the actors on stage. There is camaraderie between all involved in the process when actors and audience members take part equally in the action on stage and the discussion.

Similar to Dwyer's theatre experience, I found that the more my students developed a familiarity with the work, the more they wanted to discuss it. Furthermore, the discussion was happening organically:

> I reminded them of the importance of silent games. Yet, as I was about to restart the game, one girl raised her hand and asked if we were doing the activity to learn how to communicate with deaf people […] other kids agreed that this would be a great lesson to learn how to help people who are deaf – someone else said it'd help people who don't speak your language. (Wolfman-Robichaud, October 30, 2007, Allison's class)

Dwyer stresses that as a facilitator, one must be prepared to alter the lesson plan if the situation requires it, which is indicative of the reflective practitioner. David Diamond

(2007) encourages Jokers not to let the discussion of the action go on longer than the action itself. This approach is problematic if the majority of the learning takes place through participant self-reflection rather than creating a balance between self-reflection and group discussion. Dwyer suggests that Jokers, as outside observers, interrupt the pedagogical process because of their inability to gauge the benefits of the performance without being part of the action themselves:

> We may never learn if, or precisely how, audience members apply the lessons of this theatrical experience but we can gain a good sense of how they think these lessons might be applied – provided the audience is given a chance to talk and provided we count this talk as part of the 'main act' of a [theatre] event, as something more than a potentially disruptive break from the acting out of ideas on stage. (Dwyer, 2004, p. 208)

The same concern can be applied in the classroom. Teachers, researchers, and visiting teacher-artists often seek to guide students' learning, when in fact they are interfering with the natural process. Once I joined Sylvia in reflecting on what I heard during the excessive "chatter" in between and during activities, I found the students were actually engaging in a self-directed learning process and should not be quieted.

I learned from some students from Allison's class the benefit of their discovering the intricacies of the activities through discussion rather than my guiding them too much:

> **Sarah:** Remember we had a discussion about [conflict] first, did that help?
> […]
> **Student 9:** Yeah, brainstorming ideas, it helps your brain, like, it puts a thinking cap on.
> **Student 10:** It helps us because, um, if you were like "We're doing conflict. Now go and do it!" and none of us knew how to do it, we'd be "isn't she going to explain something?" But *us* talking about it helps, because, like, it was our ideas, not just yours.
> **Sarah:** That's right, you were the ones who explained 'conflict!'

Student 7: I think if you just sent us off to our groups, what might happen is we wouldn't end up having any sculptures.

Student 6: It might be chaos.

Student 7: But when *we* explained it, we got a general idea of what conflict was, we knew what to do and could pretty much make what image we thought would be nice.

(Multiple anonymous students, personal communication, December 8, 2007)

It was important for the students to develop a sense of ownership and greater understanding when, as a class, they constructed their own meanings, goals, expectations for the activities.

6.2 Further research

6.2.1 Montessori vs. Mainstream arts education

I was introduced to the Montessori method at Cedar Stand Elementary, and would like to study the influence of Image Theatre in the Montessori classroom versus the mainstream classroom. I did not compare one class to another because that was not the focus of my study, and at the moment I am still learning about the Montessori approach. From conversations with Sylvie Brown and Allison Martin over the course of the year, I discovered a great deal about the Montessori classroom. Arts education is very important to the Montessori curriculum, however, in my research, I found few lesson plans on the performing arts and I would like to research that exclusion. I am also interested in learning to use some of the self-directed activities of the Montessori approach to develop new drama/Image Theatre activities.

6.2.2 *Conflict*

My research used the issue of conflict as a catalyst to further analyze the effects of Image Theatre. For the purpose of my research, it was crucial that I maintain my focus on developing my techniques as a drama facilitator rather than conflict prevention and awareness. My interest in prevention methods, current research, and psychological effects grew when stories of conflict emerged from the work I did with the students, however, I realized I was ill-equipped to support the students in dealing with what emerged. In the future, I plan to develop my social justice experience, prevention awareness, and knowledge of developmental stages in children. Once I have received training on prevention techniques and conducted more private readings, I see the potential for future research on conflict and its effect on elementary-age students.

6.3 Endnotes

1. Since the mid-2000s, various schools in the Vancouver school district have adopted the district-wide "Virtues" initiative to promote social responsibility and a healthy school environment. From student-created posters to daily announcements over the PA system about the virtue of the day, many of the schools, including Cedar Stand Elementary, have promoted their virtues in many ways. We did it through drama.

7 CONCLUSION

Over the course of my research, I analyzed the effect of using Image Theatre in three elementary classrooms to ultimately create a safe space for dialogue on conflict. I employed a variety of theatre activities, derived from theatre practitioners such as Augusto Boal, David Diamond, Michael Rohd, and others, to encourage students to create frozen images with their bodies that represented people in conflict. Developmentally, elementary age children have difficulty verbally expressing their emotions, however creating images with their bodies seems to come more naturally for them and allows them to instinctually engage in a meaning-making process without the pressure of using words. Once these images were created, I facilitated a naturally emergent discussion on students' understanding of the images emotional content and meaning. By using the intermediate step of image theatre activities, I was able to first bridge the difficulties students have with verbal expression and use the images created to enhance their understanding and empathy for others' roles in a conflict situation.

During my research, I came to the reflective practitioner methodology organically through reflecting on my observations of the students and my own practice. Reflective practitioner methodology is based on self-examination by the practitioner, calling attention to the lessons learned while in the experience of practice. In my research, I found that the most critical observations I made were not necessarily concerning the student's reactions, but my own. Through journal writing and note taking, I discovered that I was altering my lesson plans in the moment to better accommodate the students' needs. This methodology enabled me to use the improvisational skills I had developed as a performer to gauge the effectiveness of a technique and adapt to increase its

performance. Overall, through this methodology, I was able to develop a set of Image Theatre activities that proved to be the most effective in the classroom.

A limitation of my study was the singularity of my research locale. I worked in one school, experiencing only one demographic within three classrooms. Though my extensive observations contributed to my understanding of the method and its effect on the students, the work may have benefited from a larger data base from which to pull more experiences with the Image Theatre work.

From what I have observed, Image Theatre is effective in teaching students to explore their reactions to issues more thoroughly, especially in Grade 3-5 classes. The image work scaffolds students' developing confidence in self-expression, self-awareness, group-building, and community dialogue. With these skills and competencies in place, students are better-prepared for success both in and outside of the school.

The involvement of the teachers emerged as a critical component in addressing the issues in the class to which I had no previous knowledge. We collaborated to explore topics safely within the classroom and to provide the students with follow-up support through integration of aspects of my work into the teachers' lessons.

In my research, I have not found any extensive studies on the use of Image Theatre with elementary students. Image work is common in theatre practices, but as an addition to the school curriculum, it has not been widely researched. There have been studies that examine the use of different Theatre of the Oppressed techniques in schools, but no thorough investigations of Image Theatre in particular. This study attempts to fill a gap in the literature by opening up this new area of academic pursuit. It is my hope that

people will continue this research and expand the Image Theatre techniques applicable to school settings, while ultimately integrating these methods into standard curriculum.

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APPENDICES

Appendix A: Mr. Ocax and Poppy

One aspect of David Diamond's Theatre for Living methods (as opposed to Augusto Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed methods) that I firmly believe in is his exploration of the oppressor's point of view. As explained in Chapter Two, page 14, it is important for the students to not see bullies as the "enemy," but rather to gain a better understanding of the situation by considering the bully's personal struggles that would make him/her act in an antagonizing way.

Allison Martin, a Grade 4 Montessori teacher at Cedar Stand Elementary, told me about an exercise she conducted with her class that explored this idea behind a bully's own struggles. Though she did not do any drama activities around this lesson (she and I had not met yet, otherwise, I would have given her some potential drama exercises to try with the lesson), she shared her amazement at how capable her students were of "having compassion" for the bully.

Allison: We read the book *Poppy* by Avi. One of the main characters is Mr. Ocax, he's an owl and Poppy is the real central character, and she's a mouse. Anyway, it's basically about Mr. Ocax as this bully and he's overseeing and lording over the mice. So we read this book and did some novel study activities. Anyway, I had them do a critical thinking assignment in which they had to take the point of view of Mr. Ocax. And the thing is, all of the kids were like "Mr. Ocax is bad, he's the bully" and we talked about what bullies are, and…all the white lies, how he maintained his power, and why did he need to maintain his power, and what did

the mice think, and what could they have done to change it, and what did he have to be afraid of, and they were all very firmly entrenched in the fact that he was the bully and he was wrong, this behaviour is wrong. So I said "okay, now, I want you to switch it around and I want you to see it from Mr. Ocax's point of view, how is it possible that…." Anyway, they had a real hard time with that, but some of the assignments that came back blew my mind. It showed that these kids actually took their brains and they put them in another place. And some of them wrote "I just wanted to be with my family, but my parents didn't love me, and I had nothing to eat, and mice are the only thing that I can survive on without getting sick, and I knew I had to help my brothers and sisters to feed them…" and all these stories came out of having compassion for Mr. Ocax, as the bully, when we know his behaviour is wrong. So it was a bit of a leap – some of them made it, some of them didn't, but either way, it's taking a different point of view.

Sarah: It is and it's a lot to ask for them in real life, when they're in a sticky situation, to put themselves in the place of the bully…

Allison: Yes, and to actually do it…

Sarah: …but the more empathy that you develop and work on, the more they'll appreciate a situation that involves having to understand the "bully." It's not even so much if you are a victim in this bully situation, "how do I act in front of a bully" but for a lot of kids, "how do I recognize in a bully why these feelings are manifesting?" And how do you hopefully work with that. And it's really about understanding people and where they come from and why.

(A. Martin, personal communication, February 27, 2008)

Appendix B:

Comparison between the Reflective Practitioner and the Theatre Practitioner/Performer

Reflective Practitioner	Theatre Practitioner/Performer
Reflection-in-action "When someone reflects-in-action […] he does not separate thinking from doing, ratiocinating his way to a decision which he must later convert to action. Because his experimenting is a kind of action, implementation is built into his inquiry." (Schon, 1984, p. 69) Similarly, the reflective practitioner "must permit the focus of the inquiry to transform once the study has been launched." (Taylor, 1996, p. 37)	**Improvisation** A technique used by artists who perform spontaneously in the moment without a written script to dictate their performance. "Improvisation produces an environment where the player can enter, happily into a state of play where the unknown event, situation, or relationship can be explored and discovered simultaneously." (Schwartz, 2001)
Continuous reassessment of the "problem" "The problems don't come to [the teachers] fully formed, professionals must reflect on the particulars of their situations […] in order to identify and define the areas that present problems." (Patterson & Shannon, 1993, p. 8) The ongoing "moments of inquiry and reflection overlap as the teacher is articulating a framework to direct investigation, collect data[…] and draw tentative conclusions and a plan for action." (ibid)	**Inner Monologue/Subtext** The underlying and ongoing dialogue that a character has with oneself to determine the best approach to a scene. The inner monologue is the subconscious thought that serves to create the stimuli behind a performer's actions. Without the inner monologue, the actor is simply reading the text rather than bringing the character to life. (Benedetti, 1998) Subtext refers to the "meaning lying underneath the text/dialogue." (Sawoski, 2007, p. 9) For the teacher-researcher, this subtext may be the underlying meaning/goal of the lesson.
Trial of ideas The benefit of reflecting on a technique is that the practitioner can determine the need to revise it before using the same technique again. In the moment, if the researcher is willing to revise during the actual practice, a failing activity can be "saved" on-the-spot and a new trial can be conducted. A teacher should not change an activity every time if it does not work, for they can learn from the "failures" as well as the successes. However, to return to the same activity a second time would benefit the activity on the whole.	**Rehearsals** Performances generally involve many rehearsals to discover the minute details of a script and of the characters within that script. Rehearsals are a chance to experiment before going on stage. If a performer takes advantage of this time, she can try techniques that will help her learn about her character. Rehearsals are not intended to practice-to-perfection, but to engage in a discovery process that gives the performance a believable quality that may have been missed without work beforehand.

Knowing-in-action	**Naturalism**
Researchers and practitioners draw from a professional knowledge base as a way of dealing with difficult scenarios. By returning to theories that have been developed, skills that have been honed, and concrete examples that have worked in similar situations, the researchers learn to approach the problem with the knowledge that *within them* lays the ability to discover the answer.	Naturalism requires that the actor identify with the inner life of her character by "drawing out the truth of a character from within the actor herself." (Sennett, 2000, p;. 151) Similar to "Knowing-in-action," an actor will draw from their knowledge base within to present the scenario on stage in a naturalistic and truthful manner.
Crystallization	**Director Feedback**
"Crystallization, without losing structure, de-constructs the traditional idea of validity and provides us with a deepened […] understanding of the topic." (Richardson, 1994, p. 522) The practice of crystallization creates a network of cross-references to confirm the validity of observations. In research, this means the reflective practitioner has more opportunities to gather ideas from others, observe, read, etc. herself and from her supportive outside observers.	The role of the director is to provide the performer with additional insights into the character. Though a skilled performer can produce a believable character on her own, a director serves to help the vision of that character fit in with the vision of the performance as a whole. Similar to the process of crystallization, a good director acts as an outside observer (see Outside Researcher/Audience below) to confirm the validity of a performer's vision, while encouraging the discovery process to continue.
Outside researcher	**Audience**
As argued by reflective practitioners, a research is part of the action (i.e., reflecting-in-action), an outside researcher cannot fully understand the situation and may contribute their own biases to the study. However, that does not diminish the benefit of an outside observer. Though the main research of a reflective practitioner will be conducted within the practice, outside observations can help shape the research by enriching the areas through which the teacher-researcher approaches her reflection-in-action.	Similar to the outside researcher, an audience member may not understand as well as those who are on the "inside" of the event/character's mind. Unless, by chance, an audience member is given the opportunity to question the actor-in-role, perform the role himself, or discuss the motives with the playwright behind his/her words, there will be the separation between the what the actor feels as the character and what the audience member perceives in the character. However, the audience's presence is important. "There is no theatre without an audience. Every technique learned by the actor, every curtain and flat on the stage, every careful analysis by the director is for the enjoyment of the audience. (Spolin, 1999, p. 13)

Appendix C: The Activities

The activities below are some examples of games that can be played during the course of a drama class. They are listed in the relative order in which they are played during the course of a class. They do not have to be played exclusively as a "warm-up" or a "theatre game." Some of the warm-up games are complicated enough to be part of the main lesson, other main activities are active enough to be a warm-up. This is just a sampling of these types of games.

Check-In

Taking Your Temp

Students explained how they felt on a scale from 1 to 10. 1 means "not great" and 10 meaning "fantastic!" Often the students would claim to be "11," alluding to the fact that they were feeling so happy, they were off the chart.

Warm-ups

Joe Button

Joe Button is a rhythmic song that I sing aloud while acting out motions. The students usually learn the words quickly, but even if they do not sing along, they can enjoy acting out the motions. The story is that Joe works in a button factory and his boss keeps asking him 1.) if he's busy (to which he always says "no") and 2.) to "turn the buttons" with various parts of his body (left hand, right knee, nose, hips, ears, eyes, etc.). Every time he "turns the buttons" the children must add that body part to the other body parts they are already using. At the end of this game, they should be wiggling around the

room "turning buttons" with every body part they can. When asked by the boss a final time if Joe is busy, he says "YES!"

I present this song in a fast-paced, syncopated chant. I have heard it done at a slower tempo, however, I prefer (and I believe the children do too) the frantic-like nature of having to turn the buttons as fast as they can. The words are below:

Hi, my name is Joe.

I work at a button factory.

One day the boss says, "Joe, are you busy?"

I said, "no."

He says, "turn the button with your (fill in body part)."

REPEAT

People to People

This is an adaptation from David Booth's book *Games for Everyone*. The younger students enjoy this game immensely, especially since they do not usually exhibit any inhibition in touching each other's bodies. I had to adapt the game some for the older students by using "safer" body parts (hands, elbows, toes, and shoulders instead of hips, stomachs, and heads). David Booth describes this game as follows:

"Everyone finds a partner and stands next to him or her. The leader stands in the middle
and starts to sing the words 'people to people,' over and over until everyone is singing
along. The leader then changes the words to include a body part, such as knee to knee.
At this time all the players touch knees with their partners." (Booth, 1986, p. 78)

At this point, I asked students to switch partners so that they would have to rush to find someone else in the room to be their partner. Once they found a new partner, I asked them to switch again. I reminded them often to "carefully" touch body parts. After asking the basic combinations of "knee to knee" or "thumb to toes," I elaborated on Booth's instructions by shouting out "smiles to smiles" or "silly faces to silly faces." Occasionally, I'd ask students to form a "surprised look to Mrs. Brown" at which point all the students would turn to their teacher with an expression of surprise. My final instruction, which was usually followed by a chorus of giggles, I asked them for "*tushies* to floor in a circle!" They scrambled to sit in a circle and, as was custom, they waited to hear what the next game would be.

Shakedown

This is an easy energizer game that can be played at any age. Starting with the right hand in the air, I shout out loud (and encourage the children to shout with me) a count from 8 down to 1. With every number we yell, they my "shake out" their hand (or foot). We then switch to the left hand, then the right foot, and then the left foot. Once we complete that cycle, we count from 7 down to 1, shaking each limb 7 times before switching to the next, then 6 to 1, and so forth. When we get down to shaking out hands and feet once each time ("1! 1! 1! 1!"), the group is usually very energized.

Theatre games/exercises

12345, 678910

Many games can be used with the lines "1, 2, 3, 4, 5," and "6, 7, 8, 9, 10." Since these lines are easy to remember (though, it can be hard for students to remember to say their line instead of repeating their partner's line), you can experiment with many different ways of saying one line.

The context in which I used this game was to explore trying to influence someone to change their emotion (see page 51). With the students' help, we wrote many emotions on a large piece of paper. Some examples were, "excited," "angry," and "confused." I then asked two students to step up in front of the group and choose from the list of emotions something they'd like to act out. They were not allowed to tell anyone what they chose, because they should be convincing enough with their actions. The first student said their line ("1, 2, 3, 4, 5") using their emotion. It was their job to convey such a strong portrayal of the emotion that the other person (i.e., thrilled) would change their emotion as a result. At the same time, the "thrilled" person would be jumping around trying to perk up the "devastated" person.

This is an exercise that directors use with actors to encourage them to commit so much to their motivation to act a certain way that they influence the other person in a scene. It is not an easy task to perform, but it is a learning experience for anyone participating to how difficult it is to be convincing enough that they can change another person's emotion.

Animals

Animals is a game that I played as a child and though I did not remember the exact rules of the game, I created my own version to play in the drama classroom. The players stand in a circle with the leader/facilitator in the middle. I first review the actions for each animal. Every animal requires three people participating. The leader spins around and points to one person in the circle. That person in the middle must form the base of the animal and the two people on either side must form the animal components. If any of the three people do not assume the position before the leader finishes saying "Bumpety Bump Bump Bump," that person must sit down. It is important that they stay in the circle, because the more people who have gotten out and are sitting down, the more complicated it is for the other players to run around them to form the animals. Some examples of animals are:

Elephant – centre person creates a trunk with his arm, side people create large ears

Monkey – centre person scratches his armpits and makes a sound like a monkey, side people peel bananas

Lion – centre person roars, side people create his mane

Donkey – all three people freeze

Shark – centre person creates a shark fin in his head, side people throw up their arms and yelp

Octopus – centre person makes bubble noises with their mouth, side people create the many arms/legs

The leader can be creative and come up with as many animals as they would like to challenge the group. With one of the classes at Cedar Stand, they became so proficient in the game that created additional "animals" for Alien, Coyote, Ghost, Dog, and Pirate. Needless to say, I had more trouble remembering the animals than the students.

Leader of the Orchestra

The children sit in a circle on the floor and one person is selected to leave the circle. Once that person has left, a leader of the orchestra is chosen silently to lead the group in rhythmic motions (slapping their legs, snapping, pulling on their ears, etc.). The person who left the circle returns to the centre of the circle and has three chances to guess the leader of the orchestra. I encourage the students to be strategic when switching actions, if the person in the centre is looking directly at them, they should wait before they look away to change the action.

Image Theatre Games

Clay

Two to three students are selected to form a group. One person is the sculptor and the other one person(s) is the clay. Carefully and in silence, the sculptor physically moves the clay into a position. If the clay does not feel comfortable being touched, faces or body parts can be reflected instead of being physically moved. Another way to move class is to attach imaginary strings to a body part (like a marionette) and pull the body parts into place.

I remind the students that clay does as it's told and does not speak. I also remind the sculptors to be kind to their clay and not to make it do anything it does not want to do. I usually let the students experiment with moving clay around first before giving them a topic. Once they become accustomed to working that way, I start with simple ideas (happy, sad, angry), but the more advanced the group is, the more I present them with

challenging topics to sculpt: agony, disrespect, curious, etc. Once each sculptor has created something, I ask them to switch, so the person who was the clay gets a chance to trying sculpting. Occasionally, I'll take the class on a gallery tour and those who were sculptors can walk around the room and see what other sculptors have created.

Groups of 4

These are the notes I took from my experience at the Headlines Theatre "Theatre for Living" Workshop Level 1. I've included the discussion points that followed.

STEP 1: Each person creates a scene of social justice (or whatever the theme that has been chosen) in their mind and puts the rest of the group into that image (using the skills from Clay).

STEP 2: All images are presented to the entire group and one is voted on that can be "animated." This image should be chosen by voting for the two images that one can most identify with in relation to the theme chosen.

STEP 3: The chosen image is recreated (note: it must be okay with the creator for the image to be used) – Jokers asks the following questions/prompts:

- What do you want?

- What's your secret wish?

- In one sound/sentence, say what you want.

- Take one step in the direction of what you want.

- If other people are in the scene that are not there, place them there.

- Clap hands, move steps toward what you want on each clap.

- Sound orchestra: touch each person to make sound.

STEP 4: Joker invites entire class to identify with one of the characters on stage and

come up to replicate it. Joker asks all of the above prompts.

STEP 5: (optional) Photograph the image

STEP 6: (optional) Creator names the image.

Discussion

- Our perception of the image is important, not the story behind it.

- We should not be acting in these situations, we must be authentic.

- A secret thought has a great power – a hug can mean:

  1. I love you. 2. How did I get here?

- It's very powerful to freeze the conflict – it calls attention to it.

- This is an unspoken way of getting to know people.

- There is wisdom to everyone's observation.

- Everything has symbolism.

- Images are universal in their simplicity and complexity.

- The body can inform the work.

- Everyone has the ability to tell their own story.

(Wolfman-Robichaud, August 13, 2007, Headlines Theatre Level 1 Workshop)

Appendix D: Behavioural Research Ethics Board (BREB) certificate of approval

The University of British Columbia
Office of Research Services
Behavioural Research Ethics Board
Suite 102, 6190 Agronomy Road, Vancouver, B.C. V6T 1Z3

CERTIFICATE OF APPROVAL- MINIMAL RISK RENEWAL

PRINCIPAL INVESTIGATOR: George Belliveau	DEPARTMENT: UBC/Education/Language and Literacy Education	UBC BREB NUMBER: H07-01098

INSTITUTION(S) WHERE RESEARCH WILL BE CARRIED OUT:	
Institution	Site
N/A	N/A
Other locations where the research will be conducted: Vancouver School Board Jules Quesnel School Maple Grove School	

CO-INVESTIGATOR(S):   Shelley Hymel
SPONSORING AGENCIES: Social Sciences and Humanities Research Council of Canada (SSHRC)
PROJECT TITLE: Addressing the role of the bystander through drama in bullying situations

EXPIRY DATE OF THIS APPROVAL: June 12, 2009

APPROVAL DATE: June 12, 2008

The Annual Renewal for Study have been reviewed and the procedures were found to be acceptable on ethical grounds for research involving human subjects.
Approval is issued on behalf of the Behavioural Research Ethics Board   and signed electronically by one of the following: Dr. M. Judith Lynam, Chair   Dr. Ken Craig, Chair   Dr. Jim Rupert, Associate Chair   Dr. Laurie Ford, Associate Chair   Dr. Daniel Salhani, Associate Chair   Dr. Anita Ho, Associate Chair