A Tempest in the Halls: Intersections of Social Justice, Student Collaboration, and Devised Theatre

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A Tempest in the Halls: Intersections of
Social Justice, Student Collaboration, and Devised Theatre

By

Jennifer M. Grazer

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DEDICATION

This work is dedicated to my family, most of whom were not able to be physically with me through most of this process. To my Mom and Dad who are so proud to have a doctor in the family and never doubted I would finish. To my sisters and brother, aunts and uncles, and grandparents who would ask, "How's it going?" and took genuine interest in my progress. And finally to my husband Mark who gave up countless evenings, weekends, and vacations while I worked through classes, and projects, and hours of writing. I love you, Skippy!
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Lastly, I want to recognize my students, both past and present, who have been so excited to be able to officially call me Dr. G. I hope I can do the new title justice because you all are the reason I wanted to do this in the first place.
ABSTRACT

A TEMPEST IN THE HALLS: INTERSECTIONS OF
SOCIAL JUSTICE, STUDENT COLLABORATION, AND DEVISED THEATRE

An increasing disconnection exists between students and schooling as these formal institutions continue to prioritize high-stakes testing and quantitative measures over the specific needs of individual learners. Drama attempts to interrogate spaces in all echelons of social and economic standing and seeks to bring together dichotomous perspectives in the spirit of irreverent collaboration. The narrowing of creative, synthesis, higher-order cognition in courses meant to be free-thinking and expressive signals a dangerous turn towards even more sterile subject matter in education. This qualitative study examined social justice in drama spaces by investigating student development and process in collaborative playwriting, as well as teacher/researcher’s bias concerning the specialness of aesthetic arts classes and aesthetic arts students.

The data sources for the study involved student interviews and focus groups, observations, student reflections and biographies, and student-created dramatic pieces. This data was peer reviewed and member checked, as well as crystallized – an advanced form of triangulation – to increase accuracy. Four findings were discovered from the data analysis and reflection: (1) student collaboration and group dynamics require further investigation on basic levels for effective classroom use; (2) intuitive leaps between learning concepts and creating connections across diverse perspectives are problematic for even AP and Honors students as educational expectations have become rigidly standardized and extrinsically motivated; (3) student challenges concerning creativity and imagination are illustrated by a lack of ownership, a forfeit of agency, and an easily discouraged learning mindset; and (4) Drama spaces must be
continually questioned and interrogated for social justice practices as cultural, racial, and class (SES) divides exist within them, but are not openly discussed.

Recommendations for teachers of all subjects include direct instruction with formal and informal collaborative projects, as well as continued development of creative and imaginative skill sets that may address decreases in ownership and learning agency. Further research in high school theatre arts is needed to construct a stronger literature base that speaks to the complexities of course curriculum and the complicated relationships between students, teachers, and dramatic learning spaces.
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Chapter One

THE STUDY

Introduction – Dramatic Focus

Even though we received a posted rubric in our email inbox, I still was not quite certain about the overall purpose of the focus walks imposed by the county. Teachers were given a specific date for the visit, and individual instructors were told what class period to expect guests: a building-level administrator and a county office representative. My classroom was relatively neat and sufficiently colorful with posters of actors/directors/playwrights, student design projects, and a bulletin board of ongoing events, university theatre programs, and upcoming auditions or job opportunities.

Clipboards in hand, the pair of assessors quickly scanned my drama classroom, searching for appropriate evidence of student learning. The students were leaving for the Performing Arts Center to engage in stage combat demonstrations and short combination training, but the evaluators appear unruffled and announced they would follow along shortly. They made a beeline for the purple message board and the 55 Georgia Performance Standards for Dramatic Arts that I had posted fifteen minutes earlier. The day before, I had previewed with all my students the possibility of being observed and questioned by various administrative personnel. I informed the students they could respond to any questioning with as much knowledge as they had concerning the current lesson or daily activity, information I considered to be significant indicators of engagement. In actuality, I consider the newly-introduced state standards vague and nondescript for effective student learning.

Bundling in coats and hooded sweatshirts, the students and I dashed the 200 feet outside
to the fine arts building, where we lit the onstage fluorescents for a brief physical warm-up. After stretching quads, triceps, and traps, the Drama II students paired with partners to rehearse a push/choke/grab scenario. Traditionally in Greenview High’s drama program, I begin stage combat studies with the second-year students, as they have already proven a modicum of maturity and focus in previous courses. Depending upon the complexity of the lesson and the size of the class, I may ask upper-level theatre students with additional fighting experience to present combat scenarios for the Drama II class. While these juniors and seniors are not members of that particular period, they continued combat training into the next course and are familiar with the expectations for beginning stage fighting. On this day, a handful of Advanced IV performers joined the class to present a complex piece involving throws, falls, punches, and drags, thereby illustrating what the new fighters would experience later in the semester. As I dodged between the combatants, I attempted to adjust their body positions and coached victim and attacker reactions. The focus walk assessors entered through the right house aisle and approached the stage and the fighting actors.

Despite my internal cringing, I continued assisting students in scene preparation while attempting to tune out the ensuing learning evaluation. The questioners immediately peppered the students furthest down stage, the visiting Drama IV students:

“What standard are you currently working on now?”

“What standards are involved in this lesson?”

Without losing a step, one actor replied that the standards in drama are fluid and that multiple elements are used in conjunction with each other on a regular basis. The pair of assessors then
climbed the five steps to the stage floor, where they further inquired as to student activities and learning standards.

Two boys sparred with chokes and clothing grabs as a long-haired girl in a hooded sweatshirt visually reviewed their performance and giggled. Suits and clipboards circled the action and stood alongside her.

“Do you have a rubric for this activity?”

The girl blinked and thoughtfully turned towards the evaluators.

“Oh yes, we get rubrics for most assignments, but since we’re doing stage combat we didn’t want anything in our hands or onstage.”

The inquisitors nodded and wrote, smiling slightly with seeming approval, then they left the auditorium house, exiting the building. The downstage apron and wing curtains erupted with laughter. As I apparently looked very confused, a Drama IV student explained the reason for their jovial reaction.

“After they asked us some questions, they went up to Jaime and asked her some stuff about what we do in class!”

I chuckled. Jaime is a student whose schedule allows for late arrival, so she attends my first period as a place to stay before second period classes begin. She has never taken a drama class, and technically she would not be counted officially present for another 20 minutes. I consider the irony of this county walk-around observation assessment for which the outcomes and recommendations will be based on responses from students who are not actually enrolled in
Social Justice

The previous vignette illustrates the need for educational assessors to base their evaluations on equity and understanding in order to ultimately affect student achievement and the students’ perceptions of learning. Social justice is integral to any investigations of teens involved in their education as they reflect upon the effectiveness and significance of personal schooling experiences. School administrators and county officials, often with little to no direct understanding of arts education, enter aesthetic classrooms and make value judgments according to the same rubrics applied to academic courses. This lack of recognition and agency troubled me in that transformative capabilities of dramatic arts appeared overlooked. School principals do not engage with my classes, except during annual teacher observations, and I question their knowledge of dramatic curriculum and student chemistry. Each year, Greenview High narrowly exceeds the coveted Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) measurement. As often the only high school in Briar County escaping state scrutiny, areas of academic importance are reduced to math and English language arts (ELA) scores, and graduation rates. In a district of increasing cultural and socioeconomic diversity, student educational experiences are truncated to limited indicators of success. With growing class sizes and a shrinking teacher force, the probability of student disconnect remains high.

Social justice is integral to investigations of teen involvement in their education as they reflect upon the effectiveness and significance of personal schooling experiences (Findlay, 2005). In this study, the concept of social justice carries a definition dually related to its use as an integral component of the structural framework, serving both as an overarching theme and an
investigative learning component. Drawing from Paulo Freire (1997, 2000) and his treatises on equitable and democratic education, I initially explored social justice through the lens of pedagogy and culturally responsive teaching and learning practices. This impression of social justice echoes the works of bell hooks (1994), Henri Giroux (1997), and Peter McLaren (2009), and I refer to them in my attempt to discover fairness for all individuals within the dominant systems that extend the power of the status quo. With our evolving high school demographics comes the demand that educators more deeply connect to their diverse student populations, which are comprised of a myriad of cultures, ethnicities, socio-economic levels, and sexual orientations. Each social and personal facet that a student brings to the classroom illustrates the complex portrait of an individual who possesses unique educational experiences beyond the walls of formal schools (Ladson-Billings, 2005). We celebrate such distinctive characteristics and understandings within the secondary curriculum, and they are intertwined with dominant discourses as we question current conventions of American education.

The second stance of social justice suggests that we interrogate the status of arts education—specifically drama education—within the traditional construction of the courses. Augusto Boal (1979), a Brazilian drama contemporary of Freire, addresses the use of theatre to problematize social and political inadequacies while emphasizing its importance as a cultural learning tool and personal means of discovery for all students. Maxine Greene (1995), a scholar of artistic and educational intersections, states that arts and aesthetic learning are integral to meaningful student engagement and social justice practices. Tony Jackson (1993) suggests educational drama is an instrument of important historical, societal, and cultural transmissions that invites both performers and audiences to experience divergent perspectives and themes.
through technical skill and creative aesthetics. James Ross (2005) postulates that before system administrators eliminate the arts curricula, they could give consideration to the detrimental effects on schools, neighborhoods, and communities that lack artistic programs. My examination of social justice extends this equitable access to and availability of high school theatre classes that advance the creative, academic inquiries of diverse student populations in modern classrooms.

With the public school experience becoming increasingly standardized due to the myriad of national and state-level assessments (Henning, 2002; Jones, 2004), theatre classes embrace a more individualized learning approach. Greene (1995) states that the imaginations and creative problem-solving of a generation have been stifled in favor of quantitative testing procedures. Studying drama moves students beyond the construction of a performance for audience consumption to gleaning technique, and aesthetic and analytical skills. Realining school and county views to the importance of school arts programs (and specifically drama) may affect curriculum evaluation so that theatrical experiences are available to all students. The idea of social justice interacts strongly with the function of devised theater in that the students’ voices are heard against the canon of traditional writings because the students discuss topics that are important in their lives rather than simply perform works deemed important or significant by others (Conrad, 2006). They will be able to elucidate in their own words their feelings concerning their school year, perhaps speaking about budget crunches and loss of teachers in addition to the reduction in the number of elective classes that minimizes their choices for their academic schedules. These topics may be possible for discussion within the dissertation, as may interrogating troubling themes such as parents losing jobs, the difficulty of finding scholarship
monies or paying for college, the pressure over high-stakes test scores and how they quickly determine a teen's future.

Readers and audience members may realize the extreme conditions under which young people are asked to create meaningful knowledge in increasingly difficult circumstances. My dissertation may affect other teachers and students within my daily contact and in turn spark other levels of questioning and inquiry that could perpetuate into something much more lasting and meaningful. This study not only adds to existing bodies of literature concerning theatre education and social justice pedagogy, but it additionally allows me to perceive what social justice means to my students and permit me to observe and document the ethnographic processes of performance (Denzin, 2003) and of devised theatre (Oddey, 1996) through ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2003) and Collision Theatre (Elman, 2007) as students craft social justice drama. Finally, it is a space wherein I might advocate for the appropriateness and timeliness of social justice theatre studies in contemporary educational settings. While this appears an admirable goal on behalf of my students, I recognize the influence this viewpoint might have on the participants and the student-centered nature of the project. They may understand the importance of social justice in drama classes, but could collectively determine to move their writing and performance in other directions.

Researcher Transformations

_Ever conscious that my students are participants in a dissertation study, I care about them and want them to feel that their work is meaningful and will contribute to a larger body of knowledge and learning that will have some stamp of their input upon it. I learned last year during an advanced qualitative course that trying to conduct research at a breakneck pace is not_
only exhausting, but it is frustrating, confusing, and mind-numbing. I find it practically impossible to produce thick description from observations and to accurately transcribe particular conversations or spontaneous happenings. This year, I teach nearly 200 students, so maintaining rapport with them while simultaneously conducting interviews, focus groups, personal memos, and other bits of data is quite difficult. At times I feel as if so much is going on within my classroom that I am simply turning in the middle of a tornado. Realizing my difficult task, I do not want to spread myself so paper thin that I lack overall cohesion and quality within the work I produce.

Amid these stressors, I must provide a solid foundation of relevant scholarly literature for my project while addressing a certain creative and artistic aesthetic. In the process of constructing the performance piece, I must strive to have dramatic elements embedded to further heighten the sense of human connection and enjoyment. My goal is to seek a fluid balance between the practical and the aesthetic facets of the project without one taking precedence over the other (Saldana, 2003). I want the students to enjoy the creation and collaboration process in order to be more solidly invested. While their ideas and general ability to input essential information and decisions will drive their interests initially, they may also experience genuine connections among themselves, the material, and the overall project in order for them to have the necessary passion to complete work.

Teachers may take on or be assigned the role of transformational figure, especially if they are well-liked and successful with students in the classroom. To a drama instructor who leads a theatre department, the idea of sustainability within the lens of transformation is exceedingly important. With the curricular framework of performance aesthetic and technical
process, coupled with a continued culture of equity and discipline, the teacher may be able to create a program capable of maintaining itself beyond the presence of a single definitive person. Based on constant reflection on pedagogical practice, theatrical skill sets, and personal connections, I gradually encourage students to be more independent and self-reliant in their learning experiences. a practice which frees me to expand other areas of the program and allows them to have additional ownership and agency in high school spaces.

Purpose of the Study and Research Questions

The purpose of this study is to address the increasing disconnection students felt towards school as these formal institutions continue to prioritize high-stakes testing and quantitative measures over the specific needs of individual learners. Educational theatre is uniquely positioned to allow teens to question and investigate their social spaces and identities and places them in the midst of multiple perspectives for deeper meaning in their learning (Gonzalez, 2005). Students, especially those with multiple years in the program, report that their experiences in drama have been some of the most significant of their high school career.

As teens spend additional time within school settings, they develop a detachment from learning, and the education system classifies them as demographic information and test scores, providing little individuality in the curriculum for their continued growth. The modern American education focuses almost singularly on knowledge acquisition (Greene, 1995; Jones, 2004), and stakeholders are unaware of the cultural undercurrents and social underpinnings that make schooling relevant and meaningful. Therefore, the research questions for this study address themes concerning drama education’s role in creating more individualized and equitable learning experiences for high school students:
• How might drama studies create spaces for “releasing the imagination” and counter the standardized educational environment that negatively affects diverse learning populations?

• How might drama students develop as creative inquirers of devised/collision drama performance and take ownership of their learning?

Study Evolution and Emergence of a Third Research Question

I realized as the study project concluded that I had not positively answered the research questions with the student participants. While concluding focus groups and interviews produced constructive findings on collaborative work processes, the participants and I felt disappointed in our work together. The issue of validity may arise here in that the study questions do not appear answered from a research standpoint. However, qualitative studies, according to Margot Ely, Ruth Vinz, Maryann Downing, and Margaret Anzul (1999), function beyond binaries of yes and no responses and null hypotheses; they allow the researcher to investigate more deeply into the nuances of human data. The study’s effect on me as a teacher/researcher became increasingly important as I engaged with the data findings and continued making discoveries and personal transformations with collaborative learning and social justice education. From these experiences and conversations, a third research question emerged:

• How might teacher researchers, drawing from self-reflective personal and classroom experiences, develop into social justice-minded and culturally aware practitioners?

The addition of this question recognizes the influence of the teacher/researcher, both positive and negative, upon the participants and the study itself. The project outcome for the students appeared lackluster and disjointed; they reported some learning successes, but were not pleased
with the overall production conclusion. The study’s effects on me, however, completely revolutionized how I approach the learning of my students, including those who are gifted and in honors/AP classes. I also initially wanted to dismiss my position as a White, female, middle class teacher in a culturally and socioeconomically diverse classroom. The interactions between the diverse students and the teacher/researcher require exploration to fully interrogate the research questions and develop areas for future research within theatre education.

*Advancing Relationships*

As I taught most of the students in this study for several years and know them each fairly well, we dispensed with much of the basic teambuilding and rapport construction that would take place early in such relationships. However, I overestimated the trust and confidence that this class of students has among themselves despite several semesters of working together on various activities and projects as well as outside plays in school musicals. On the surface, the class appeared comfortable and socially-accepting, but the stressors of devised theatre creation revealed fractured connections. Relationships require constant investigation, having fluid and evolving natures. The dynamic elements of student ties uncovered surprising themes for student motivation and dramatic participation.

The class probably would be several students larger than its current incarnation of 20 actors, but some encountered scheduling issues when trying to enroll in one particular class in our ever-shrinking academic framework. Some students who have taken drama classes with me in previous years encountered the frustrating constraints of having course electives denied them because of the schedule matrix or because the courses they desired were removed because the teaching positions were not filled; their course decisions have become dire (Ross, 2005). Many
teenagers had to choose between AP or honors-level classes and fine arts electives, drama, of course, being one. While I would like my classes to always be among a student’s personal first choices, the demand that vital educational facets sacrifice one for the other places us all in unfair positions.

A few students are new to the group, and while they do not have the same history as the other students who have been together much longer, they nonetheless appear comfortable in the midst of our dramatic community. As much as I attempt to resist using trite sports analogies, I could not expect a team that has just begun practicing together to win a region championship. For members who are just learning about each other's playing styles, personalities, and additional important attributes in their first season together, one cannot expect that they would win games on a continuous basis. In this case, I could not expect a beginning drama class to undertake the complex process of devised theater at the same time they are attempting to build burgeoning relationships with classmates (Oakes, 1996). I imagined the majority of the team-building work complete, thus allowing the group to focus on more theatrical elements such as character creation, plot progression, and wrapping the devised text around an already created work. This assumption underscored significant educator notions of ownership, agency and social justice that required further investigation with student participants.

Definition of Terms

Throughout this study I employ various terms to better describe and flesh out the particular strategies and frameworks used to support the dramatic work of the researcher and students. These concepts function most often in theatrical domains or in performance-based research, and as such they require specific definitions in order to increase the reader’s
understanding.

Devised Theatre

This term may exist under different names – collaborative theatre, creative drama, etc. – but for purposes of this study, I use the notion of devising as a means of outlining a process of play origination (Oddey, 1996). Members of a performance group assemble and decide collectively the topics for dramatization, plot structure, characterization, and direction as well as technical elements such as costuming, lighting and sound, and scene design. Devising companies usually develop working contracts and guidelines relating to the nature of certain tasks assigned to members to avoid possible miscommunication or confusion concerning various decisions made throughout the project.

Collision Theatre

This dramatic technique was developed by Rosemary Newcott of the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, Georgia (Elman, 2007). It involves the use of classic theatrical texts as a plot structure on which high school actors initially interact to further explore social, cultural, and personal situations. Based upon the chosen framework play, the students craft scenes, monologues, and tableaux or still-life pictures frozen in action, which a professional playwright eventually reworks back into the play action itself. Collision is a form of devised theatre, though Newcott does not expressly reference this collaborative genre.

Diversity

In today's American schools, the notion of diversity on campuses and within classrooms appears frequently, but with seemingly little consistency in practice or definition. Given the current high-stakes learning environments of many institutions, meanings of diversity are
contorted to fit into normalized parameters. Diversity training and subsequent workshops are held for unknowing, and sometimes unwilling, educators as district or state mandates to participate in outward showings of diversity understanding (Morrison, 2006). Educational definitions read as binary compilations able to display right or wrong answers and revealing concrete Truths concerning the connotations of diversity that all teachers ought to know (Worley, 2011). Basic diversity paradigms encircle ethnicity, race, and culture heavily while often disregarding sexual orientation, religion, language, physical disability, and age (Green, Callands, Radcliffe, Lueble, & Klonoff, 2009). Additionally, Marlene Morrison (2006) places nationality, lifestyle, personal beliefs, socioeconomic status, and education into the diversity concept, with Patricia Gurin, Eric Dey, Gerald Gurin, and Sylvia Hurtado (2003) examining various classifications and uses of diversity such as structural, informal interactional, and classroom applications.

While the definitions of diversity within educational settings have expanded, the traditional explanations of visual identity markers continue to remain prevalent. Mary Beth Liedman and Bradley Wiggins (2010) maintain that America is not a multicultural country despite the overwhelming presence of diversity among its people. However, not all areas of the country are as diverse as the setting for this study and remain in homogenous communities of relative sameness and perceived safety (Orndoff, 2003). For ease of explanation and surface understanding, diversity reduces to a single word or idea, lessening its agency and creating further standardization for students (Worley, 2011). Thus young people are recognized as Black, Latino, or Asian only, bypassing the additional intersections of identity and diversity.

Multiple identities exist within a single individual, even concerning single identity
criterion (Rummero, 2003), which can pose challenges for students with multiple minority status. Teachers and administrators unaware or unable to interact and appropriately educate diverse populations may tend to view such diversity as an obstacle to be defeated (Dray & Wisneski, 2011). This perspective places the Other in a seat of deficiency or of someone to be remediated or fixed. Diversity, then becomes a state of being tolerated by the status quo powers (Laegaard, 2010), not truly recognized or accepted alongside the dominant cultures of society. Concerning various tenets of diversity experienced in classrooms, their part in creating identity is fluid and flexible, changing over time with multiple intersections to be realistically and reflectively examined (Rummero, 2003). These explorations of diversity may not only exist between students, but with educators as well. Investigations of personal identity and diversity on the part of teachers may lead to greater connections with young people and deeper understanding of their learning needs and interests.

From my perspective, reflecting more on my background and learning experiences as a student and teacher allowed me to connect with the home and educational situations of my drama students. Acknowledging my own diversity and its inherent privileges or disadvantages created additional learning moments in my journey towards greater cultural awareness. For this study, diversity takes on multiple, fluid, and organic definitions that evolve to include a variety of populations. Diversity is represented in the forms of students of differing cultures, ethnicities, sexual preferences, genders, and socioeconomic situations. Investigations of sub-groups depends upon the importance the participants place on the stated classifications.

*Ethnodrama*

This term refers to the dramatization of research within a given study, either as an initial
construction or as a later progression of the analysis and presentation process (Saldaña, 2003). Ethnodramas draw upon the work of existing investigators in various fields – education, psychology, sociology, political science, etc. – and process traditional researcher observations, interviews, focus groups, and researcher memos into a theatrical piece complete with plot, characters, and narration. The degree of the dramatization and material distillation depends upon the leanings of the research team and the consent of participants as to the accuracy of the production work.

*Performance Ethnography*

The term “performance ethnography” serves as an umbrella that describes the cultural and social ways of studied groups or individuals; it encompasses a component of performance within the research and/or its presentation (Denzin, 2003; Mienczakowski, 1997). While ethnodrama demands a production-oriented structure, performance ethnography could be represented through poetry, dance, or a performative act related to readers within the study.

*High School Drama Programs*

While this term appears to clearly define itself, many interpretations abound concerning the nature of educational theatre programs. For the purpose of my study, this notion refers to a ninth through twelfth grade dramatic curricula that involves a progression of skill, participation, and knowledge-based courses. Some drama programs are solely production-based entities that focus upon play productions, emphasizing acting and technical ability development. I use practical dramatic construction as a facet of my various syllabi, but I also incorporate relationship-building and skill acquisition as a method of creating life-long artists and discriminating patrons.
Winning Isn’t Everything

Our high school has achieved Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) for several years in a row, but administrators escalate pressure to ensure that we remain within the state's acceptable progression whereby schools are grouped as either having met AYP or as needing improvement, all based on student test scores. The curriculum provides no formal testing guidelines or end of course assessment for drama classes; therefore, the drama department carries very little weight in terms of NCLB contributions. I am not advocating that my theatre program ought to come under state and federal scrutiny for standardized measures; such comparisons would not properly parallel since NCLB guidelines currently provide no evaluation for qualitative projects and activities.

On the local level, however, those evaluators of the dramatic arts program require the ability to assess the curriculum by relating it as both a separate entity and in comparison to other academic performances. They could appraise competitions and aesthetic presentations, thereby providing an estimation of their value to the school. In our state, the Georgia High School Association (GHSA) views high school theater as a competitive event. Unlike regular athletes who meet several times and against multiple opponents throughout the season, competitors in one-act plays present only once within their assigned region and are numerically ranked, with those in the top-placed piece going on to the state competition. The conditions whereby students are judged on one single 55-minute performance prepared under undue stress and emotional conflict often make for rather anti-climactic and difficult auditions, rehearsals, and performance processes.

I find a direct connection here to social justice in that a single day’s judgment determines
the worth of diverse aesthetic pieces. Spectacle production engage judges more frequently, favoring well-moneyed districts with historic arts cultures. Trophies and awards garner attention from school officials which protect programs from curricular and budgetary cuts. Smaller, less touted departments often produce developed characterization, but may struggle with expensive ancillary design elements.

While I attempt to downplay the emphasis on dramatic rivalry, my student actors can become disillusioned and frustrated with theatre studies for several weeks following competition. Despite the contest’s subjective nature, students feel personally affronted by negative ratings from removed adjudicators. The outside life struggles of simply producing a traveling play every year are never calculated or recognized beyond the drama community. Third or fourth place evaluations sheets escape display in the school trophy case reserved for prizes of an athletic nature.

Professional or undergraduate acting groups often compete at dramatic festivals, but their competitions are not as quantified as high school pieces, which are numerically scaled on specific dramatic criteria such as characterization and pacing from 1-10. Judges then rank them first place through fifth place based on audience/actor knowledge, a policy that opens students to both positive and negative critiques from the judging panel. This current convention causes me to question why high school associations participate in such practices because the process can be extremely stressful and emotionally charged for student cast and crew members, who often leave these festivals disappointed and with little sense of accomplishment.

I do not wish to exaggerate the importance of the one-act competition, as it is only a portion of my extensive dramatic season. Perhaps it is because I am from a New York State high
school that does not offer drama programs; therefore, I am not overly familiar with these practices. I am also the only female drama teacher currently instructing in the county and have no competitive interests in fighting to the emotional deaths of my student-actors. For many years I have spoken to other drama teachers and directors about trying to revamp the system and allow for a more festival-based format that coincides with band and choral competitions. In this layout, one-act plays would meet several times during the season and would present with different schools at each event; assessors would evaluate each piece according on its own merit, thereby allowing for many “superior” ratings in a single showing. Unfortunately, with drama stipends connected to the one-act play in its present incarnation and with little interest in modifications from the association coordinators, we theatre coaches are loathe to suggest changes that may shrink our currently decreasing salaries.

Origination of the Study

The drama students remarked on the inequity of the one-act process on multiple occasions. They felt pressure to support productions and roles that would please adult judges rather than establish meaningful character relationships. Placing well at competition held a certain level of importance, but the student actors ultimately felt detached from believability and acting enjoyment. I wanted my students, especially those in advanced classes, to experience character depth and complexity while developing positive personal connections to their dramatic work.

The students with whom I worked were graduating the year of the study, and nine or ten of them had been in the drama classes I taught since they were freshmen. I did not want to run the risk of giving them already over-inflated egos, but these students really were the stuff of
legend in that they worked cohesively together on projects of great complexity, maintaining friendships outside of class and in other areas of interest as well as drama. They were a brilliant and individualistic group of teenagers. As I realized that all research work must be completed during these students’ senior year, we had to remain on schedule. I remained vigilant in making certain that I worked effectively and efficiently, constructing well-crafted focus group and interview questions, structuring possible dramatic activities and writing exercises for the devising method, and generating other work that could be singularly accomplished without student input in order to accommodate my research.

I was extremely enthusiastic about the students devising their own play, believing that they had many interesting ideas. I was a strong proponent of students finding their own voices and agency and creating personal pieces that were relative to their daily lives (Conrad, 2005). I considered using a contextualized dramatic piece that was already written and analyzing it for the study, a strategy that would require little complexity. However, I felt it would not have the same power and significance of a performance piece crafted by the students; I considered the process to be much more important than simply the end-result of the performance (Ackroyd & O’Toole, 2010). I believed the journey that involved brainstorming, writing, and workshop-ing various pieces that ultimately would become part of the fabric of creation was far more provocative than merely viewing a completed play.

As the process took shape, however, I realized that project outcome might not have the positive conclusion I initially imagined. Despite their early excitement, the students became disconnected with their devising work and each other, and they disengaged from conversations concerning important social talking points. In some situations, they even became openly hostile
with each other though they had taken classes together for several years. While the students did create and perform their vision of Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, it was not the culminating capstone most performers had envisioned for their senior year of high school. Some students reported that they learned vital lessons concerning time management and collaborative work. However, I experienced significant personal gains regarding relationships with my students and nature of aesthetic arts education and its intersections with social justice.

Summary and Coming Attractions

My emergent concern during the study was that because of the stringent standards set forth by NCLB regarding expectations in the curriculum areas of reading and math, few theatre departments will address change within their schools. If the arts world cannot agree to set rules for itself and succeed, how then can drama cohorts prosper at the hands of a removed federal government? Robert Colwell (2005) suggests that local theatre teachers ignore the current trends in education and concentrate on what will work for their specific students and their unique discipline. He recommends constructing curricula within four or five year programs, courses that build upon each other and illustrate sequential learning processes. If drama teachers were to provide solid arts agendas with legitimate requests for funding to school administrators and boards, perhaps their needs will be recognized. Despite his words of encouragement, Colwell (2005) states that many colleges are narrowing their arts education programs for future teachers, mostly due to lack of funding or interest in these programs. Funding for arts education is, therefore, not only affected on the middle and high school levels but on collegiate ones as well.

I have highly contextualized this social justice study as it occurs with one group of students during one semester of a drama project. Research of this nature is incredibly place-
specific, and attempting to replicate it may prove extremely difficult if not impossible. The power of devised theater depends upon the knowledge of community members—in this case, high school students and teachers. As a researcher and an educator, I must report what I observe, whether positive or negative. I recognize my present biases in various situations, and I must investigate those intersections also. Greene (1995) emphasizes that teachers must learn alongside their students in order to interpret more effectively their educational needs and their diverse perspectives. My subjectivity does not diminish me as a researcher; rather, it empowers me in my continuing endeavor toward personal and professional betterment.
Chapter 2
REVIEW OF LITERATURE

Introduction

Like many facilitators of public professional or community theatre, many drama instructors hearken back to Freire (2000) and Boal (1979) as primary sources of social justice frameworks. Through Freire’s efforts in Brazil with the working poor and in his seminal work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000), Freire emphasizes that dominant cultures use education to subjugate lower classes and to prevent them from realizing their potential as conscious participants in their own societies. While he calls upon notions of economic tyranny from Marx and other Socialists, Freire claims that status quo dominance—such as that occurring in Brazil and America—result from cultural and social disconnects. In order for conditions to change for oppressed groups, they engage in dialogue within their social communities and external dominant figures in which they reflect on their situations and take action against their oppressors. According to Freire (2000), authentic education provides liberation from the culturally autocratic mindset of the dominant culture.

Adding to the social justice dialogue, Greene (1995) discusses the aesthetic measures of freedom and imagination in educational spaces. While Freire (2000) and Boal (1979) emphasize a critical, Marxist stance concerning social justice, Greene (1995) approaches the conversation from an arts-based, experiential perspective. Her interpretation of the social justice ideal contrasts previous notions by utilizing imagination to create endless learning possibilities for students and teachers. Through imaginative occurrences, individuals may experience multiple viewpoints which allows them to engage in a meaningful manner with art and each other.
Greene’s aesthetic standpoint concerning social justice provides for the growth and evolution of learners, and she recognizes that individuals often experience tension and pain when questioning issues of dominant discourse and self-reflection. Educators especially are encouraged to confront ambiguous and uncomfortable situations because Greene states that meaningful learning is constructed through unfinished or incomplete interrogations. Greene (1995) emphasizes that these pluralistic intersections are deliberate encounters that empower learners—both students and teachers—to create their own knowledge and reflective processes.

Greene's *Releasing the Imagination*

Building on her seminal work, *The Dialectic of Freedom* (1988) Maxine Greene continues conversation with education and creative learning, social justice and lived experience, in *Releasing the Imagination* (1995). Though this work is nearly 20 years old, Greene’s insightful foresight into educational traditions and policy trends enable her writings to remain timely and thoughtful on issues of learning inequities, the artistic aesthetic, and multicultural classrooms. Throughout the book, she stresses recognition of multiple identities and perspectives to more deeply explore the destruction of public education and the use of Imagination within its domains. Greene’s work on experiential learning through the arts for the purposes of social consciousness and change—as well as self-knowledge—frames my social justice study.

Greene (1995) explores the realities of today's young people and how the intersections of school, family, and community play integral roles in understanding diverse populations. The first of three sections, entitled "Creating Possibilities," discuss spaces wherein creative thought might cultivated to strengthen learning opportunities for young people.

Surely, at least part of the challenge is to refuse artificial separations of the school from
the surrounding environment, to refuse the de-contextualizations that falsify so much. As part of this refusal, teachers can be moved to take account of connections and continuities that cannot always be neatly defined. That means attending to the impact of street life and all it's multiplicity, danger, and mystery. It also means being somewhat aware of students' family life in its ease and unease. It means becoming conscious of the dramas played out on the playgrounds and front stoops ... Police stations, churches, drug-dealers' corners, shaded places in nearby parks and libraries, and the always blinking light of television screens: all these are part of the educational reality seen at large. (p. 11-12).

Admittedly, educators are often ill-prepared to engage students whose life experiences are not reminiscent of their own. Such disconnections between teachers and learners cause schisms in perception as the mostly White, middle-class faculty believes their students lazy and disinterested in academics, while diverse young feel educators are lacking in empathy and unaware of youth realities. Greene posits that imagination can stimulate dialogue concerning identity, community, school pedagogy and curriculum, and society-at-large that may combat long-seated learning oppressions and personal and cultural hopelessness. While such notions appear simplistic in scope, she directs most concepts to teachers in proscriptive attempt to make small, but impacting changes with individual students over time.

In the book's second section, "Illuminations and Epiphanies," Greene (1995) couples the search for further imaginative enlightenment with mindful curriculum-building, personal writings, and teachable moments. In addition, she specifically explores the connections between arts and imagination in allowing students to craft personal meaning in academic settings using
lived experiences and marginalized contexts. Such discussions are necessary to interrogate the
oft-ignored barriers between diverse learning populations and educational opportunities. Greene
pointedly questions the relevance of the traditional Western literature and art canon within
cultural multiplicity in modern classrooms. Students cannot spontaneously create links to foreign
learning concepts without first having guided instruction to actively engage them in meaningful
pursuits. The contributions of diverse learners may be unheard as their cultural stories do not
align with the dominant discourse of classroom conversation which focus on the achievements of
White, European heritage. Even in the framework of the arts aesthetic exists decidedly
ethnocentric traditions that exclude the imaginative development of outside ethnicities. Greene
maintains that these artworks "confirm people in their elitism; they serve the interest of social
power" (p. 146), whereby they strengthen the hold as specimens of high cultural esteem.
Teachers may purport myths that paintings, poems, plays, and musical pieces contain no specific
cultural significances, and that the artistic and academic traditions of dominance are universal.
Greene argues that such mindsets threaten the authentic and expansive use of creative thinking in
schools by restricting educational access to conventional knowledge and historic and
contemporary figures that do not confront the status quo. She counters this one-sidedness by
challenging teachers to engage students in creative acts of expression, allowing them connection
with the experience diverse and traditional artists and storytellers. Greene states:

If we can enable more young persons to arouse themselves in this way, to make sense of
what they see and hear, and to attend to works in their particularity, they may begin to
experience art as a way of understanding ... At the heart of what I am asking for in the
domains of the teaching of art and aesthetics is a sense of urgency, even of power. ... We
want to enable all sorts of young people to realize that they have the right to find works of art meaningful against their own lived lives. (p. 149-150)

The nature of social justice that I take from Greene is the invitation for student participants to devise theater—with its own innate sense of urgency and power—against their lived experiences.

In the final section, "Community in the Making", Greene (1995) explains the need for pluralism and multiplicity within schools and communities that are constantly searching for commonalities and generalizations. The inclusion of additional cultural stories and divergent histories into the national collective undermines the heroic individualism and self-made freedoms of democratic civics and the American dream. Greene calls upon the works of several authors from diverse backgrounds—from Morrison to Melville—emphasizing the multitudinous texture that enriches the American experience, though many important personal and cultural histories remain unrecognized by mainstream traditions. The call for higher learning standards in educational settings, to the rejection of all other scholastic experiences, continues to trouble the cultivation of imagination within diverse classrooms. Subject significance is reduced to tangibly assessable curricula, leaving only a handful of specific concepts and skill sets to determine every individual's academic worth. Greene states that a resurrection of one-dimensional achievement standards and basic classifications of diverse student populations may cause "severe injustices to the children of the poor and the dislocated, the children at risk, but will also thin our cultural life and make it increasingly difficult to bring into existence and keep alive an authentically common world" (p. 172-173).

For Greene, this common world is created by contributions from a myriad of engaged and divergent sources, ever in a flux state to accommodate the multiple perspectives that embody the
ideal American collective. However, by introducing single-strand learning standards as the preferred mode of knowledge transference, schools continue to place emphasis on histories, arts, and educational styles favoring current power structures. Greene insists that many unique voices be recognized in classrooms, despite teachers’ unfamiliarity with the social and cultural experiences of students. The act of listening to lived situations may open dialogue between disconnected groups and create opportunities for teachable moments. Drawing upon imagination allows for collaboration between teachers and students in developing relatable learning situations. In this manner, young people's personal and cultural experiences might exist in parallel with conventional canon to create deeper conceptual ties within school spheres. Greene’s insistence upon personal and cultural lived experiences of teachers and their students as viable standards for learning is central to my claim that drama education can in itself be an act of social justice, as it troubles performance standards as the single measure against which learning is measured.

While an important piece of social justice literature, Greene (1995) realizes that Releasing is not without its flaws. Being a member of the cultural power elite—Northern European, middle-class—she is obligated to question advances afforded her by White privilege, as I acknowledge my own privilege as a White, middle-class, doctoral candidate. She admits her disconnection in literature and art circles as the stories of her youth centered upon traditional American and British and other European artists and authors. The importance of these anecdotes lies in self-questioning and confrontation of normative cultural. Greene understands that she is unfamiliar with the everyday mores of diverse students and attempts to broaden her own experiences using imagination and divergent perspectives. This particular insistence by Greene
that teachers question our assumptions, perspectives, and life contexts while intentionally
opening ourselves to those of our students proved crucial to my data analysis. It allowed me to
approach the contrast between what I had expected to find and the findings that emerged—with
myself questioning as the emergent act of social justice.

Social Justice and Education

Linda Darling-Hammond (2009) writes that American education has been politically
charged since its inception, and there can be little doubt that the dominant discourses these
institutions are situated within are White, Eurocentric, and male perspectives (Giroux, 1997;
Lewis, Ketter, & Fabos, 2001; Trainor, 2005). Many of the conventions and traditions educators
have long held sacred cater to the privilege of middle/upper class Whiteness (hooks, 1994;
McLaren, 2009) with complete disregard for other groups and their cultural identities (Delpit,
2002; Martinez-Roldan 2003). Such attitudes appear in textbooks when editors attempt to
maintain a traditional literary canon create an exclusive audience for their learning materials,
pointing to a one-sided history and knowledge base. Educators continue to favor extended
lectures, seatwork/worksheets, and excessive homework presuming that students possessing the
comments that a good student is one who has learned to navigate these discourses and can
perpetuate a grasp of Western European learning styles. The education system evaluates those
who struggle with prescribed educational norms as deficient or lacking in some vital area, in
obvious need of remediation (Delpit, 1988; Freire, 1999). Many students relegated to
Exceptional Education services are those of Color and socioeconomically disadvantaged students
(Ladson-Billings & Tate, 1995; Ware, 2001). Their cultural “ways of knowing” (Heath, 1984)
and community backgrounds, although rich in heritage, have no place in the current educational systems, which honor only statistical gains and the Western European learning style.

The trend since the late 1970s and early 1980s—the period of the subtle decline of the Civil Rights Movement—has been for political and educational communities to disavow the strangle hold of White dominant culture and perpetuate a false ideal of invisibility and sameness (Collins, 2000; Giroux, 1997; McIntyre, 1997). As the power-holding race and class, White Americans typically do not identify themselves with an ethnic group or culture as they assume that White culture is synonymous with American values and attitudes (Schwartz, Zamboanga, Rodrigueuz, & Wang, 2007). Whites traditionally see no need to critically discuss or analyze constructions of race or class in educational settings or in any other setting, for that matter (McIntyre, 1997). Whites generally possess the ability to separate themselves from racial affiliations and claim “colorblindness,” denying legacies of oppression under a façade of fairness and equity for all learners (Brookfield, 2003). Jennifer Trainor (2005) notes that White students become angry and subsequently disengaged when faced with conversations of racial oppression in the 21st century. Many, especially males, believe that concepts of social justice, affirmative action, and celebrated diversity are unnecessary in their learning context as everyone in modern society is now considered equal (Applebaum, 2007). Their position as White carries certain benefits and “easy-passes” implicitly enjoyed without conscious recognition (Giroux, 1997; Lewis, Ketter, & Fabos, 2001). As the American teaching profession is overwhelmingly White, middle-class, and female, many educators succumb to these same conventions. Abby Ferber (2007) recommends that teachers, as agents of revolution and change (Freire, 1999), candidly acknowledge the inherent power and privilege of race as a step towards dialogue and social
justice in classroom settings. While diverse populations may approach such conversations tentatively and with difficulty, stakeholders might question current educational policies and perspectives.

This dialogue may require a new world view apart from the dominant and narrow scrutiny of modern American education (Ladson-Billings & Donner, 2005), a culture in which teachers and students challenge traditional roles and positions of power to create a new and authentic dynamic that builds meaningful connections for all learners (Freire, 1999; Solsken, Willett, & Wilson-Keegan, 2000). Anthropologists recognize culture as a verb, as in a series of shared actions and experiences. Susan Bodnar (2004) defines culture as life that is fluid and changing. Culture, for students and teachers, can begin as a relationship with others. People may not realize they possess culture until they are in the presence of someone or something unfamiliar. In Freirean (2000) terms, the dominant regime—in this case middle-class Whiteness—seeks to convince all subordinate groups that their cultural mindset is correct and superior, often to the detriment of all others. To survive in such an environment, expressions of otherness are forced underground, and when operating in a society that espouses White European ideals, expressions of self—no matter how positive, destructive, or even unconscious—must remain hidden from the mainstream (Decuir & Dixson, 2004). Stakeholders might construct public school settings that are educational havens and creative testing grounds for diverse learners at all developmental levels.

When one examines Whiteness, this consideration generally calls into question notions of normalcy usually equated with masculinity and heterosexuality (Weis & Fine, 2001). Educators who investigate critical issues in pedagogy may be concerned with these intersections of power
between gender and sexuality. Lois Weis and Michelle Fine (2001) studied conversational groups of diverse female students as they challenged issues of dominant discourses; the researchers note the obstacles young women face in educational circles. Regardless of their power perceptions, males also have certain learning stigmas described, in terms of slower interactions with literacy (Young, 2001) and attention-seeking, or disrupting antics in the classroom (Nogeura, 2003). As schools become more diverse, teachers may also promote dialogue in terms of gender and sexual orientation, topics upon which American educational discourse is usually silent. Dennis Carlson (2001) discusses the use of personal narrative to address homosexual identity and create space for dialogue and understanding among peers. Discussing gender stereotypes and debunking gay/straight mythologies (Kumashiro, 2002; Mayo, 2004) is an important step in opening minds to critically view current social perceptions on sexist, heterogeneous thought and homophobia. In fact, as a researcher, Warren (2008) struggled internally with whether or not to reveal himself as a bisexual man to research participants of his study, many of whom were gay, bisexual, or questioning themselves. Paradigms of power concerning gender and sexuality could involve examination in order to create conversations on Whiteness and cultural stereotypes.

To counteract damaging perceptions that do not face social reality, Marc Rich and Aaron Cargile (2004) suggest using social drama to discuss white identity transformation in which “people who are informed largely or exclusively about race by (white) mainstream US culture come to rely upon a larger, more historically grounded viewpoint that permits appreciation of contemporary forms of oppression” (p.360). Most Americans define Blackness by the influence that Whiteness plays upon it and often vice versa, illustrating the interdependence of these
cultural classifications upon each other (Wannamaker, 2004). Society views each according to
the presence, or sometimes absence, of the other in that the notion of race is created through
perceptions, misconceptions, and long-held beliefs of similarities and differences. Annette
Wanamaker (2004) acknowledges that students may be taught that one’s racial identity is that
"The most difficult goal of the pedagogy of whiteness is teaching students that race, as an
identity category, has been created by history and culture, but also is something that can be
continuously re-created through a political awareness that can lead to personal agency” (p. 347).
Diane Conrad’s (2006) exploration of devised theater with Canadian aboriginal youth illustrates
how teens label “at-risk” in their positioning beside the White dominated pedagogy of their high
school and that educators may inadvertently deny students’ agency by not questioning the
stereotype. All individuals involved in Conrad’s (2006) study interrogated their personal
identities and learned to use dramatic technique through dialoguing about current realities.

Freire (2000) comments, however, that the elite sectors of society keep the middle class
system under constant surveillance, and education for diverse populations is quickly dwindling
into the economic machine. In a foreshadowing article, Pauline Lipman (2004) discusses the
plight of Chicago Public Schools (CPS), consisting primarily of African American and Latino
students and the negative effects of No Child Left Behind (NCLB), which she considers a
business-oriented framework thrust upon teachers, students, and administrators. As test scores
decline, so do class choice and curriculum flexibility for these diverse populations. American
policies on high-stakes testing are also forcing large communities of students from all
demographics to forego college or any additional learning in favor of low-tech, low-paying
vocational positions (Rumberger & Gandara, 2004). In order to escape the failing reputation and
increasing standardization in public schools, upper echelon parents remove their children altogether in favor of the more intellectual curriculum afforded to private schools (Meadmore & Meadmore, 2004). Buying a privatized education has always been a perk of the rich (Belshaw, 2008), perpetuating rigid economic structures and generational entitlements. Ballooning class sizes, over-worked faculty, and drastically shrinking resources are increasing realities for lower- and middle-class students.

Social Justice and High-Stakes Testing

School populations are becoming more diverse, and systems are ill-prepared to serve the influx of new ethnicities and social situations; Henry Hodgkinson (2003) states that schools are so increasingly diverse that being Caucasian will soon fall into minority status. However, he and Jamal Abedi, Caroline Hofstetter, and Carol Lord (2004) emphasize that student ethnicities are not being recognized or honored as important educational contributions. Admittedly, most efforts to change school culture focus on ideas of improving test scores (Henning, 2003; Amrein & Berliner, 2004) and attempting to motivate students for testing (Jones, 2004; Jones & Egley 2005). Students are continually bereft of control, having their school capital and culture indoctrinated with study sessions to improve pass/fail rates. These students are regularly removed from aesthetic-type classes, such as languages or art or drama and placed in test prep initiatives. Many of these aesthetic classes are the very reason that students remain in school and do not drop out (Gallagher, 2005; Gonzales, 2004; Greene, 1995). Standardized testing initiatives strips educational curricula down to a skeletal framework of academic classes. Student learning is reduced to rote memorization drills and archaic writing formulas that deny diverse learners the opportunity to become passionate about their futures. Greene (1995) also cautions that viewing
education through a narrow accountability lens erases students’ individuality and identity within the school environment.

High-stakes testing has garnered top priority in education, to the detriment of students and teachers alike (Henning, 2002; Jones, 2004). The pressure on schools to maintain high testing standards, obtaining coveted state and federal funding, is so intense that some districts succumb to cheating (investigation pending for Atlanta Public Schools) in order keep resources available for students and schools (Amrein & Berliner, 2003). Admittedly, teachers and administrators greatly differ over the use and viability of test scores for districts that are only able to disaggregate data at the end of the school year (Jones & Egley, 2005). Teachers become frustrated when so much instructional time is given over to evaluations that have very little bearing on students’ authentic learning and may be poor assessments of what students actually know (Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004). Ken Jones (2004) states that when responsibility for testing results expands beyond teachers and school districts, then a more balanced model might be developed.

Many teachers understand that in order to actively engage students on a personal level, teachers might know where the students come from. Hodgkinson (2004) acknowledges that most educators instructing diverse students today are of the White, dominant culture, but Gloria Ladson-Billings (2006) and Lisa Delpit (2002) stress that creating relationships with diverse teens creates a culture and atmosphere of trust and acceptance. Students who believe that teachers care about them and their interests will work through a difficult lesson or concept to please a caring adult (Ladson-Billings, 2006). In addition, teachers could connect to and relate with each other concerning personal and educational experiences to gain greater insight into
diversity (Farkas, 2004). When educators begin to admit “they know that they don’t know” (Singleton & Linton, 2005) about the lives of diverse students, these conversations build bridges concerning race, ethnicity, and ambiguous learning circumstances.

Instead of having test scores dictate a student’s academic placement and thereby labeling that child as deficient (Hodgkinson, 2002; Abedi, Hofstetter, & Lord, 2004), difficult (Ladson-Billings, 2006), or in need of special education services (Farkas, 2004), Jones (2004) states that a panel of experts including teachers, parents, and community members might determine the child’s educational future. Such a paradigm shift would involve critically relevant pedagogy of the highest order (Freire, 2000; Boal, 1979; Giroux, 2001; Greene, 1996; hooks, 1994) in which an entire village is striving toward the betterment of the child’s education (Jones, 2003). Citizens could become advocates of schooling on multiple levels, challenging the current learning priorities within the American educational system.

In recent years, small learning communities that developed organically out of concern for student motivation and authentic learning (Katzenmeyer & Moller, 2003) have been left fallow in the wake of increasingly rigid teaching schedules and testing calendars. Very little time is left to address collaborative efforts or to build relationships internally or among community partners. Thomas Sergiovanni (2004) writes that the educational work between teachers and leaders requires a covenant-type relationship in which educators are bound by more than a mere contract, but by faith and hope that the work being conducted supports the betterment of students and the community. Likewise, Kenneth Leithwood (2009) reiterates that a teacher’s emotional state is the primary influencer of a student’s achievement, and a school leader’s largest sphere of influence involves teachers (Milford & Silins, 2002). Administrators may be aware of teachers’
needs and perceptions related to change and ongoing school situations (Marzano et al, 2004; Martinez et al, 2005). Teachers also could be pro-active in stating their needs in relation to holistic student achievement, making lifelong learning the priority and relegating state assessments to a less significant status.

Social Justice and Theatre

Freire’s theatrical contemporary, Augusto Boal (1979) incorporates drama within the social justice framework. Boal’s groundbreaking work *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979, translation copy) opens avenues for investigation and observation, much like Freire, that seek to maintain a status quo of privilege and power for a shrinking minority of self-possessed classes. The techniques in *Theatre of the Oppressed* suggest that the traditional audience become involved with the formal artists as fellow actors presenting various scenarios of struggle. These spect-actors (audience members who participate in the community plays) view the showcased skits and scenes performed by actors and interrupt the action within the forum piece by suggesting changes or additions that the characters might incorporate to create a more realistic and believable plot line.

Boal (1979) contests the work of established theatre supported by the government or State, likening it to the Greek bureaucracy’s support of Aristotle’s plays or the Church’s support of morality plays during the Middle Ages. Paul Dwyer (2005) disagrees with Boal’s reading of the classics and of Aristotle in particular, maintaining that too little of the ancient works remain to accurately extrapolate meaning. Aristotle’s mythic figure status was unwarranted, according to Dwyer (2005) as the playwright did not garner nearly the influence and attention that many modern scholars and audiences attribute to him despite Athenian patronage. Boal (1979) insists
that alliances between the formally developed arts and various governing bodies institute a power dynamic that keep lower classes and the peasantry immobile while rationalizing the inherent rights of the oppressors to rule. Therefore, authentic pieces might reach people outside the sphere of tradition, performing in marketplaces, streets, churches, and schools and suggesting that citizens reflect on tyrannical situations in society and transform them through public interaction. *Theatre of the Oppressed* (Boal, 1979) utilizes games, exercises, and scenarios, that internalize and sympathize with participants, allowing performances to be a collaborative experiences.

Mining inspiration from Boal and Freire, Eugene Barba (2002) discusses his development of the Odin Teatret in Norway as a place of refuge and relief for burgeoning performers wanting authentic theatrical experiences. The author emphasizes that drama could have long-lasting impressions on audiences, even imparting memories to future generations of past injustices and needed changes. Bisecting the Atlantic Ocean in Jamaica and the Bahamas, the Sistern Theater Collective (Green, 2004) and the Track Road Theater Company (Strachan, 2007) use the Brazilian frameworks to give voice to silenced women in the Caribbean. Jonathan Green (2004) notes that the Sistern group sought to keep its productions relevant and authentic to the grassroots community that so closely connected with its stories and scenes of working-class life. However, the need for resources and other monetary support drove Sistern to patrons outside the islands, effectively separating them from the neighborhood for which their pieces were originally intended. Breaking with the grassroots intent, the group shifted focus to capital-making ventures leading to “the deterioration of the local community-based work that they were being funded to do. … While they existed discursively for a local community, attentions had in actuality been
refocused elsewhere” (Green, 2004, p. 486). Members of the Track Road Theatre Company (Strachan, 2007) also felt the seductive allure of corporate and international patronage. Ultimately the troupe decided in favor performances for small audiences in public outdoor venues rather than having their provocative and irreverent works manipulated for political gains: "There is a liberation in hauling the stupidities of our day out into the sun, a power in demonstrating that the unending human will to resist oppression and to search for better" (Strachan, 2007, p.93). Many theatre companies make difficult choices that affect their monetary gains and audience patronage to tell the sometimes controversial but often relevant stories important to their communities.

Within this vein of social justice drama, it is then necessary for the researcher to investigate themes of social theatre which, according to Grant Schinina (2004), does not serve to illustrate commonalities but differences and build bridges between borderlands of diverse populations. The elite classes tend to gloss over divergent traditions and discourses, tamping knowledge with sameness. Drawing on Boal’s ideas (1979), Schinina (2004) notes that many forms of popular theatre simply play upon the economic mobility of the privileged to purchase tickets and patronize entertainment that solidifies status quo. These forms of drama root themselves directly in the community, as they are place-specific and focus upon social interactions and healing practices (Schinina, 2004; Thompson & Schechner, 2004): “In social theatre, the objective is to question society, with the living presence of differences, rather than to be purified and brought back to a ‘normal value system or social code” (Schinina, 2004, p. 24). This dramatic form seeks critical review and exploration from actors and audience alike, but it causes struggles based on the socioeconomic demands of monetary or practical values.
Before ideas such as social theater and Theater of the Oppressed were conceived, marginalized populations were enlivened as they viewed socially-aware dramatic projects. The Harlem Experimental Theater (HET) during the 1920s represented a growing body of Black performers involved in neighborhood empowerment (Macki, 2008) who emphasized the role of community in their work. Adrienne Macki (2008) explains that “authentic representations of black identity” (p. 113) were needed in original works of playwrights of Color to challenge institutionalized racism. The buildings that housed productions—schools, churches, libraries—were also active agents in showcasing the present-day issues of Black life.

Similarly, the Women's Suffrage Movement in the U.S. and Great Britain inspired performance pieces that highlighted feminine oppression and the dramatic portrayals of working-class women (Woodworth, 2006). Christine Woodworth (2006) examines how the personalities and moralities of several female characters within the play were perceived by contemporary and modern audiences. Various women's rights organizations such as the Women's Social and Political Union (WSPU) and the Actresses' Franchise League (AFL) often included performative components within organized gatherings and protests demonstrations that were "oversimplified" as basic explanations of gender and class (Woodworth, 2006, p. 19). In later displays of civil disobedience, performance elements were used in the Greensboro sit-ins during the Civil Rights Movement in 1960. Rebekah Kowal (2004) states that these social actions accelerated the urgency of the situation and pushed this scene from a local stage to a national one. The famed Woolworth's lunch counter became a venue for drama of the most provocative kind, with actors having partially written dialogue in which to safely and conspicuously engage White customers and restaurant staff:
In occupying the counter and demanding service, the protesters dramatize both the exclusion and the possibility of inclusion that was at the core of the civil rights movement of the 1960s. Furthermore, they kept in motion—through the success of their direct action—the idea that doing something (enactment) could make a difference, thus nurturing the seed planted by Dr. Martin Luther King Junior's Montgomery bus boycott, which proved that the organization of masses of bodies performing a massive theatrical life action could intervene in political processes with a power equal to or even exceeding that of mobilized voting blocs or legislative and judicial processes. (Woodworth, 2006, p. 148)

Whether these heroic demonstrators consciously realized it or not, they were using their cultural, spiritual, and political convictions to further performative dialogue within the social justice paradigm.

Further examples of marginalized populations are often found among indigenous peoples, and the work of Snow, Casey, and Grant (2009) emphasizes the silenced voices among the aboriginal tribes of Australia. Sacred communal acts performed for the benefit of a larger cultural event raise participants and audience members above the plane of the mundane. Tension occurs when the dominant White faction exerts social and political power over the spiritual knowledge of ancient tribes. Kevin Rudd, the incoming prime minister of Australia offered a national apology in 2008, a performance of social justice and healing for aboriginal Australians following decades of ignorance and mistreatment. Snow et al. (2009) emphasize that attention must be paid not only to the principal actors within these social dramas but also to the audience members, who are, in effect spect-actors in the tradition of Boal’s (1979) elements. Viewers of
the speech, both live and in their homes via television, had the opportunity to respond to
unfolding history and react in a way that influenced the prime minister’s organic social justice
moment.

“Applied theater” is an additional term used more specifically in Australia for this type of
critically conscious work among conflicting groups and privileged populations (Balfour, 2009).
Given the diversity of conversation topics within the social justice theater paradigm, it is
exceedingly difficult to pinpoint specific reactions and effects of performative work on actors
and their audiences. In any case, purpose and intent for textual and performance development
might be clear, and location could create specific settings for greatest authentic impact. While
this type of theatre may not create an immediate transformative relationship with participants,
Balfour (2009) proposes that it could lead to later revelations and revolutions. Alterations in
society do not call for monumental productions but for thought-provoking pieces that plant
important evolutionary seeds in the minds of audience members.

Based on the rhetoric of social theater, Canadian researchers developed the notion of
popular theater as a vehicle to locate marginalized populations within the hierarchies of power
and privilege (Butterwick & Selman, 2003). These researchers examine theater as a means for
social justice and feminine collaboration in a high-risk context, attempting to create a third space.
Homi Bhabha’s (1994) work concerning the third space focuses on the colonizing effects of
dominant discourses that influence marginalized populations, resulting in a hybridity of identity
among personal/cultural and social/political personalities. The third space functions as a
mediation zone or community area in which diverse groups interact freely in respectful and
questioning engagement. Again, relying on Freirian principles of pedagogy, this study
investigates the intersections of lived experience, storytelling and improvisation, dominant discourse, and reflection to reveal deeper understandings of societal oppression and silence, and the creation of a theatrical antidote to counteract their negative effects. Mary Ann Hunter (2005), in studying the social and cultural intersections of two youth-centered arts organizations, embraces the notion of third space as a place of cross-cultural dialogue and exchange, a negotiated area in which indigenous and non-indigenous artists interact and freely construct ideas. These gaps between society’s sanctioned areas can open neutral territory in which groups and individuals experience and interrogate differing cultural perspectives and question conventional schools of thought.

The benefits of social justice are most often needed in the most dangerous and dire of circumstances (Paterson, 2008) and no situation could be more frightening or extreme than that of a nation at war. Based on the work of Boal and Freire, Doug Paterson (2008) asks oppressed citizens to tell their stories of triumph, tragedy, and life in war-torn countries. His work in Israel, Liberia, and Iraq highlights the reactions of participants during interactive dramatic scenarios and emphasizes the productive discussions regarding culture, power, and modern politics that occurred as a result. One powerful vignette presents the misunderstandings that the Israeli and Palestinian citizens often have concerning ethnic and social bias and how perceptions of daily interactions between citizenry and local authorities can become dangerously misconstrued (Paterson, 2008). Due to the vast amount of colonization imposed upon the Middle East, many scholars incorrectly conclude that any theatrical tradition in the Arabic world is simply an imitation of European conventions (Amine & Carlson, 2008). However, researchers have discovered that the authentic heir of Middle Eastern theater, set in a forum structure similar to
Boal's, has existed for hundreds of years and has been smothered for the past several decades under colonial domination (Amine & Carlson, 2008). Oppressed dramatic traditions are slowly finding their way to local actors and audiences, thereby initiating revivals of creative cultural heritage.

Diana Taylor (2002) similarly discusses the relationship between performance and human rights in Argentina, and how the second generation of displaced, oppressed people engage in political confrontations to gain understanding of their familial and cultural identities. In the Plaza de Mayo, protesting Abuelas and Madres march weekly with banners and signs, and chanting and demanding justice for the children and grandchildren who disappeared during brutal regimes a generation ago. The offspring of these missing dissidents have developed their own brand of civil disobedience using ID pictures, social networks, flyers, and spray paint to target former government employees or military personnel, putting pressure on current politicians for information, admittance, and closure (Taylor, 2002). Matthew Buckley (2009) maintains that this type of open portrayal of extreme emotion has its roots in melodramatic forms arising from the terror, confusion, and abject loss during national revolutions. While traditional melodrama is often seen as a lesser form of theater due to its seemingly stereotypical characters and stock plot devices, these pieces actually connect with the life experiences of individuals, uniting actors and audiences in sympathetic understanding.

Laura Edmondson (2009) showcases a piece that deals with populations in times of war or struggle that was not necessarily meant to engender feelings of connectedness or sympathy. The disturbing play, Maria Kizito, poetically narrates the 1994 genocide of Rwandan Tutsi tribespeople in a Sovu convent, emphasizing the participation of several nuns in the slaughter of
innocents. While several other productions have been staged concerning this horrific event, the Erik Ehn piece is intensely straightforward concerning situational events and it does not evoke empathy for the audience, nor does it offer relief or closure to the reality of its visceral contents:

The play is not meant as an explanation -- not even as a condemnation... it is meant to provide a space of time in which we can be with Maria. I try not to judge her guilt. I try to let us be with her in her guilt, because her kind of guilt is the key to the understanding of who we are in the world today … There is an urge in me to eat the dead, to bring closure. But I fight instead to remain all alongside the dead, adjacent.

(Edmondson, 2009, p. 70)

Instead of ignoring the pain, discomfort, and revulsion caused by a production of this type, the audience is are provoked to keep the wounds of war and genocide from healing and to further reveal the themes and political situations that generate serious dialogue.

A common form of social justice practiced in the theater community uses nontraditional casting within various performance pieces. Specifically, directors interested in the examination of race, gender, sexuality, and other methods of classification often choose to reorient plays by challenging the traditional character dynamic (Medeiros, 2004; Pao, 2000; Wilson, 2006). Sun (2000) questions colorblindness and the conventional methods of ethnic casting, whereby actors of color would perform in traditionally white roles. Should directors remain purposefully unaware of performer physicality and sexuality to avoid the possibility of stereotypical portrayals and imitate the guise of social propriety and forward thinking (Medeiros, 2004; Pao, 2000; Sun, 2000; Wilson, 2006)? From a philosophical perspective, White actors are actually in greater need of experiencing diverse perspectives through playing characters of color, but the author admits
the decision may not be terribly popular (Sun 2000; Wilson, 2006). Instead of implementing colorblind casting methods, Pao (2000) offers a conceptual casting framework in which actors are selected based upon very specific themes that the director wants to initiate. Even famous playwrights, however, are loathe to allow tampering with their original constructs, as is the case with August Wilson and his plays presenting modern African American life (Wilson, 2006). Pao (2000) insists however, despite Wilson's objections to cross-racial casting, that many White students would learn a great deal in taking on the perspectives of minority characters. While directors may shy from placing white actors in these roles, doing so may facilitate important dialogue that may lead to more dynamic and risky casting in the future. When directors engage in racial and social questioning within their casting decisions, they create spaces for performers and audience members to experience new perspectives through traditional storylines.

Social Justice and Theatre Education

The extremely precarious position which American education and educators currently occupy dictates that equally extreme measures be attempted to counteract the marginalizing effects of standardization and high stakes testing. Greene (1995) states that when teachers guide students to develop their imaginations, these students exceed the expectations of predefinition and move more successfully through conventional discourse. Joanne Gonzalez (2006) examines dramatic pedagogies in her Ohio classroom to find methods of subverting oppression and creating a critically conscious learning environment for all students. Based on her many years as a high school teacher, she emphasizes that teens will respond most authentically when able to exercise power in educational spaces and negotiate for agency in creating collective knowledge.

While drama classes are able to challenge teens in thought-provoking and unique
discourses, this discipline is rarely considered academic or cognitive, left to survive on the borders of an increasingly stratified educational system (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006; Ross, 2005). Drama, however, as with many other arts, questions standardized curricula, builds community partnerships and engages specialists and artists of all disciplines creating pedagogical links to other curricular schemas (Rabkin & Redmond, 2006). It questions the lack of imagination perpetuating secondary education and may alleviate many frustrations and learning slumps experienced by students (Ross, 2005). This interrogation of self and social space within the drama classroom often leads to students’ deeper inquiry of non-relevant learning situations in other classes, which makes them aware of the disconnect between contemporary schooling practices and the modern pupil.

Drama teachers continuously find ways of working with multimodal literacy practices that engage students on an exciting technological level (Jensen, 2008). While some electronic devices are being banned from high school campuses because of distractions, many educators embrace their use as innovative new tools for deeper learning. Districts proclaim on websites and school letterhead that their students are gaining knowledge necessary for the 21st century, yet they prohibit the very instruments that further such exploration. Johnny Saldaña (2005) and Judith Ackroyd and John O’Toole (2010) discuss the use of multimedia applications within various devised theatre pieces—video shorts, computer imaging, etc.—to simultaneously illustrate the informational overload and the freedom provided by instant communication. Giroux (2005) proclaims, "Young people need to become critical agents able to recognize, appropriate, and transform how dominant power works on and through them... They need a pedagogy that provides the basis for improvisation and responsible resistance" (p. 25). As drama productions
evolve with growing technological advances, so must teachers’ commitment to help students thoughtfully navigate cyberspace discourses.

For dramatic studies to be effective within public school situations, many researchers emphasize that drama might question and subvert students’ issues of educational inequity. Kathleen Gallagher and Denise Riviere (2007) explore the positioning of African History Month in Canada, and how the Black experience is currently being redefined and assimilated into White dominant culture. In this study of an all-girl class, students began by discussing issues based upon their classifications of being female and Black, as well as the perceptions those monikers entail. A performed portion of Da Kink in My Hair is presented as a celebratory piece for the month's festivities, but it receives harsh criticism and negative backlash for its storied monologues concerning the lives of women of Color in a Toronto beauty shop. While many White audience members, teachers, and students alike rebuffed the production as exclusionary, the piece, in actuality, "exposed multiculturalism in ways that trouble both simplistic notions of citizenship and romantic notions of social cohesion” (p. 329). Students engaged in social justice drama illuminate issues such as race and ethnicity and force conversations from audiences, much to the chagrin of those in the dominant status quo.

Finding dramatic texts in which to showcase students of Color can often prove a very difficult challenge, and often ethnic characters are relegated to fringe spaces, supporting cast members as sidekicks or serving folk for the White protagonists (Medina, 2004; Gallagher & Riviera, 2004). Given its intensive time commitment and collaboration aesthetic, devised performance, while exceedingly emancipatory and provocative in such situations, is often not possible (Bowles, 2005; Brian, 2005; Schirle, 2005). In Carol Medina’s (2004) study using
picture books and literary texts, culturally diverse students in a Midwestern drama class were able to show the intersections of society, ethnicity, and identity through tableaux, improvisational work, readers’ theater, and other complex representations that depict the influence of media and pop culture. While multiculturalism may be an official edict from school boards, state assemblies, or even federal authorities, policies are generally left up to individual buildings to enforce, usually at the discretion of classroom teachers within those buildings (Gallagher & Riviere, 2004). The investigations of culturally diverse pieces, as with the case of Thompson’s Pink in Gallagher and Riviere’s (2004) study, ask that pupils and educators extend past current comfort zones and into worlds that question ethnicity, identity, and sexuality.

Helsa Nicholson (2003) examines preeminent British playwright Edward Bond’s work The Children in relation to acting, creativity, and social justice. In an interview with Nicholson (2003), Bond claimed that the origin of all drama is to seek justice, but that “justice is highly paradoxical. We are of unjust societies, and so ultimately, laws are historically justified but morally unjust. The law has to judge as justice has no judge. Instead it has drama, because justice is created in the site where the self touches society” (p. 3). Using the techniques of Theatre-in-Education, devised theater, and English dramatic construction, the play challenges student actors to question representations of children within society, to take a journey through historical situations, and to rethink the future (Nicholson, 2003). Urvashi Sahni (2007) also researches Bond’s work and theatrical theories of the notions of home and the world in what children attempt to define themselves based largely on these two parameters using imagination and reason. The study involves five East Indian girls who feel oppressed by their culture and home environment and use creative drama practices to configure a space of democracy and justice.
Is the purpose of educational theater in current situations of learning inequality and cultural injustice to constantly create spaces of disharmony and self-doubt that leave audience members, performers, and teachers/directors in a perpetual state of unsettling angst? While these lenses are undoubtedly important, a catharsis of sorts might be attached that allows all parties to appreciate dramatic works as artistic performances (Florence, 2005; Martin-Smith, 2005). Both Susan Florence (2005) and Adam Martin-Smith (2005) preface their articles with quotes from Maxine Greene that relates the importance of aesthetic education through the arts and its ability to create and nurture "a special kind of reflectiveness and expressiveness, of reaching out for meetings, a learning to learn" (Martin-Smith, 2005, p. 3). Florence (2005), however continues to emphasize the power of theater to trouble and question status quo discourse, allowing students to make connections that disrupt their "tunnel vision" (p. 77). The process-product framework that often foregrounds dramatic works dictates that aesthetics be a vital part of theatrical pieces (Martin-Smith, 2005). While contemporary education favors concrete, easily measurable learning parameters, the beauty, discipline, and other intangibles of artistic forms that often reach student and adult audiences in profound emotional ways.

Model Theatre Spaces

In the creation of the theatre classroom or program, a balance with practicality is necessary. Teachers for years have exhausted resources for funding drama programs; now they are told to justify its inclusion in the school curriculum. Woodson’s (2004) argues that theatre be completely integrated into regular “academia, into popular culture, into communities and into the society at large” (p. 25). The primary threat to any drama program derives from the instructor’s and participants’ beliefs that the program operates under a secret veil of special-ness. Theatre
groups may not consist of students or teachers with elitist airs that put forth feelings of snobbery and exclusion of those less talented or creative (Oaks, 1998; Trent et al., 1998; Hennessey, 1998). Ideal programs focus on the exceptional qualities of young people, discovery of their uniqueness concerning their own lives (Woodson, 2004; Hennessey, 1998; Oaks, 1998; Stevens, 2002; Andersen, 2004). As the students examine their personal journeys using dramatic methods such as role-play, monologue, and dialogue, they realize that every teen has an important voice regardless of natural talent or ability.

In comparison, Kenneth Stevens (2002) contrasts two current classroom models: “school as factory” (p. 11), and “school as studio” (p. 11). Stevens (2002) admits logic is involved with the school as factory, or assembly line process, in that the preparation of a strong work force makes for better products, which in turn, creates a better economy and society. Fortunately, Stevens (2002) offers another concept option in the form of studio in which the community views students as artists, not as workers, in which they are free to develop personal models of learning and interpretation. The arts are vital to this emotional and intellectual growth, pulling together a variety of styles and experiences that allow for greater cognitive understanding (Stevens, 2002; Hennessey, 1998; Oaks, 1998; Trent et al., 1998; Anderson, 2004). Although the arts often energize regular academics and excite students to explore their own theatrical possibilities, drama and its counterparts are often relegated to extracurricular status. The limited use and understanding of the arts sometimes leads to elimination from the school course offerings altogether despite its importance to cultural and community development.

Sharon Bailin (1998) suggests that techniques used in drama classes help students creatively solve problems, allowing them to utilize this tool of critical thinking in other areas.
She argues that regular academic education focuses too much on the acquisition of knowledge and not on critical thinking. Learning with drama involves making life decisions, creating and interpreting art, and improving artistic performances (Hennessey, 1998; Oaks, 1998; Andersen, 2004). Drama possesses a complex array of intellectual resources divided into background knowledge and critical attributes. Background knowledge is essential to the basic understanding of any play script or character analysis. Critical dramatic attributes are divided into four categories: principles of quality thinking, knowledge of critical concepts, repertoire or strategies, and attitudes or habits of mind (Bailin, 1998; Cockett, 1998). While all of these elements apply directly to drama, the author points out that drama education illustrates them in a practical manner. Critical thinking is used extensively in theatre arts, and Balin (1998) and Stephen Cockett (1998) provide specific teaching strategies for the dramatic classroom: choral dramatizations, play reviews, role-playing dramas, and deconstructions of television programs. Such varied applications emphasize the integral learning connections students create as a result of engaging in dramatic study.

Some of theatre’s most impressive academic gains appear when drama classes are coupled with social interaction. Nevine Yassa (1999) examines high school students’ involvement in theatre arts and its correlation with social behavior. Upon interpreting the findings of her data, Yassa asserts two common attitudes and behaviors that link most students together: individual and interactive characteristics. With individual characteristics, she identifies three unifying themes among her subjects that influence their lives: self-confidence, assertiveness, and regulation of emotions. Students in drama feel more comfortable voicing their thoughts and opinions to others in class and conversation, and they better understand and control
affective responses in stressful situations (Yassa, 1999). In addition, students involved in drama improve their working relationships with other students as well as teachers. Lending even more credence to her study, Yassa utilizes research from Piaget and Wagner (as cited in Yassa, 1999) to tie in teens’ cognitive evolution to various skills and behaviors. The study witnesses self-reflection, critical thinking and evaluation, and even self-actualization incorporated into daily classroom drama activities that were often unobservable in academic classes. Overall, the author believes the study’s most noteworthy finding is the clear connection between drama courses and students’ personal discoveries (Yassa, 1999; Bailin, 1998; Woodson, 2002; Freeman, Sullivan, & Fulton, 2003). Such gains in teens’ individual awareness warrants additional study and curricular coursework within the traditional school framework.

Natalie George (2000) conducted a study of educational theatre that suggests that drama is uniquely suited to how children actually learn, given its multi-sensory nature. Students actively engage in dramatic exercises, walking, turning, jumping, and arguing their way through various activities with rarely a still or silent moment. Theatre improves academic experiences, but emotional, cognitive, and physical ones as well (Trent et al, 1998; Andersen, 2004; Freeman et al., 2005). Self-esteem and self-confidence appear to be the first affectations of good dramatics in that students interact with each other and various texts, finding assertiveness in their presentations and personal discoveries (George, 2000; Yassa, 1999). Drama studies help participants to overcome self-conscious behavior and progress to acceptance of self and the development of healthy peer relationships (Freeman et al, 2003; Yassa, 1999). These inter- and intra-personal skills are vital to the successful navigation of an increasingly diverse and globally-structured society.
George (2000) also reviews cognitive improvements due to drama class exposure. She highlights the use of language and vocabulary that theatre automatically utilizes in context, increasing concrete and abstract thinking (Yassa, 1999). Teens connect with new character perspectives and experiences that deal with realistic circumstances, and through performance they begin to mentally grasp the power of words. Comprehension matures exponentially as skills and abilities receive practical exercise. Moving onto physical and emotional improvements, drama allows students to challenge their bodily proficiency through development of personal performance styles and spatial awareness (Oaks, 1998; Stevens, 2002). When teachers unite learning with physicality and movement, student expression progresses beyond studies of text, so that teens creatively incorporate gestures, body language, and non-verbal cuing. In terms of emotional growth George (2000) emphasizes character development and collaborative mentalities. When conjoined with diverse perspectives and personality analysis, character development and collaborative mentalities are emphasized with work in diverse perspectives and personality analysis that allows for examinations of character and personal growth. Group endeavors allow students to use collective knowledge to build scenes and situations that explain their places in society.

Gregory Freeman et al. (2003) identify self-concept, social skills, and problem behavior as common topics associated with creative drama. These researchers consider that the social, emotional, and behavioral issues of today’s students are major educational factors and that theatre studies can play a positive role in addressing these issues. Viewing creative drama as a holistic art, the authors see theatrical involvement as activating the inner self and surroundings, the individual and the community, and the human situation and its potential (Freeman et al.,
2003; Oaks, 1998). Drama studies engage all these facets while juxtaposing them, revealing new perspectives and possibilities for students and teachers in terms of individual learning and shared social responsibility.

Jessica Davis (2005) identifies an important focus in a drama classroom: a sense of ownership on the part of the learner. When students possess a personal stake in their education, they often set objectives and evaluate them at will. Communication and integration of process and reflection also provide opportunities for unique perspectives, actions, and collaborations with other subject areas. Another major focus of the drama classroom, modeling, creates an active element of performance and revision. Teachers who are intent on furthering their students’ learning may make them aware of their own reflective experiences, thereby initiating open-ended discussions. Greene (1995) believes it is the responsibility of educators to engage students by encouraging learning investigations based upon prior knowledge and imaginative reflection. Teachers could also be involved in their own journey of self-development along with the students. Davis (2005) states that in these situations everyone functions as a learner, with the instructor serving as a facilitator. Educators report that modeling a reflective posture allows them more time to gaze inward (Bailin, 1998; Freeman et al., 2003). Skills that teachers could model include close observation, listening, and questioning teachers might feel free to develop new vehicles of reflection. Davis (2005) discusses journals and portfolios as modes for personal production, with exhibits and performances as more product-focused creation. Drama teachers must also be aware, however, that the greatest barrier to utilizing process and reflection in the theatre classroom involves time constraints (Davis, 2005). Drama teachers could build in reflection time through rehearsal and character development sessions; while such innovations
may prove difficult, Davis encourages all educators to see their classes as works of art in progress and incorporate new teaching strategies. Similarly, students might view facts and data as a progression in their education, not as a purpose for or measure of their academic or intellectual worth (Davis, 2005). High stakes assessments and end-of-course testing that are meant to evaluate knowledge appear rather shallow when one juxtaposes them against personalized dramatic activities that investigate social and personal growth.

Christopher Andersen (2004) believes that the theatre classroom, or an infusion of drama into regular academics, can reach students on a deeper cognitive level. Looking at group or entire class improvisations, Anderson (2004) views individuals as both participants and observers, playing a role and reacting with other characters (Hennessey, 1998). Students are able to reflect on their own performances, internalizing learned skills and concepts as well as strengths/weaknesses in their work, and evaluating similarities and differences with other actors. The teacher in this situation acts as facilitator and builds upon student-driven changes to create a sequence of dramatic actions. With some theatrical forms, the production is the entire focus of work and rehearsal; when using this technique, however, the teacher might see to it that the process of character building and exploration remain the themes of the exercise (Anderson, 2004). A new breed of practitioners has furthered advanced research as they are drama educators rather than actors who drifted into teaching (Andersen, 2004; Stevens 2002). These teacher-artists balance their technical skill and aesthetics as theatre performers with their ability to function as effective professional educators.

Process and reflection in theatre are examined as avenues for deeper meaning in other subjects. Davis (2005) reviews a scene from a master acting class, as a student and instructor
work on reflection and revision to attain various character results. From the outset, she maintains that the public majority believe drama to be play-acting games and not the thoughtful diligence and work of actuality. Like other curriculum areas, drama education, especially in arts-based schools, can only be effective if teachers have passion and industry for their given genre. Davis (2005) also discusses connection and community, difference and respect, and how these bonds of closeness create environments in which authentic learning flourishes. Continuing in the view of reflection, Davis notes that teachers could consider mistakes as opportunities for growth or unanticipated outcomes for additional work. Too often those in the educational system give precedence to the end product over the process, but the process of learning ought not be overshadowed. Continuous education is common practice of teachers, and assessment might not be the sole determinant of knowledge acquisition.

**Devised Theatre**

Current educators such as González (2004) and Gallagher (2004, 2007) categorize their works as devised theater, a strategy in which performance participants build dramatic presentations collaboratively. In *Devising Theater*, Elizabeth Oddey (1994) analyzes recent pieces of devised theater history, noting some of the dates of important concepts and performance ideals. "Choice is the key word when devising theater" (p. 26), according to Oddey (1994) situating devised theatre within Freire’s (2000) and Boal’s (1979) emancipatory frameworks. In this labor-intensive process, all members of the acting troupe or company (directors, designers, actors, crew, etc.) are intimately involved with all areas of creation concerning the performance piece (Oddey, 1994). Deirdre Heddon and Jane Milling (2006) assert that the origins of devising were born out of the European traditions of commedia dell'arte,
and often play upon the Dadaist movement of the early 20th century, positioning them with postmodern conversations as a preface to ideas of self determination, community, self reflection, and equality.

While devising theater may be extremely rewarding, many practitioners caution that it is an extremely arduous process, sometimes taking months or years to refine and produce (Bowles, 2005; Brian, 2005; Schirle, 2005). Researchers advise that teachers establish some sort of framework that has communal agreement concerning individual and group tasks, rehearsal procedures, design connections, and the overall purpose and motivation of the piece (Oddey, 1994; Morrow, Bauer, & Herrington, 2009). Vincent Magnat (2005) advises that while it may be tempting to relinquish control of a devised piece to a traditional production team, the collaborating company might push through any initial obstacles to develop authentically collective ideas and original voices within the text. Diana Belshaw (2008) claims that devised theatre training could be considered as:

… a great equalizer that genuinely welcomes creative collaboration from every member of an ensemble. No voice is marginalized; no experience deemed insufficient. And, in the end, every actor has the power to choose a future that extends beyond a lifetime of waiting and wondering powerlessly whence the next job will come. (p. 39)

According to Joan Schirle (2005), American theatre companies are growing more interested in devised theatre, a trend that appears to be a shifting paradigm in cultural and sociopolitical currents, one that blurs traditional boundaries. Young people may also be encouraged to question traditional hierarchies of power based upon their malcontent and marginalization at the hands of government and media forces.
Individuals unsettled with action and societal response may continue to raise questions about social justice and the reconciliation of old problems with modern audiences and performance stages (Thompson, 2006). Naila Mae (2007) advocates the involvement of playwrights and dramatic stakeholders to build a sustainable theater infrastructure that not only serves social justice concerns, but resurrects multicultural storytelling and embodies local and global definitions of community. Devised theatre practitioners in these circumstances call upon the actors to present a transformative work meant to require the audience to question present status quo circumstances. A general audience populating theater seats no longer exists; the new norm involves diverse populations of patrons with sophisticated experiences arriving to the space with complicated social convergences (Schirle, 2005). The construction of social capital within an educational theater space is of tantamount importance when developing a dramatic and democratic consciousness (Thompson, 2006). Jill Dolan (2001) suggests that devising performers be “citizen-artists,” who remain “actively immersed in current social and cultural discourse, viewing their productions as public forums in which to debate the issues of the day from multiple perspectives, in all their complexity and contention” (p. 8). The researcher builds upon Freirian concepts of dialogic engagement that create interaction between power structures, working toward a more freedom-oriented conversation.

College and university instructors as well continue to struggle in social justice fields with students of increasing diversity in culture, ethnicity, sexual orientation, and socioeconomic status. Stanton Garner (2000) examined problematic attitudes toward women in the play *Oleanna* within an undergraduate dramatic literature class. Discussions encompassed marital relationships, cultural taboos, discourses of power, violence, alienation, and traditional gender
roles. Students engaging in these conversations create a space for investigating social ideologies and emotional manipulations of a female character harassing and mentally overpowering a man. As colleges may study texts on a deeper analytical level than high school, it is theatre practitioner’s responsibility to engage students in critical review and new methods of inquiry (Kindelan, 2009). Students’ exploration of character psychology often lead to questions concerning cultural and historical precedents that may be left unexplored in other courses. "I contend theater studies programs can play a more active role in pursuing the question and engaging students in the process of becoming morally and physically responsible” (p.99). Theatre programs occupy a critical and vital space in an educational system in order to meet the needs of diverse American students.

Given that devised theatre explores these racial, sexual, and psychological elements, teacher researchers may be concerned that more university programs do not undertake devised work. Practitioners (Brian, 2005; Magnat, 2005; Schmor, 2004) and researchers (Heddon & Milling, 2006) reiterate that post-secondary performance departments remain concerned about program sustainability in fluxuating economic and ideological times. Many educators still support theatre as product-oriented in approach, which may negatively affect the important processes of self-reflection, communal perspective, and collaborative decision-making. John Davies (2005) notes, “This is not theatre for theatre’s sake. It is the implementation of a mechanism that will divulge and confront the implications of human behavior” (p. 117). This statement suggests a heavy responsibility is required for artists, teachers, and researchers in the fine and performing arts.

Drama educators question the role that dominant discourse, specifically Whiteness, plays
within the classroom to create a conscientious learning space. Because of educational and social privileges enjoyed by the culture in power, White students and teachers may claim colorblindness to oppressive situations concerning skin color and ethnic stereotyping (Rich & Cargile, 2004). Barbara Applebaum (2007) states that while the majority of Whites are not necessarily liable for the damage done to people of Color concerning the pervasive power of race, they are nonetheless culpable and responsible to disrupt the discourses that Whiteness creates within society. Individuals or groups responsible for racist liabilities—either historical or contemporary—may be actively seeking to undermine to minorities and their struggle for equity in American society. Students experience empathy through drama interactions which may encourage them to recognize the complexity of cultural situations, social justice issues, and multiple perspectives (Kana & Aitken, 2007). Greene (1995) states that the current apathy and general feelings of resignation Americans have contributes to negative responses to education and arts experiences. Student actors involved with devised theatre question the notion of normativity in education and trouble dominant mindsets concerning diverse learning and student success.

Summary

The social justice pedagogy of Freire grounds the modern educator in a praxis of student involvement, constant questioning and curiosity, and a rebellious introspection against the political bureaucracies of American public schooling. Both Freire (1999) and Greene (1995), each coming from their different paradigms and world views, emphasize that education, and its subsequent positioning and presentation, may never be neutral and unbiased, despite long-standing beliefs to the dominant contrary. Ideologies of neutrality not only appear shallow and
naïve in scope, but may become disrespectful and dangerous in the face of complex societal obstacles and hegemonic power dynamics present in various incarnations throughout cultural and political circles. Drama, by its very nature allows participants to interrogate spaces in all echelons of social and economic standing and seeks to bring together dichotomous perspectives in the spirit of irreverent collaboration.
Chapter 3

METHODOLOGY

Introduction

Given my interest in drama education and my current occupation as a drama educator, I determined in this study to examine questions arising from my theatre arts teaching assignment. The overall study is qualitative in design, drawing on various types of ethnographies to better extrapolate my position and findings. The use of performance ethnography (Denzin 2000, 2003; Mienczakowski 1995) through ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2005) was pivotal to my research, and creation of a scripted narrative provided the core of the dissertation as well as a production witnessed by school classes and performed by students. Performance ethnography and ethnodrama (Bochner & Ellis, 2000; Richardson, 2000) were incorporated as critical forms to disrupt and re-interpret how individuals view their environment and their place within it. Concurrently, through developments in social justice in both education (Freire, 2000) and theatre (Boal, 1979) I sought an interactive, thinking (not merely consuming) audience that implemented emancipatory methods and could aesthetically identify with the diverse perspectives (Greene, 1995).

Methodological Orientation and Research Questions

Norman Denzin (2003) describes performance ethnography as a mode of inquiry that is disruptive, political, and discursive by its very nature: “Performance ethnography represents and performs rituals from everyday life, using performing as a method of representation and a method of understanding” (p.33). This method is not simply a tale of human experience but a physical embodiment of that experience and a method of empowerment for readers to discover
more about themselves. In Denizen’s (2003) terms, performance does not necessarily relate to an actual staged event but to the manner in which humans perform behaviors, experiences, and classifications of social and political life. Postmodern thought calls for radical writing methodologies that question traditional agendas and interrogate political epistemologies. Laurel Richardson and Elizabeth St. Pierre (2008) state that "Postmodernism claims that writing is always partial, local, and situational and that ourselves are always present, no matter how hard we try to suppress them—but only partially present because of our writing. We repress parts of ourselves as well” (p. 478). Jim Mienczakowski (1995) posits a blurring of the boundaries between disciplines of knowledge that has been slowly occurring over time, as social sciences have blended incorporating the narrative voice into reports of findings. Ultimately, performance ethnography provides a search for personal meaning using the stories of others, and sometimes ourselves, to interpret our world.

Relevance and Purpose of the Research

The significance of this study lies in the increasing disconnect students feel toward schools as these formal institutions that continue to ignore the individual learner. Educational theatre is uniquely positioned to allow teens to question and investigate their social spaces and identities to develop multiple perspectives for deeper meaning. Greene (1995) states that educators of the aesthetic arts might locate methods of empowering students to find and use their voices to reclaim their personal histories. Students, especially those continuing in the drama program, report that their experiences in drama have been some of the most significant of their high school career.

Problem Statement and Research Questions
As students spend more and more time within school settings, they tend to develop a growing disconnection, and these young people feel like numbers or demographic information; schools allow them little individuality for their continued growth. Given that modern American education focuses almost exclusively on knowledge acquisition, institutions pay little attention to the cultural undercurrents and social underpinnings that make learning relevant and meaningful. The following questions provided the foundation for the examination of drama students and drama instructors at Greenview High School:

- How might drama studies create spaces for “releasing the imagination” and counter the standardized educational environment that negatively affects diverse learning populations?
- How might drama students develop as creative inquirers of devised/collision drama performance and take ownership of their school learning?
- How might teacher researchers, drawing from self-reflective personal and classroom experiences, develop into social justice-minded and culturally aware practitioners?

These questions address multiple perspectives and discourses, such as what elements in dramatic studies challenge the status quo, how standards are seen as an educational panacea for achievement gaps, and what students’ thoughts and opinions are concerning their education. In addition to questioning the learning environment, this inquiry also questions how students create spaces for social justice, how they use voice and agency to promote learning, and how they generate ownership, both as individual and as collaborative learners. A third facet of research asks teacher researchers to interrogate their personal biases and assumptions and use reflection to address their social and cultural stances as educators in attempts to become better educators of
diverse populations.

**Performance Ethnography and Ethnodrama**

Susan Findley (2003) explains that two issues traditionally arise in arts-based inquiry: How might researchers function within the shifting paradigm of fluid roles? How might this research be presented without privileging the researcher and leaving participants voiceless? Findley (2008) also argues for quality in this arts-based framework that includes investigations into process, not solely product, and working beyond textual media. Arts-based research may be seen as a legitimate type of inquiry rather than simply as colorful interpretive technique, remaining open to evolving art forms that challenge traditional standards of artistic definition rooted in political and historical contexts.

Within this form of ethnographic inquiry, lies the desire to create written texts that story the life of the participants, capturing their experiences in truthful and meaningful representations, to engage readers emotionally and mentally. According to Arthur Ellis (2000), students benefit from a strong plot, coherent and dramatic tension, balance and flow, and above all, realistic interpretations of life. He emphasizes practices that illustrate actions instead of providing factual pieces of text about them. From a social justice standpoint, Ellis (2000) suggests that multiple points of view be offered, so students may experience many perspectives and moral diversity, from resources that maintain ethical standards of truth and care within storytelling. Likewise, Carolyn Bochner (2000) stresses that narratives of self and community are powerful vehicles of choice and resistance from dominant discourses, asking for stories that emotionally move the reader. Writing for performance ethnography is structurally complex, weaving together past and present events, and illustrating the transformation of characters. Authors who practice honesty
and credibility in representing their work allow themselves to establish connections with an audience (Bochner, 2000; Denzin, 2003, Ellis, 2000).

Denzin (2008) suggests that ethnodrama is perhaps the most powerful ethnographic medium for communicating the essence of research to live readers. This research methodology falls under the larger umbrella of performance ethnography without necessarily involving the researcher as a subject or character in the performance piece. Ethnodrama takes the gathered data from a study and transforms it into a performance piece usually to be read by the research participants and others for whom the information would benefit. Saldaña (2005) claiming that it dramatizes data details: "An ethnodrama, the written script, consists of dramatized significant selections of narrative collected through interviews, participant observation fieldnotes, journal entries, and/or print and media artifacts such as diaries, television broadcasts, newspaper articles, and court proceedings.” (p. 2). Saldaña (2011) also tags “ethnotheatre” as a performance of the data itself as theatrical production, but this separation of the written text from actual presentation is emphasized only in his work. Mienczakowski (1995) imagines ethnodrama as the public voice of ethnography, physically placing faces, bodies, and visceral emotional experiences onto traditionally flat subjects. Within my study, ethnodrama provides a lens through which the processes of collaboration and creative inquiry are revealed.

Ackroyd and O’Toole (2010) navigate the ethnodramatic processes of five researchers new to the theatrical frameworks of dramatized data. While each project proves unique in its participation base and thematic aim, all seek to question current ideologies concerning researcher privileges and the storied narratives of subjects. The researchers/playwrights also feel deeply responsible and accountable to their participants whose interviews and interactions they have
adapted into a performance text. A certain amount of trust is engendered within these studies, and levels of confidence and security between each participant group and the subsequent researcher directly parallel individuals’ willingness to share and communicate openly. Data and textual facts are no longer just words on a page; they became the lived experiences of actual persons who stand in a performance space demanding, daring, and provoking audience members to re-imagine their stories with them.

Aiding potential researchers in the performance research paradigm, Patricia Leavy (2009) outlines a basic checklist of considerations to facilitate studies that involve dialogic texts, reflexivity, and subjugated perspectives. From the outset, goals could be fairly transparent, and the aim of the performance is clearly serving to heighten those goals. The form of the work is also examined, as some studies involve data written in dramatic form, but they may or may not involve a theatrical representation of the collective research. Construction of the script itself encircles plot, narrative, and overall structure that speaks to the creation of characters as three dimensional entities. The textual script also becomes a tactile artifact of ethical issues manifested within a study, but researchers might be careful to avoid specific closure.

Many researchers, artists, and teachers in dramatic studies call upon the expertise of Saldaña (2003, 2005) concerning the framework of ethnodrama, the data and resources used, and the eventual distilling and dramatizing of the findings:

The basic content for ethnodrama is the reduction of field notes, interviews transcripts, journal entries, and so forth to salient, foreground issues – the ‘juicy stuff’ for ‘dramatic impact.’ The results are a participant’s and/or researcher’s combination of meaningful life vignettes, significant insights, and epiphanies. (p. 221)
Saldaña advocates using a sufficient number of actors for a powerful story line and serve the plot’s progression, a thought which may, at first, appear disingenuous to the objective nature of the research. However, ethnodrama and ethnotheatre require a fluid balance between inquiry and aesthetic entertainment, so that the performed research involves and interests different audience group perspectives.

I agree that equilibrium be reached within the investigation and dramatic presentation of ethnodrama, and it is perceptions of the researcher that ultimately determines the course of the study. As a public high school teacher desiring accessibility for my work, I was ever conscious that I was conducting a dissertation study that must also be understandable for secondary audiences. Saldaña (2003) emphasizes that great care be taken in the positioning and characterization of the researcher in the theatrical presentation as it would be equally disingenuous to omit his or her influence on the work. Ultimately, the level of involvement or stage time in the ethnodrama is personal preference, corresponding to overarching artistic needs and truthful representation.

Setting and Participants

The research study took place at Greenview High School in Briar County, Georgia. As of fall 2009, data gathered for a Southern Association of Colleges and School (SACS) evaluation, Greenview High continued to be an environment in flux and evolution, having amazing growth spurts and annually increasing diversity among its learner population. Since the school’s opening in the 1999-2000 school year, the student body has grown from 960 students to the current enrollment of 1,668. The highest enrollment occurred during the 2005-2006 school year with 2,300 students. The opening of South Side High School and redistricting within the
A Tempest in the Halls

county in 2006 caused a drop in the enrollment at Greenview High to fewer than 1,800 students. The average daily attendance has remained consistent over the past five years, with the lowest at 93.4% and the highest at 94%. The average pupil-teacher ratio has been 20 to 1, but with current class size adjustments based on economic hardship, the ratio has risen to 27 to 1 (Briar County in-house report).

The demographic make-up of the student body reflects the growing diversity of the larger community. Of the student population, the demographic make-up is 55% White, non-Hispanic; 40% African American, non-Hispanic; 4% Hispanic; and less than 1% multiracial, American Indian, or Asian. The gender make up at Greenview High is 50% male and 50% female. Thirty-five percent of students are from economically disadvantaged households, and 41.66% receive free or reduced meals.

The Briar County School District has adopted a hybrid block class schedule in which some classes are offered as 100-minute block classes and others are on a traditional 50-minute slot. Seven periods make up each school day, and three possible sections are provided for block courses. The only period not available within the block schema is 3rd period, based on the odd number of periods within the school day. Students have the option, depending upon course availability, of taking several block or traditional-length classes during a given semester, and rarely do two students’ schedules look similar. The particular class in which the research occurs is Drama III & IV, Advanced Theatre, which is scheduled for 5th period, 50 minutes daily. It is not part of the block class cycle, and allows students to participate for the full year.

The students within Advanced Drama are a fairly diverse group: 21 members, with 14 females, 7 males; 7 identified as Black, and 14 as White. Most of these individuals are twelfth
graders and graduate in May; only a handful are in tenth or eleventh grade. As these students are in an advanced performance class, the majority of the class has taken courses with me for two or three years and I have known them since they were freshmen. Most members of this class also participate in extracurricular performances, such as the One-Act play, holiday presentations, the Spring Musical, and the Spring Play; and many hold offices or are active in the Thespian Troupe/Drama Club.

School and Student Access

I have been a teacher with Briar County at Greenview High for nearly ten years as an English instructor and the school’s sole drama director. During this time, I conducted several studies with students in various drama courses and of differing ability levels and under the guidance of advisors from two universities. Given my research history, the administration of Greenview and the superintendents of Briar County are familiar with my study requests and have never denied me access to my students and their work.

Because I have been a teacher within this particular school for almost a decade, I suppose I am something of a fixture, having the reputation of an avant-garde and unconventional instructional character. I readily admit that my sometimes blunt demeanor may scare students away from taking my classes, but I try to communicate my genuine care and concern for their personal well-being and educational futures. While I do not become involved with students on a parallel friendship level, I am interested in their lives and how I may assist them in creating positive realities beyond high school. My advice or criticism to teens may appear harsh or cold, and I attempt to reiterate consistently that my intention is to not crush dreams nor is it to candy-coat their worlds; rather, my intention is to dispel illusions and aid them in self-discovery. My
drama connection possibly allows me more insider status than many teachers possess, bringing with it the additional responsibilities of mentor, role model, counselor, facilitator, and director/artist/technician. Working with different student participants translates into different working relationships and degrees of access that I do not assume are present.

Methodology

While I have great faith in the abilities of my students, I know that, too often, time is not on the side of the teacher or researcher. For that reason, I have combined methodological techniques to strengthen the framework of the dramatic design. Collision theatre, developed in 2002 by Susan Booth and Rosemary Newcott at the Alliance Theatre in Atlanta, GA (Elman, 2007) is a type of devised theatre unique to this metro region. The Collision project came about through Booth’s desire to create a realistic medium for teens to exercise agency in conjunction with the professional theatre community. Elman (2007) identifies the purpose of Collision theatre:

The Collision Project’s main goal is to cultivate the voices and experiences of a generation of young people who often feel neglected by the theatre. Their stories, they feel, are not being told. By allowing teenagers to adapt the themes of classic play—*Our Town, Antigone, Romeo and Juliet,* and *King Lear,* for example—into works that reflect their own voices and times, the project helps to develop future theatre artists and audiences. (p.11)

The process for the framework involves first choosing an established playwright with diverse perspectives, and then auditioning and interviewing area high school students to workshop for three weeks at the Alliance Theatre during the summer. These 15-20 teens work six-hour days
with Newcott and the designated playwright on a schedule entailing warm-ups and ensemble-
building exercises, writing personal narrative pieces, discussion of textual issues and themes, and
a concluding group session detailing significant moments or revelations from that specific day.
Capping the student portion is a devised-type performance based upon the collaborative work
that closes with an actor/audience question-and-answer review.

The playwright then refines the Collision piece for up to a year with continued email
contact from workshop teens and two separate readings held at the Alliance to ensure that she
maintains student integrity (Elman, 2007). Simultaneously, project director consider area
colleges and universities with theatrical programs for the touring company for the finished piece,
with proximity a key characteristic for selection. University students audition for a tighter, 50-
minute, six-character version of the initial work and have three weeks to rehearse. Finally,
performances with local middle and high schools in metro Atlanta are scheduled with the tour
engagement running for a few months.

A few thoughts: I rejected the option of sending my data off to be disaggregated and re-
scribed, as I did not have a year with my students in which to interpret dialogue and scene
placement for semi-professional performers. Therefore, I created a unique construction based on
devised theatre principles first developed in the UK (Oddey, 1994) and incorporated elements of
Collision theatre (Elman, 2007). As previously reviewed, devised theatre uses the cast members
of a theatre company as the writers/designers of a collaborative work to be presented to a specific
community or group. However, much like Collision theatre, devised theatre may take several
months to build and produce, depending upon the given parameters. Because of time constraints
and student availability, we completed all work in-house, with student performers collaborating
in the playwriting process. The teacher/researcher acted as facilitator, assisting only when students reached an impasse concerning writing choices, casting decisions, or general collaborative differences. We based our framework on *The Tempest*, a strategy provided by Collision theory. The participants went on to write their devised piece, a mixture of Shakespearean drama and personal stories of collaboratively-agreed upon themes. This project ultimately concluded in multiple performances of their work for the student body of Greenview High School in May.

Given the nature of this blended performance of classic text and personal vignette, actors may seek to engage directly with the audience and trouble the fourth wall notion of traditional theatre. Antonio Danto (1981) notes that convention of the fourth wall was developed by Diderot during the 18th century based on conversation with Antoine who created the term. The fourth wall functions as the imagined boundary between the action of the play and its patrons, and Elizabeth Bell (2008) suggests that it allows viewers to glimpse the present tense of a performed reality. The students’ written pieces directly challenge this convention by breaking through or pushing out the margins of normativity and requiring audience attention and engagement, symbolizing a disruption of the status quo and demanding equitable representation in democratic learning.

Oddey (1994) emphasizes no set framework for the creation of devised theatre pieces because of their organic nature. Generally, the teacher/researcher generates no concrete framework for devised theatre. Greene (1995) notes that the difficulty in open-ended projects derives from the teacher’s struggle to provide a learning situation in which students organically and consciously interrogate their educational experiences. However, in order to provide clarity
for this study, I provided the following possible scenario for the reading audience:

1. Participants (students) investigate various issues or problem situations that exist within the school or their lives (e.g. identity, family, friends, learning demands, sexuality) and construct questions to be answered concerning the performance piece (and in the larger context of the dissertation). They also determine the purpose and audience for their piece.

2. Participants engage in discussion concerning their questions and the embedded issues.

3. Participants connect their questions to portions of *The Tempest* (the Collision portion) where similar subjects might parallel the characters themselves.

4. Using varied teacher prompts and theatrical techniques (e.g. improvisation, tableau), students cut/edit the Shakespearean text, constructed monologues, dialogues, scenes—among other works—that relate to their lived experiences based upon the questions to be confronted at the study’s opening and identified throughout sections of *The Tempest*.

5. Students jig-saw their pieces together with the existing play with varying levels of success as the participants deem appropriate and most provocative.

6. Collectively, the number of scenes and characters are determined as well as how much of *The Tempest* remains exeunt. These decisions include how characters are represented or collapsed according to artistic and practical constraints. (Will a student monologue be woven into the play text, be
enacted by another character/chorus member, or stand alone as an outside
voice?)

7. Participants attempt to fill in narrative gaps and place pieces and scenes for story
flow and emotional/affective connection to audience.

8. The researcher assists participants in the polishing process; e.g. adjusting
entrances/exports, changing confusing syntax, etc. Copies are made of
the final script for all actors and production team members.

9. The rehearsal stage for the production begins, culminating in several school
performances for English, social studies, and special education classes, as these courses
represent the majority of student body.

During the collision/devising process of this study, I observed and interviewed students.
I conducted focus groups in which students discussed their involvement in the play project and
their thoughts on the project itself. The overall framing of the dissertation was initially to be
divided into five acts with each section being prefaced with the findings that reveal
patterns/trends/issues that embed a portion of the literature review. I determined to possibly
follow with a story narrative, and end with the created play text that pertains to those particular
stories/findings. Because of the crystallized nature (Richardson, 2008) of this devised research, I
found that many patterns and trends interacted or intersected with each other in various manners,
creating challenges in reporting the findings in a succinct, coherent method. This crystallization
generated a large volume and variety of data, so I decided to write only Chapter Four with
dramatic elements as an ethnodrama as illustrated by Saldaña (2005). Upon further review, I
reformatted the data in the dramatic text into a narrative structure that would be concise for the
dissertation framework, allowing me to re-purpose and more deeply investigate the original data sources. The fourth chapter, originally written as a play, was reconfigured into a sequence of events that succinctly describes the learning situations within the study.

Being mindful of restrictions of the academic school year, I attempted to ensure that the study remain on a schedule so student participants would have sufficient time to rehearse before performances began. The opening two weeks initiated the questioning and selecting of possible topics and themes as well as a familiarizing process with *The Tempest* text. I conducted preliminary observations, focus group discussions, and a selection of interviews. The following five weeks involved students considering the Shakespearean cuts and writing their personal pieces based upon the discussed themes and their interpretation and interaction with the text. In the meantime, I continued with the introductory interviews while observing the student collaborative process. For mid-stage interrogations at weeks eight through ten, students collided their works with *The Tempest*, and I conducted a second set of focus group discussions and interviews. The rehearsal portion lasted approximately two weeks, and at which time I made continuous observations. The students made casting choices for their created characters and I interviewed students who had previously been absent. We then has a few days of script formatting and preliminary polishing followed by one day of rehearsal notes and brief discussion gave greater text and character awareness to student actors before their series of two performances for their peers and teachers. The fourteen and final week concluded with a debriefing session, ending interviews, and final focus group discussions concerning the students’ experience with the devising process and their collaborative and artistic developments with agency and voice. A listing of data points divided by month is available within Appendix D.
Positionality

Traditionally, the researcher is seen as the penultimate authority concerning data, subjects, analysis, and conclusions of a given study. Current thought requires that all areas of discourse be questioned and investigated for socio-cultural agendas and power structures, and dominant pedagogy that underpins conventional research writing incorporating the researcher’s stance as part of the discourse (Denzin, 2000; Mienczakowski, 1995; Ellis & Bochner, 2000). The term “creative analytical practice” (CAP) (Richardson, 2000) describes the many reflexive narrative forms, including performance auto-ethnography, creative nonfiction, and performance narratives that blur the boundaries of texts and other representations. Triangulation of sources is replaced with "crystallization," which involves symmetry, transformation, and multidimensionality (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008) of subjects, data, and other resource materials. Initiating a constant stance of self-reflection and deconstruction of the researcher’s positioning is integral for negating a priori assumptions and make the writer visible for the reading audience.

This deep level of engagement causes the writer to inhabit multiple spaces, which further increases researcher responsibility in revealing personal insight and information and remaining faithful to the truth of stories (Ellis & Bochner, 2000; Berger, 2001) rather than continuing to uphold the grand narrative of imaginary objectivity (Connelly & Clendinin, 2000). Teacher researchers may feel pressure to transform their data and privileged experiences to indirect positive outcomes (Miller, 2005). Such stories, with neatly packaged conclusions, do not investigate authoritative positioning and fall back into traditional epistemologies of unifying themes. I did not want my voice to overshadow or dominate the voices of my students so that
their stories were not clearly heard.

I acknowledge my own privilege as an educator I am aware of the advantages afforded to dominant cultures and daily seek to pursue equity for all students in my classroom spaces. Being a White, middle-class, heterosexual woman, I currently engender all the major categories of the typical American teacher, but rarely are those classifications questioned nor am I asked to explain their significance. In contrast, modern education demands that diverse learners prove their worth and expertise via institutional conventions that seek to dilute and make invisible divergent cultures (Giroux, 1997). How could I speak to social justice ideals when I appeared to be the embodiment of the educational status quo?

Because of my position as a teacher of performing arts, a discipline constructed upon self-expression and identity development, I could not allow myself the stance of invisibility or colorblindness, pretending that race and culture have no political or social effects on students and educators (Howard, 2006). Students enter school bringing unique experiences and diverse heritage, as well as language, skin color, religion, and sexualities. Such diversities are often viewed as deficiencies, and traditional teaching demands that learners adopt unfamiliar academic regimes to navigate standardized lessons. Ignoring students’ cultural guideposts and identity markers may, at times, situate the educator as a colonial savior figure, in that opposing and divergent voices are marginalized in favor of ideologies perpetuating oppressive social and political practices. Race and culture do matter in classroom spaces and I continue to investigate my personal perspectives and biases, exploring social justice and dominant conventions inherent in White privilege.

I had difficulties locating myself properly within this study, perhaps because I was
heavily involved in most aspects of the research. How could I represent myself most accurately with multiple roles and perspectives? Nothing in current research, I discovered, discussed at length the teacher-artist-researcher creature. Then I chanced upon a recent article by Patricia Leavy (2009) in which she explains her work with arts-based research (ARB) and that she developed an a/r/tography sensibility (Springgay et al., 2008). She discusses the intersections of the three identities, claiming that one is not more important than the other, and each informs praxis and has a unique performative perspective. How are these identities represented? What does it mean to be a teacher, an artist? What other identities are constructed within those three that influence my perceptions of self, space, and students?

My most pressing questions concerning my role as teacher/researcher remain: How much power do I exact concerning projects or activities? How tightly do I control unscripted situations? As drama teachers are often directors or performers ourselves, we are very accustomed to taking charge of multiple situations, but sometimes we are loath to hand over our creative decision-making authority (Beare, 2008). Greene (1995) states that for teacher/researchers to engage in educational critique, they be inside the learning environments they wish to investigate and not removed observers in conventional stances. Joanie Friedman (2006) explains, through her involvement with a middle school mentorship program called Dramagirls, the most provocative and rewarding work is produced when students and adults develop pieces collaboratively rather than adhering to traditional hierarchical roles. In her research, Friedman (2006) served as the leading facilitator, the participating girls had the authority to decide which of their written pieces they wanted showcased, and in some instances, who would perform them, which made the success of the project more meaningful for all those
In my study, I attempted to emulate this aspect of Friedman’s (2006) research and allow students to choose and develop their own preferences of text. However, I constantly questioned whether my observations were based on my past interactions with students attempting to keep study incidents within the current context. Greene (1995) encourages teacher/researchers to find their position within a project’s space and use their personal experiences to connect with students’ lived situations. However, I realized the impact of shared learning between teachers and students after the project had concluded, and the majority of the participants had graduated.

Confidentiality and Ethics

All students in this study have been given pseudonyms or assigned a single initial to designate them within observations, focus groups, and individual interviews. Names or identifying features have also been deleted from student work to maintain confidentiality. Bias may exist with the researcher, given that I am also the classroom teacher. Alternative names have also been given to the school where the study took place and its subsequent district.

Data Collection

Crystallization (Richardson & St. Pierre, 2008) was achieved through several classroom observations conducted on various dates with my Drama III & IV combined class, individual student interviews, at least two focus group discussions, and students’ writing pieces that pertain to particular areas of classroom research. Interviews and focus group discussions were digitally recorded and transcribed. Observations were handwritten, then typed, and I reflected upon them by using observer comments. Student writing was collected at various completion points throughout the research period, including prior to spring break and following the performance of
their devised pieces. I conducted all transcriptions of data from interviews and focus groups myself to ensure the accuracy of students’ thoughts and comments throughout the research period. Should there be a question concerning a specific piece of digital feedback, I deferred back to individual(s) within a certain recorded section (Bogdan & Biklan, 2005). All data was coded and analyzed for possible trends and patterns within the study using the Atlas Ti 6.0 qualitative analysis data program (Appendices C, D, E).

Data Management and Analysis

I recorded many observations in a handwritten notebook that I always kept with me; sources data were recorded digitally on a secured audio recorder. I recorded all interviews digitally using the same device, which possessed a pass-code lock. I then transcribed both observations and interviews typing them into a password-protected computer and I kept student writing and other information in a locking filing cabinet or at my desk in my locked office while I was working in the classroom.

I analyzed all collected data initially using the Atlas Ti 6.0 program software. I encouraged students to create digital copies of all their written work to allow for more convenient transference between word-processing software. I began analysis with a general open coding (Appendix C), during which I assigned various phenomena an indicator or acronym (Merriam, 2009). I then conducted axial coding in which the general codes were classified under basic themes or positions (Appendix D). These new groupings I collapsed to form tighter, more cohesive trends and patterns that further illuminated students’ thoughts and opinions concerning their high school learning experiences as they collided with theatre practices (Appendix E).

According to Merriam (2009) and Grbich (2007), textual analysis of written works involves the
investigation of narrative content through a process of coding and category construction to discover relevant traits within student pieces. Questions answered concerning the use of textual or content analysis include the following: Do I have sufficient document sources to warrant this form of analysis? How reliable is the approach or method? What relationships between codes and collapsed contents exists which I will be analyzed (Grbich, 2007)?

The student-driven nature of this research prohibited me from extrapolating the exact layout of the study by the end of May when the students would graduate. I reorganized and reformatted the prospectus in its original form to reflect more appropriately the nature of the dramatic elements within the investigation and devised play work (Saldaña, 2003). I analyzed themes and patterns throughout various sections, or acts, accompanied by all pertinent literature, personal observations, and research. At first, all the components of a thoroughly reviewed dissertation would exist, but in a more theatrical arrangement. The realities of crafting performance-ready ethnodrama or ethnotheatre for dissertation work proved exceptionally complicated. Upon reflection, I re-imagined my initial methodological design, employing a narrative chronology that allowed cohesive illustration of the journey of the collaborative project.

Limitations

As the subjects of this research study were extremely personalized, replication would be difficult, if not impossible. All the themes and “big ideas” constructed by the students were place and person-specific; research methodology is most effective and powerful with specific audiences, however, has explained is most powerful and significant for audiences (Green, 2004; Strachan, 2007) as theatre becomes most persuasive when addressing explicit questions within
A researcher would find replication extremely complicated for a researcher if he or she has little or no dramatic background to conduct a study of this sort because theatrical knowledge is integral to this process orientation. If this genre of study were conducted outside a drama classroom or in an environment that focuses upon product rather than process, student agency and voice may be compromised for the sake of time or test-driven results. My level of access to the drama classroom and students’ knowledge and class curriculum played a vital role in my ability to rearrange a daily or weekly class schedule or make spontaneous decisions concerning our area of study for a given segment. A visiting teacher or researcher might struggle with taking such liberties without raising questions from students, teachers, and administration.

Summary

Several parallels exist between acting and teaching in terms of creating personal connections, managing time and energy management, and being attentive to detail. James Hennessey (1998) encourages educators to connect with students through dramatic participation and become a teacher-actor, not simply an acting or a drama teacher. Darrell Dobson (2005) highlights the continuing exploration of a professional actor-turned high school teacher who continues to investigate the influence of teacher persona on actor, and vice versa:

Acting and teaching are not about pretending to be something you are not, but rather about being aware of and responding to the subtleties and nuances of the moment. Being ‘on’ and being ‘sincere’ are interrelated aspects of performing and teaching. Being ‘on’ means establishing a heightened sense of awareness and presence in the moment, and elevated with-it-ness, being tuned into the now, of focusing and concentrating of the mind, body and voice, and this state relates to being authentic. (p.
Laurie Ball (1990) wonders if it is even possible to exist successfully as both teacher and artist or if one reality completely overshadows the other. Marc Hill (2006) maintains that it is indeed possible if the roles of teacher/researcher remain fluid and honest with students/participants’ representations. Above all, in an educational environment that values standardized, high-stakes assessment over individual and community knowledges, educators who produce counter narrative writing that may question the current trajectory of American education (Denzin, 2008). Stories from real-life classrooms told by actual practitioners may trouble the public’s perspective on learning in schools; a teacher/researcher is uniquely situated to do just that.
Chapter Four

ANALYSIS OF DATA

Introduction

At the beginning of the study, I believed that the best learning experience I could give my students was one in which they could be autonomous. Most of the individuals in Drama III and IV had taken theatrical classes for at least three years and were familiar with memorizing lines, portraying various characters, and taking direction from me in rehearsals. I decided that engaging in a devised theatre piece would allow them the authority of choice and agency to create their final high school performance work and at the same time provide the context in which I collected my research data.

In order to relate the developments of the collaborative dramatic process effectively, I initially wrote Chapter Four of this study as an ethnodrama, attempting to relate the theories of performance ethnography to readers. However, the amount of data I collected made crafting such a creative piece cumbersome and unwieldy for the more concise nature of dissertation work. While I do wish to continue investigating ethnodramatic and ethnotheatrical pieces, for this dissertation I settled upon a more structured organization to represent my data analysis and its subsequent findings. The project focused on student process rather than a final product; therefore, I determined to utilize a chronological structure in order to heighten the sense of the journey. Building upon authorial voice in the style of Michael Connelly and Jean Clandinin (1990), I prioritized meaning making through a strong authentic narrative. They recommend researchers become fully involved with the study, and examiners “must ‘fall in love’ with their participants, yet they must also step back and see their own stories in the inquiry, the stories of
the participants as well as the larger landscape on which they all live” (p. 81). With this approach I was able to gaze deeply into intersections of the research discoveries and thematic patterns (Richardson, 2008) to better illustrate the direction of the project process, the student choices, their group collaboration, the class re-convening, and the devisers’ performance piece.

Dramatis Personae

The section below represents a brief summation of the participants involved with the study. At the outset, students chose their own pseudonyms through which to be identified or asked that their middle names be used for confidentiality within the work. The devisers are listed in alphabetical order, and I have assigned them descriptors based upon interview and observational data collected throughout the devising process and class interaction.

ALISA: 18, a senior Black female, AP/honors student, yearbook editor, very fashion forward.
ANTONIO: 16, a junior White male, class clown, soccer jock, new to Greenview, opinionated.
AVA: 18, a senior White female, AP/honors student, Briar County native, liberal views, outspoken, dancer.
CASSIE: 17, a senior White female, AP/honors student, individualistic and thoughtful, involved in stressful relationships, Drama Club VP.
DESIREE: 18, a senior Black female, artist/rapper/all-around performer, unique style, driven.
HUNTER: 17, a senior White male, AP/honors student, cartoonist, comedian, self-conscious.
ISABELLE: 16, a junior White female, honors student, new to Greenview, shy, fashionably eclectic.
JAIME: 17, a senior Black female, AP/honors student, opinionated and energetic, Drama Club treasurer.
JOANNE: 17, a senior White female, honors student, sweet and compliant, a follower.

KATE: 17, a senior White female, “happy goth,” very Southern, fast-talking and opinionated, dating STEPHEN.

KENNEDY: 18, a senior White male, goth/punk/metal vibe, mercurial, easily distracted.

MACKENZEE: 17, a senior White female, girl next door, sweet/friendly, lacks confidence.

NATALIE: 18, a senior White female, AP/honors student, socially awkward, reserved but opinionated.

NIKOLAS: 18, a senior Black male, AP/honors student, drama club president, dedicated and involved.

RAY-RAY: 16, a junior Black male, honors student, football player, new to Greenview, outgoing and confident.

RUTH: 18, a senior racially mixed female, quiet but forceful, organized and dependable.

SHANIQUA: 18, a senior racially mixed female, new to drama program, engaged, thoughtful, individualistic.

STEPHEN: 18, a senior White male, JROTC, Briar County native, loyal and dependable, dating KATE.

TAMMARA: 18, a senior Black female, AP/honors student, yearbook editor, socially mobile.

ZONA: 16, a junior Black female, basketball player, tough, reputation for trouble.

*Making Choices*

To begin their dramatic project and my study, I initiated a simple discussion with the students concerning the last theatrical performance of their high school careers. Because many of these teens were involved in either onstage or backstage activities for every dramatic piece
Greenview High had produced over the past three years, I initially struggled with appropriate material for their level of development. Additionally, the discovery of an ensemble play that would engage close to twenty actors in a fairly equitable manner could prove extremely challenging and time-consuming. Some students were familiar with Collision theatre (Elman, 2007), the concepts having been introduced to them through acting workshops their freshman year. Several others had written their own plays and delved into personal exercises writing novels and short stories. Rather than mount an extensive search for the perfect class play, I deemed it more logical, given their experience and apparent camaraderie, for the students to create one of their own. Many students were graduating in the spring, and I desired that they perform a work that would showcase their talents and passions. I suggested devising as an alternative to the traditional plays that most of the advanced students were familiar performing. The class agreed that finding a work to satisfy everyone could prove extremely difficult. They appeared invigorated by the notion that they could construct their own dramatic creation, one that would be tailored to their specific strengths and interests. I wanted to use elements of Collision theatre along with the broader precepts from the umbrella of devised theatre (Heddon & Milling, 2009; Oddey, 1994) in order to synthesize a process that could be challenging yet possible for these high school students on a strict time schedule towards graduation.

I sensed that students felt ownership of the project’s design because they appeared initially motivated and excited. I wanted them to know from the outset that they controlled the final outcome, so they might be as creative and inventive as their collective imaginations would allow. Other teachers and scholars, such as Delpit (2001), Heath (1984), Darling-Hammond (2009), and hooks (1994), emphasize that if a student’s ways of learning and knowing are not
recognized, schooling seldom has enjoyable meaning or connection. Schooling then becomes what Freire (2000) calls the “banking of education” in which groups in power maintain the status quo by determining whose knowledge is valued and which cultures are important enough to learn it. Greene (1995) is concerned that:

Young people find themselves described as human resources rather than as persons who are centers of choice and evaluation. They are, it is suggested, to be molded in the service of technology and the market, no matter who they are.

Today’s media presents audiences with predigested concepts and images in fixed frameworks. Dreams are caught up in the meshes of the saleable; possession of consumer goods is the alternative to gloom or feelings of pointlessness. Ideas of possibilities are trapped in predictability. (1995, p.124)

I recall that over the years with this particular group of students, many of them have commented on the lack of individualization and flexibility within their public school education. Some felt, as emphasized by Greene’s (1995) quote, that they represent a quantitative unit for a work force machine that does not care about their holistic needs or personal development. As the devised piece would scaffold onto a previously written work or idea, several students were skeptical concerning the actual amount of freedom afforded them in the process of devised theatre.

Referring to the basic premise at the outset of the project, a student stated the following:

CASSIE. I don’t know if I like that. It sounds like we’re just doing a re-write of whatever piece that we choose. That’s not very original. (Cassie, personal communication, February 18, 2011)

However, after more students described their own lengthy experiences with writing completely
original pieces, others acquiesced in order to have a finished work with an already-familiar plotline. Though she enjoyed being able to creatively craft various pieces for the project, Cassie in particular remained skeptical of collaborative work throughout the process and revealed within interview conversation a strong dislike, even loathing, for group assignments. As an AP/honors/gifted student, Cassie rarely felt challenged or engaged by heterogeneous collaborative work, irritated that others could not follow her cognitive leaps and sideways thinking. Gary Davis and Sylvia Rimm (2004) explain this attitude of reluctance and superiority as common among gifted students. Throughout the project, this initial reticence with collaboration would reveal more difficult and intolerant relationship intersections that later evolved into a significant theme in the study.

Before the class determined their particular scaffolding play, I asked them first to consider what personal or school-related issues they wished to address in their work. Alisa and Tammara, two Black females, immediately said discrimination was a major issue, and they and others cited various examples of discriminatory behavior within the school.

ALISA: Sports and athletics get special treatment over smart students and academics all the time.

AVA: You’re so right! Look at drama. We have to fight and scrape with a thousand different fundraisers and bake sales for money, and football just gets handed gobs of cash.

JAIME: But I think it’s more than just that. So many interesting classes that I wanted to take, like creative writing and contemporary literature, got axed so more of the boring general classes could be taught. I’m tired of being bored in school. I want to learn about
something cool and intriguing.

NIKOLAS: It seems that everything the school does favors the ignorant kids. Nothing is really set to be challenging. It’s like we’re celebrating stupidity. Briar County needs to wake up and get into the twenty-first century. (Class discussion, February 17, 2011)

Their interaction was intriguing because the students did not mention any instances of racial, cultural, or sexual discrimination. Not even gender bias was discussed despite the powerful personalities and opinions present in the class. Perhaps in reflection, I might have taken the omission of cultural markers as foreshadowing certain occurrences in the project. I had anticipated that students would feel stifled imaginatively in regular academic classes and might report those occurrences within their devised piece, but I did not consider that the drama classroom would be a place for scrutiny as well. However, at the time, my intention as the teacher/researcher was for students to determine the direction of the discussion.

The class conversed further on testing and Georgia Performance Standards (GPS), teacher/student disconnections, favoritism, high school relationships and power couples, and finally Facebook drama. I was impressed that the students identified these themes and ideas for the piece rather quickly and concisely. Oddey (1996) mentions that this concept of shared decision making is extremely important for building ownership within a devised performance work. Conversations such as these allow young artists greater connection with and responsibility for their pieces (Findley, 2003) while empowering young voices to present their authentic creations. Ackroyd and O’Toole’s (2010) study with their graduate research students illustrates the diverse uses of devised theatre and performance ethnography while at the same time emphasizing how the dramatic forms further capture the essence of each group’s story.
Once discussion topics were formulated, the class collective began to discuss specific written works to use as a framework for their project. Ray-Ray put forth Romeo and Juliet as a perennial favorite, but several students discouraged the notion immediately as the typical high school love story default performance. Cassie suggested The Taming of the Shrew as a stronger alternative to teenage angst. Desiree mentioned the King Arthur and knights of the Round Table stories as a current unit in British literature that would be easily recognizable for senior students. Cassie offered Peter Pan as a second possible choice, but students remained puzzled about the flying implications, or lack thereof, created by popular versions. Copyright issues might also develop if the stories were less than 100 years old and verbatim dialogue were borrowed. Stephen enjoyed stories with zombies and envisioned an apocalypse, possibly on a deserted island. The zombie take-over mystified most students, but they instead discussed an investigation of a deserted island. However, they had no frame of reference for a play or story set on an island that would attend to the discussion topics already outlined. Realizing that the students were not acquainted with The Tempest and that it met their “deserted island” criteria, I proffered Shakespeare’s The Tempest to the class. Most had heard of the play but were not familiar with the storyline and required a brief explanation and synopsis. Several students leapt at the suggestions immediately, which caused me some initial concern, fearing that they were abandoning ownership and turning into teacher-pleasers.

I purposefully avoided giving the impression to the students that their project agency was a front for actual teacher power or that I would manipulate them towards positions and decisions of my choosing. I reiterated that The Tempest was only one possible play, and they could continue to explore additional works that could combine with their discussion topics even more
cohesively, even though I could recollect no other examples that would encapsulate their story requirements. However, Mackenzee quickly skimmed through a play synopsis of *The Tempest* on her smart phone, and other students found the Sparknotes site with the “No Fear Shakespeare” version, which has the original lines in the left column and modern wording in the right.

The later exit interviews reveal that several students thought that choosing *The Tempest* had not been a wise decision on their parts because most students, including the devisers, were not familiar with it. Possibly based on their social status as AP/honors/gifted students, the class wanted to please me, a concept discussed in Davis and Rimm (2004), with their decision based on my suggestion. The majority appeared to favor using *The Tempest* with only a few naysayers, but Desiree still professed her preference for King Arthur; however, she agreed to put forth strong effort if the class agreed to the Shakespearean choice.

Cutting and editing *The Tempest* script created a more user-friendly text for the devising students than the original. To help streamline the process, I created several copies of the script with the “No Fear Shakespeare” version present alongside the original words. Again, not wanting to usurp student ownership but just to keep motivation and momentum high, I made these pages available to them the next day in order to keep the works in the fore-front of their thoughts during class time. Students decided how much to cut and where, which scenes to leave intact, and which sections to scrap completely. Some truly enjoyed the challenge of the original text and did not want to remove it altogether simply for the sake of scripting ease. One student discussed why portions of the portions of the original text might remain:

ANTONIO: I really do like the original script. It’s kind of cool how Shakespeare just reverses different sentences and words. Makes me feel smart that I know what he’s
saying when you understand the language. (Class discussion, February 17, 2011)

I was glad Antonio did not feel intimidated by text that often leaves other students lost and frustrated, and I was hoping that the class saw this opportunity to express themselves and voice concerns and opinions. The editing of the script could determine the direction of the devised project because the students would decide how much of Shakespeare’s work to leave intact and how much text to rework to suit their preferences for a piece that more readily related to our high school audience.

However, as I distributed scripts to the teens, I wondered if I gave them too much freedom in the development of this project. Did these students even know what they were doing? Could they create a cohesive performable piece within the span of a semester? Heath (1984) emphasizes that individual students have unique ways of knowing and developing and that what issues and ideas are important or innate to them are often disregarded to allow for more academic or scholarly notions. If I retracted their freedoms because of my personal apprehension regarding possible difficulties or failures, nothing would be gained in the study or learning process. The students were able to explore whatever topics they liked for discussion within a dramatic performance. While some of their conversations could upset, embarrass, or otherwise question the status quo and each other, they were nonetheless practicing an advanced form of social justice within their daily school environment, as indicated in Apple (1999), Darling-Hammond (2009) and hooks (1994).

Realizing that students had omitted a basic premise of devised theatre (Oddey, 1994), such as underlying decision-making structures and processes, I determined to provide them with minimal information necessary to drive the work forward. Just before beginning their editing
work, the students assembled collectively to develop basic regulations and by-laws for collaboration and to help ensure that their process was fair and orderly for all concerned. Both Gonzalez (2007) and Oddey (1994) maintain that this structure be handled early in ensemble work to avoid unnecessary conflicts and stalled motivations within devising. The following conversation occurred at this regulatory meeting:

ALISA: I think that major decisions should be agreed upon by the majority of the class.

NIKOLAS: I know we’re looking at editing the original *Tempest*, but there needs to be major cuts—like we did with *Romeo and Juliet*—so it becomes a shortened plot that we can work with easier.

HUNTER: Maybe we need to look at the structure of what we want too. You know, how we’re going to take all our thousand topics and work that into the story and still have it make sense.

SHANIQUA: So, we can add some of our own stuff too, right? We definitely need to add our personal flair to it.

DESIREE: There’s lights and sound stuff to consider and how all that might work together.

MACKENZEE: And the same goes for costume and makeup.

ANTONIO: We should figure out what the stage might look like.

KATE: And there’s casting too. We have to know who’s going to play what parts.

NIKOLAS: Well, that kind of goes along with directing. So are you going to cast and direct the show, Grazer? (Class discussion, February 18, 2011)

This offer to cast and direct I immediately rejected, especially when initiated from the students
themselves. A director of a show puts a great deal of his or her own perspective and personality into a production, and I was fearful that I would make the show what I ultimately desired onstage and deemed important for teen audiences and not at all what the students intended (Saldaña, 2005). I declined the director’s chair, instead deferring to the class to make another decision at a later date.

I gave each group a copy of *The Tempest* script to edit. Perhaps it was this original teaming that later determined the social circles that emerged, but I believe the formation of social groups was as significant as script positions. In true teenage fashion, students associated with others with whom they most readily identified, and I apologized for not having enough copies for each participant, but the teens were accustomed to small budgets and making do with current materials. For the first few days it seemed that editing would be accomplished by week’s end and students could embark on embedding their interests and personalities into the piece. I sat in with various groups clustered around scripts to understand better their editing decisions and to observe how they communicated their intentions to each other.

A general working pattern emerged: An individual would read through as many pages as he or she deemed desirable, making cuts and adding any thoughts or suggestions along the way. Some groups re-read the edits to confirm and agree or disagree with the decisions as was the case with the largest group, comprised of Nikolas, Natalie, Isabelle, Mackenzee, Antonio, and Ruth. Others would read and edit, passing the script on to the next team member, who would then pick up where the last editor had stopped, trusting in the quality and comprehension of the previous work. Those were the working habits of Ray-Ray, Zona, Tammara, Alisa, Jaime, and Desiree. On a whim, a few devisers—Stephen, Kate, Kennedy, and Joanne—attempted to read the script
sections aloud to decide which pieces to edit based upon the oral presentations, but that style of collaboration appeared too time-consuming, and while interesting and helpful for comprehension of text, it was soon abandoned in favor of the reading and passing method of the other groups.

I observed that by the end of the third day, motivation waned for some students upon realizing that Shakespearean plays have five acts and not two or three as in contemporary productions. Instead of concentrating on refining their editing process and completing this development phase, groups devolved into social arenas in which discussions on prom, public restrooms, and Thespian points took precedence over the collaborative project. I observed the need to keep the edits cohesive and coherent, at the end of each act. I proposed that the smaller groups assemble to discuss their teams’ work and ensure that all agreed to the textual decisions concerning the framework play. This strategy appeared effective for a short time, but students were becoming disengaged with the process and each other. During one particular group editing session, Kennedy appeared extremely bored and began playing with trash items from last period’s lunch as other students attempted to discuss their work. No one seemed to appreciate his antics, and the following conversation ensued:

KATE: Do you mind? We’re trying to get through this.

AVA: I know it’s dull, but try to help out, please.

ANTONIO: So cut it the fuck out. (Class discussion, March 7, 2011)

Upon hearing the peer rebuke, Kennedy crossed his arms and appeared to sulk silently for the reminder of the period. While I could have easily intervened with the student and eliminated any class conflict, I would have meddled in their group dynamic and imposed my own sense of collaboration to their work (Heddon & Milling, 2006; Kerrigan, 2001) which was in opposition
to research-based, devising and problem-solving precedents. The students needed to confront their conflicts and openly discuss problems and challenges in moving forward with social justice theatre (Boal, 1979). Reflecting on a change from the previously disengaged stance the day before, Kennedy discovered the ancient Greek and Roman references within *The Tempest* text and was utterly fascinated by them:

KENNEDY: Let’s take a look at some of the Greek myths the characters talk about. I had no idea that Shakespeare used all that in his plays. (Class discussion, March 8, 2011)

Kennedy had become infinitely more connected upon discerning a topic that attracted his attention. A secondary benefit was that study of the mythological allusions would greatly increase his understanding of the play text and the author’s intentions in his dialogue. Despite this spark of enthusiasm for the piece, Kennedy quickly lost momentum and became semi-apathetic and disinterested in the project.

In focus group discussions, it appeared that the loosely conglomerated teams did not view the editing process and the meaning of decision-making as a working priority, as reflected in the following conversations:

ALISA: We just go with the flow.

RESEARCHER: Okay. Is it a go with the flow, or a just get it done?

TAMMARA/ALISA: Both [laugh]. (Focus group, Black ppl, April 16, 2011)

CASSIE: We try a variety of methods, you know, whatever suits our fancy at the time.

KATE: Yeah, and depending upon our moods, nothing gets done at all.

CASSIE: It’s pretty much whatever Kate and I decide.

KENNEDDY: We have some good ideas, but we can be pretty lazy a lot of times. (Focus
Most students did not review their peer cutting despite reporting to the contrary, often removing pivotal sections of text simply because they were embedded in long strings of verse. Despite spending several weeks analyzing the work for usability, several students still did not understand the story or could not articulate the action of the plot. In fact, in a final interview Cassie stated that:

CASSIE: So I had this revelation about four and a half minutes ago, that Shakespeare is all right to read, but is best done performed, and I almost feel that if we had seen *The Tempest* performed or if we had seen a shitty BBC televised version, it would have been okay. Because sometimes it's hard to get Shakespeare in text and then get Shakespeare on stage. I had that problem when I was reading *Taming of the Shrew*, and I was like, I don't know what's going on, and it took me a while to catch the irony of it. So I think it would have been easier for us if we had just all sat down as a class and watch *The Tempest* first and then been like really understand what's going on in the text. Instead of just chopping and hacking away at the text. We could actually say this is what's happening. (Focus group, Duct Tape Bandits, May 23, 2011)

Her suggestion that a visual grasp would have provided greater comprehension of the play indicates that students seriously lacked this necessary element. This absence of basic comprehension played a major role in the disconnection between the devisers and their work, which would additionally seem to create a second thematic thrust involving imaginative breakdowns.

*Individual Workings*
Upon finishing the initial *Tempest* cuts, the students’ perceptions toward the collaborative work appeared less judgmental. Each individual had a different level of engagement, and there were twenty diverse sets of personalities, skill levels, and life experiences working together to produce a single project. This concept of commonality Heddon & Milling (2006) and Oddey (1994) emphasize is essential. Not everyone would work at the same pace, which is one of the many ambiguities of performance research (Ackroyd & O’Toole, 2010). However, Delpit (1995) maintains that students at a disadvantage in the classroom—minorities, students with disabilities, and those with low socio-economic status (SES)—may require more explicit instruction than devising provides. In my research experience, high school learners might benefit from direct instruction strategies and dramatic scaffolding that would allow them to formulate creative possibilities for the devising project. Given the constraints previously placed them with an environment of standardized curriculum and high stakes testing, these students demonstrated a lack of creative thinking skills, a deficiency noted in Darling-Hammond (2009), Eisner (2001) and Greene, (1995). An editing process that was supposed to take no more than a single week ultimately ate into three weeks of valuable writing and production time.

In order to set the stage for more involved devising processes, I attempted to re-energize the class with different activities to enliven the monotony produced by the prolonged editing sessions. The overall action of *The Tempest* needed to be more approachable for the students, so I advocated building a large visual plotline to reinforce the major character interactions and scene happenstances. Nikolas immediately volunteered to begin the design with Natalie, Jaime, Ruth, and Tammara as associates, and taking large, easel-sized paper and colored markers began re-creating the play act by act with modest stick figures. Following in the Collision tradition
(Elman, 2007) and to develop solid connections between the students and the script, the remaining students created word webs on the same large paper. Each participant wrote five words that provoked a relationship between personal experience and the play, taking special note of one specific word or written phrase that held particular power or meaning.

For the most part, students appeared to enjoy the change in assignment genre and became more motivated about how they might adapt the word web and plot line to pieces for the stage. Glancing at the board, I was fascinated that the students had formed *The Tempest* action into a loose interpretation of Freytag’s pyramid. They demonstrated that they are visual creatures, even keeping consistency among the stick figures to guarantee understanding for all participants. Their use of symbols appeared to be more powerful than paragraphs of prose or stanzas of poetry, and apparently this technique worked well for them.

STEPHEN: Hey Grazer, maybe we did this wrong. I don’t know how we’re going to fit these words into a new piece. It could get pretty crazy.

KATE: Did we pick the wrong words?

KENNEDY: We’re kind of going for this whole Dungeons and Dragons feel with the web, but then forgot that these words become other bits that have to fit into the class piece.

CASSIE: I had no idea that this could be so cathartic! I mean, once we started adding words, we just couldn’t stop. We had a webbing release—kind of like Spiderman.

JAIME: Could I use ‘misogynistic’ as my writing word?

RESEARCHER: You can use whatever word screams at you the loudest. And that word is definitely saying something. (Class observation, March 29, 2011)
Later in the process, using Collision protocol, students took a single word that spoke most strongly to them and wrote an original and personal work on that word topic, a practice discussed in Elman (2007). Their creation could be a short story, a poem, a dramatic scene or dialogue, even a dance or a rap, whatever medium in which they felt comfortable expressing themselves.

Not all students were as engaged concerning the switch in activities, however. Hunter appeared to have completed his web created with Ava and Shaniqua and was sketching a cartoon-esque female torso with a large chest and low cut red dress. It was reminiscent of fair or boardwalk cut-outs where people would stick their heads through openings made for faces and have souvenir pictures taken. I engaged him in conversation regarding his artistic endeavor:

RESEARCHER: Hunter, how’s that fitting into the plot of your story?

HUNTER: Oh, it’s not, but it definitely looks like Julie [actress in upcoming spring musical], doesn’t it? Can we hang it on the outside door?

RESEARCHER: [looks again at the exaggeratedly curvaceous form] Umm, probably not a good idea. (Class observation, March 27, 2011)

Hunter was a highly intelligent and talented young actor, but he was clearly not stimulated by the project. While I knew that students crafting at various paces was an inevitability, I realized that some teens would disengage from the work and collaboration altogether, becoming a hindering rather than a helping factor.

Another example of collective disinterest became apparent in Antonio; he was a new student to Greenview High, coming from a school outside of Briar County. He easily meshed with most of the students in Drama III & IV and even participated in the One-Act Play and the winter production. However, he often displayed a level of immaturity that could annoy others,
and several seniors in the class were not interested in discovering an individual of substance beneath the trickster veneer. Because of regular write-off by classmates, Antonio would constantly activate his smart phone instead of working with the devised piece. Per our administrators’ teacher expectations, I attempted to re-energize him:

RESEARCHER: Hey Antonio, what are you working on? How’s your group coming?

[ANTONIO looks up from the video games on his phone and smiles sheepishly.]

ANTONIO: Well, I added a couple of words to the sheet, and Ava and Mackenzee are finishing up with it. It should be great.

RESEARCHER: I’m sure it will be, but I’ve spoken with you continually about this, and you need to stay off the games on your phone and help folks with the project. This is a group effort here.

ANTONIO: Yeah, I know. [Puts phone away grudgingly.] (Class observation, March 27, 2011)

Additionally intriguing was the fact that Nikolas eventually wrote his original word web piece based on his interactions with Antonio. He entitled it “Troublemaker.” While Nikolas playfully allowed him a modicum of immaturity, admitting its necessity in the class dynamic, he also berated him for creating undue drama within friendship circles. Nikolas wrote the following in his creative piece:

In life, the troublemaker is needed for laughter and amusement. However, he can become a prick who everyone just wants to kill. Die Troublemaker, Die. When the anger subsides, one will seek refuge in the troublemaker’s ‘witty’ conversation and his company. Antonio is merely a character in the crazy world we call life. (Nikolas,
This diatribe was not what I expected from students whom I initially imagined were friends and fellow class actors. Apparently some students were merely tolerant of each other and did not want to engage in work or even conversation for prolonged periods of time. As Nikolas inferred, Antonio could be useful to him and the class collective, so he would accept Antonio’s immaturity until his skills were no longer necessary and he could be cut from the social circle.

Several original student pieces reflect their individual perceptions on current lives or lived experiences that directly illustrate their personalities or in some way impact them on a significant level. The recognizable and personal voices of the student actors were integral to the theme of social justice within the dramatic performance, a concept of context Saldaña (2005) relates, but unfortunately only a few of their creations actually found their way into the final product. When I questioned students in focus groups about their decision not to include their original writings in the collaborative work, their answers displayed a lack of involvement and ownership concerning their ideas:

MACKENZEE: Honestly, we really forgot about them until you mentioned putting them in the play.

NIKOLAS: Yeah, I think the big thing was that with our section already written, we didn’t really know how to work them into the Hipster stuff, because most of them were written before Shaniqua did the script.

NATALIE: It was that and we were just too lazy to re-work the play to make the pieces fit and make sense. (Focus group, The Mix, May 23, 2011)

Ultimately, as Natalie points out, the students did not want to struggle in order to work their
pieces into the devised script. The single group who wrote their script collaboratively was able to weave their work successfully into their re-invention of *The Tempest*. The other two groups, however, failed to work collaboratively; instead, they allowed one writer to create the entire piece. They demonstrated a lack of creative authority to stretch a devised text that was not theirs. That outcome was surprising in light of the fact that many of these teens seemed very opinionated and passionate about making theatre more visible to the general school population.

The following student pieces are examples of the works that devisers created using the word web strategy. While some are more connected to *The Tempest* script than others, all are highly innovative and unique to each author. In Cassie’s piece, she defines the notion of “downward causality”:

> **Downward causality:** a situation where a cause and effect relationship in a system is flipped upside down.

The mind perceives itself as the cause of certain feelings.

In reality, emotions and desires are nothing more than neurons and synapses firing off, and when you dig to the bonds, quantum mechanics.

This is tragic, but true.

Tragic because everyone wants to think that if you fuck up on earth, you will be punished in an afterlife, or if you've done a good job you will be rewarded in eternity. But, the beautifully ironic part is that no matter what you think, what you do, what you believe, you will die.

And not a bit of this will matter because you'll be dead.

(Cassie, personal communication, March 29, 2011)
Cassie had earlier expressed her enjoyment of the word web exercise and the term “downward causality” appears to have significance for her. In an opening interview, she divulged that her senior year was not the positive and pleasantly memorable final semesters she had envisioned. She had moved out, or had been unceremoniously kicked out, of her mother’s house during the middle of the first semester and lived with various friends. Previously diagnosed with juvenile bi-polar disorder, she was hospitalized after the semester break for a mental breakdown, but she hid the truth from classmates and teachers, who simply believed she was absent because of heavy partying and poor choices. A rift between Cassie and most of the other senior actors developed from these miscommunications, and to my knowledge the relationships have yet to be repaired.

Natalie, another teen who deeply identified with her written piece, adamantly denied that she was the character from her work. Utilizing the word “deception,” Natalie crafted a piece that emulated part of her journey as a teenager in high school. Her reflection on deception follows:

A long time ago, further than I can remember, I decided that I hated myself, that I was shameful. It started simply enough—pretending to be someone I'm not, creating a persona I deemed worthy of life. That persona became more and more complex over time, developing a unique personality and even making friends with people who didn't realize that the person they liked—or even loved—didn't exist.

Until I decided that even the persona wasn't good enough. So I created another one. But you can't just disappear and expect people not to care; even though I hated my prior self, I had to keep up the facade for everyone else's sake. (Natalie, Personal communication, March 29, 2011)

In conversation, Natalie emphasized that her personal word web piece did not have to do with
Performing or even writing about personal life experiences can be very difficult and painful for people (Denzin, 2003), and many individuals avoid it completely:

Natalie: I wrote down whatever came to mind, basically. I didn’t base it off of personal experience, if that’s what you’re thinking. I chose the word deception mostly because it sounds cool, and, when I saw it, I pretty much got an idea for it immediately, so I wrote that down. And I guess it just sort of evolved from there. (Natalie, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

While Natalie discouraged personal associations with her writing, Isabelle had no qualms discussing frankly on the connections she created in her work. Like Antonio, she was new to the high school and its various social mores. Unlike her male counterpart, however, she did not have the opportunity to participate in extracurricular work because of family obligations and younger siblings:

Isabelle: *The Tempest* places the word “powerful” in my mind. It reminds me of a time right in the middle of my eighth grade year, when I moved homes for the first time. All because of one man. The lawyer we had completely screwed us over and we were forced out of our home. … When you put your trust into someone like a lawyer, that determines pretty much your whole life. And if they make one bad decision on your behalf, your life goes straight to shit, and it’s hard to recover from a mistake a person with way more power than you made. (Aly, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

When I inquired as to the nature of the piece, Isabelle was surprising forthright for a teen I had know a relatively short time. She openly discussed topics that many adults would feel embarrassed or ashamed to admit, job loss and disability. Her father had been injured while
employed for a large company that did not wish to pay medical bills or compensation. The family’s lawyer attempted to gain restitution from the employer and health insurance company, but he misunderstood or misrepresented some particulars in the case, resulting in a favorable ruling for the company.

In contrast to the lived experiences of Isabelle, Desiree created an original monologue that appeared believable and truthful for teenage lives yet was utterly fictitious concerning her personal experiences. Using the word “frustration,” she developed a piece in which the female voice reveals the insecurities of young relationships and the mental stress caused by modern technology and immediate gratification:

The voicemail again? Maybe he’s just really busy. I mean, I’ve called twice already. I don’t wanna be annoying. (sigh). He always does this to me. One minute we’re on the phone happy, and the next he’s gone! I can’t take this anymore. If you really love someone wouldn’t you want to talk to him or her every moment of the day. Wouldn’t you risk everything just to be with that person. (Beat) I guess I’ll get on Facebook to clear my mind. (Beat). Oh my goodness. He updated his status from his phone 2 seconds ago! And he uploaded a picture with some girl. Who’s she? (Beat). I’m gonna try and call him … ugh, voicemail again. That’s it … I’m Done! (Desiree, personal communication, March 29, 2011)

I asked about her choices for the individual work, and Desiree was very forthright in explaining how they intersected with the framework play. Being a regular class performer and a rapper outside of school, Desiree is extremely thoughtful concerning how she represents herself and her opinions, realizing her voice has impact and power for a viewing audience. The following
interview excerpt reveals her cognitive process:

DESIREE: Thought it was fairly self-explanatory. Prospero was frustrated by the situations in his life—forced to live on an island, his kingdom stolen by his brother and what not. Miranda was frustrated by her father’s meddling in her love life. And we’re frustrated today by the same things—having to wait on other folks, not having the power to stop their bad decisions, giving your heart to someone, only to have it broken by their ignorance. (Desiree, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

The next student interviewed, Ava, had written a strong and thought-provoking piece. Her treatise on “slaves” gave me pause because she conversed openly about the inequity between the perceived roles of men and women in contemporary society. As a high-achieving, honor roll student, she often discussed pressures to perform well in all her classes regardless of difficulty level and personal proclivities. She constantly struggled to pacify and reconcile the complicated social intersections within her sphere of influence. Ava’s reflection on the word “slaves” follows:

I am a slave to the ritual of life. I follow the same routine everyday. … Slavery does not pertain to a particular race or gender but to all. Anyone can be a slave. You can be a slave to food, money, clothes, a significant other...anything. But there comes a point where a person must overcome what they’re enslaved to. Being a slave is no way to live. No matter what a person should be free of chains whether they’re on your wrist or in your mind. (Ava, personal communication, May 5, 2011)

Originally, I wanted these pieces to be incorporated into the larger devised project and for the personal work to illustrate multiple social, racial, and cultural perspectives for the class collective. This re-convening of creative thoughts might perhaps excite and engage the students
for the imaginative nature of the dramatic work. However, many participants were hesitant to share their creations, so the individual writings remained confidential.

**Collaborative Work**

Upon returning from spring break, the Drama III and IV students arranged themselves into a large circle around the classroom in preparation for collaborative discussion concerning the devised project. Rather than waiting for the possibility of conversational chaos to ensue with the combination of twenty opinions jockeying for prominence, Nikolas made an organizational suggestion to aid in the cohesiveness of the process:

NIKOLAS: I think we need to have something that helps keep order as we discuss, or it could all end up as a shouting match. So, let’s use this prop [*holds large plastic purple flower with long swirly green stem*] to give a person power to talk. If you don’t have the flower, you shouldn’t be speaking. (Class discussion, April 12, 2011)

The group immediately approved of this plan and discussion began. The “talking flower” as the students named their permission piece, passed first to Desiree, who wanted to guarantee the production’s humor. She offered it to Ray-Ray, but he waved it off. Then Alisa and Tammara added that the group needed to be certain the previous school and life topics embedded themselves in the story. Kennedy, not wanting to leave his chair, asked Stephen to grab it for him, and declared in a Russian accent that Marxist theories from the Soviet Union could be evident. Stephen suggested framing all the ideas under a Scooby-Doo umbrella. Slightly confused, Cassie declined as she was not certain if she could contribute valuable information at that moment because of her twenty-five day absence from class. Ava developed a secondary permission piece to compliment the talking flower and keep the forward momentum of the group
AVA: The concept of the talking flower is good, but we also need a way to respectfully comment or disagree on someone’s idea. So let’s use this [puffy pink flower on the end of a green pen] as the rebuttal flower, so our interactions will be more productive. (Class discussion, April 12, 2011)

Jaime seconded Stephen’s Scooby-Doo representation but was concerned about performing their piece the final week of school during the Senior Breakfast. Ruth wanted to swap the Scooby-Doo zombies for fairies; Antonio agreed with Desiree on the high humor factor for the high school audience.

Upon taking up the talking flower himself, Nikolas began to mention the use of pop-culture references in the devised piece—movies, TV shows, current event happenings—that could have a strong connection with the writers and the potential audience members. He reminisced about a show he and others had performed the previous year that had been wildly popular with students because of its informal dialogue and contemporary nuances. Perhaps such techniques would work with student audiences at Greenview High. Antonio concurred but cautioned that the bits must be recognizable or any significance in the references would fall flat. Shaniqua believed that antiquated character titles be updated to reflect modern sensibilities; instead of king or lord, perhaps the characters could be a president or a senator. Understanding the group direction, Cassie remarked on a play she had skimmed in which nuns spoofed various Hollywood legends, stating that perhaps they could use celebrities as their own version of royalty to parallel The Tempest. They might also include politicians and the political scene if the class agreed. Ava hesitated on embracing political satire, as she feared people would be overly
sensitive to the topic. As an alternative, Tammara maintained that teachers and school administration would be a worthy target; however, Stephen and Cassie felt it unwise to create caricature impressions of individuals who may not understand the production’s satirical intent. Natalie emphasized their point:

NATALIE: Speaking on the spoofing subject, negative and funny jokes about teachers are easy to create, but they rely on stereotypes and aren’t very intelligent. (Class discussion, April 12, 2011)

To conclude the session’s conversation, Nikolas maintained that whatever decisions were made concerning the thematic focus of the production, it might be created without zombies. Stephen, Kennedy, Kate, and Joanne focused angry glances on Nikolas because their ideas were disparaged in public discourse.

The next conversation workshop focused on the class searching for pre-written movie scripts to overlay with *The Tempest* for deeper devising and audience understanding. Nikolas and Jaime instantly grabbed the flowers and announced their apprehension on performing during the day of the senior breakfast, insistent that the audience would be less than appreciative of their dramatic efforts. Antonio actually supported the date, recognizing it as the last possible performance slot available before graduation, thereby allowing the class the maximum amount of writing and collaboration time. Shaniqua referenced *The Breakfast Club* several times, noting that a group of disjointed individuals coming together during Saturday detention could resonate with teen experiences. Taking the flower, Zona, along with several other students who had no frame of reference for *The Breakfast Club*, claimed they were unimpressed with Shaniqua’s decision. She instead offered up the movie *Friday* as a possible spoofing vehicle, a proposal
which met with the same confused looks as *The Breakfast Club*. Natalie again warned against employing pessimistic aspects in the project. Students allowed further negativity to creep into the conversation as they ignored politeness and engaged in racial prejudice:

NATALIE: If we start employing stereotypes to get our messages across it won’t be good. Stereotypes are lazy and not useful for good writing.

NIKOLAS: Well, what if we focused on pop-culture instead of relying completely on stereotypes for humor? The issue I can see with that though might be that not everyone understands all the references.

MACKENZEE: Because I have never seen *Friday* so I have no idea what we could do with that.

DESIREE: Well, most of us [indicating the Black students] have never seen *The Breakfast Club*, so we don’t know how that’s going to work either.

JAIME: I’ve seen *The Breakfast Club*.

ANTONIO: That’s because you’re not Black. (Class discussion, April 14, 2011)

Jaime identified as a Black teen, but Antonio stated otherwise because he was referring to the idea that Jaime shared cultural and socio-economic affinity with traditionally middle class White teens, which she had noted in interview conversations. Antonio joked that she erased her Blackness by heavily identifying with the status quo (hooks, 1996). Was she truly attempting to disregard Black culture or was this social group simply where she felt the most comfortable? In her biography, Jaime mentions that she had difficulties connecting with other Black teens, and those relationships might be a matter that she needed to explore personally on a deeper level. This discussion is not the only instance in which participants engaged in racial issues. The two
movies discussed most—*Friday* and the *The Breakfast Club*—are binary in their casting and audience demographics, *Friday* having Black actors and viewers and *The Breakfast Club* having White.

The students made indirect references to racial and cultural issues, and they joked openly concerning race, a practice Tim Wise (2001) claims often occurs. However, they seemed apprehensive to take those interactions further. Such situations in a social justice classroom are important topics of conversation.

Despite Natalie’s initial warning, more students viewed satirizing and spoofing as a viable conduit for their ideas. Ray-Ray suggested using multiple vehicles, such as those in the *Scary Movie* series, which would engage the majority of our audience demographics. Zona again put forth *Friday* and gave a nod to *The Breakfast Club* as Shaniqua’s choice. As many of these significant decisions were being made by the class collective, I observed that several individuals were absent from class, namely those who would oppose the current conversation: Jaime, Nikolas, Mackenzee, Hunter, and Cassie. However, the group did not wish to wait until a more equitable balance of opinions was represented, and they forged ahead with project progression.

At this point, Ava made a revolutionary proposition which completely altered the course of the project. Her proposal made the most logical sense at the time, and was perhaps the single event that helped propel the collective pieces forward:

AVA: It seems like to me that we have three distinctive social groups functioning in class. Maybe it would be a good idea to break into three different writing and performance groups based on the current ones we have now. (Class discussion, April 15, 2011)
Others expressed appreciation for the various perspectives that could be present in such a work and began to realize the potential of collaborating with team members who share similar mindsets, dramatic styles, and cultural sensibilities:

KATE: I like that idea, because then we could have different ideas, and themes, and characters, and not have to compete with everyone else’s plans for the play.

MACKENZEE: I think too that this would let the people who are serious about being involved in the play actually get some work done. And those who aren’t, well, they can do something else. (Class discussion, April 15, 2011)

The students attempted to set themselves apart from participants with whom they did not share social affinity and believe would not remain engaged in the project. A few participants voiced misgivings concerning this new devising strategy. However, other individuals convinced the doubtful that their arrangement would indeed create sound dramatic pieces:

CASSIE: I’m not sure if that’s such a wise use of time. The cut-down plot is long enough right now without us performing it three separate times.

ISABELLE: But what if we told the stories sequentially—to keep the plot moving forward from various group perspectives?

RAY-RAY: And we could still use all our pop-culture references.

ALISA: But being in groups for writing and performance would allow us to represent different focus points. (Class discussion, April 15, 2011)

The various groups would write out their perspectives and storylines to overlay onto The Tempest. The actors for specific character roles remained the same throughout the play, depending upon the narration and group perspective. This discussion allowed groups to create
social themes and dialogue and add other actors into their working collective to aid in performances. The students viewed their current incarnation of *The Tempest* plot and made changes accordingly, and the newly-formed teams began their writing work the next day.

*Student Devising Groups*

A student from each group crossed to the white board and wrote the chosen name of the group. Nikolas went first and wrote “The Mix” and returned to his group, consisting of Antonio, Ruth, Isabelle, Mackenzie, and Natalie from the original editing team, with the additions of Hunter, Ava, and Shaniqua, to form a nine-person super-group. Alisa crossed to the board and wrote “Black ppl” and crossed back to her seat with her group members: Ray-Ray, Desiree, and Tammara. Jaime, who officially aligned with Alisa’s team, sat in between the “The Mix” and “Black ppl”, and Zona was absent. Cassie approached the board and scrawled “Duct Tape Bandits” and returned to sit near Stephen, Kate, Kennedy, and Joanne, her five-person group.

Now freed from the constraints of disparaging peers, the official groups began to construct ideas for building a personal and teen-relevant version of *The Tempest*. Kate remarked that the collective generated dozens of creative ideas but remained unsure as to connecting a through-line for their particular perspective. While sifting through the myriad suggestions, Cassie notes that their topics—Goths, role-playing gamers, LARPers, even the classic geek versus nerd—appeared to have an underdog persona to them. Stephen was especially interested in exploring the perspective further:

STEPHEN: That might work really well. Lots of people can identify with sort of being an underdog. You know, having times in your life when you feel insecure and unloved. And all of the characters Kate mentioned, we can have those as part of the storyline.
KENNEDY: And we would still have the freedom to create our own character perspectives for these roles. (Class discussion, April 15, 2011)

Re-energized by possibilities for independent story and character development, the groups brainstormed through a series of scenes and attempted to solidify further their connection with *The Tempest* by creating original re-interpretations. The Duct Tape Bandits appeared much more confident in themselves and their devising choices than in previous days, being separated from the other students. While this was not the class formation I had envisioned, Oddey (1996) cautioned that imposing a specific group structure and relationship schema onto a devising process would only serve to smother creativity and motivation for continued progress. As enthusiasm appeared to be at a premium, I was not prepared to impede their progress because of my own collaborative biases.

The Mix team, at nearly twice the size of the other groups, experienced immediate frustration in combining the opinions of the many members into a cohesive plotline and story perspective. Nikolas imagined that using a jock or hyper-athlete lens would be humorous, as none of the actors was terribly interested in sports, but Hunter doubted the credibility of the suggestion from a character creation standpoint. Mackenzee considered investigating the notion of inclusion into the popular crowd, or popularity in general, and while Hunter was not enamored with that possibility either, he agreed it was a workable suggestion. Ava mentioned using overachievers for their particular group dynamic because so many of the team were very invested in their academic grades, despite disliking the formal learning system.

With nine, and later ten, people in “The Mix” group, these students were having difficulties collaborating successfully. When a high concentration of gifted students attempts a
joint piece, they encounter frustration, as high achievers dislike problems without easily discoverable solutions (Barfield, 2003). The ambiguity of the project eventually proved too much for them, and “The Mix” surrendered their writing piece to a single author, Shaniqua, who would absolve them from further responsibility. While Ava and Mackenzee reported feeling guilty about the decision to give Shaniqua the weight of the entire writing perspective, Hunter and Nikolas cited unified scripting and character voice to justify their move.

The “Black ppl” collective had initial difficulties settling on a particular perspective to investigate their discussion topics and The Tempest. Though Zona was absent for several days and not present to champion her opinion, the group remained adamant about using Friday as a specific angle of exploration. Ray-Ray was unsure about the connection points between the contemporary movie and the Shakespearean text, though he admitted their attempts would appear non-traditional. The students decided that lifting film characters directly from the screenplay and placing them alongside antiquated dialogue did not work for them. The following conversation ensued:

ALISA: I guess what Friday is talking about is more of a ghetto perspective. So we could use that to expand the group writing.

JAIME: Yeah, we could bring in trashy Black stereotypes and create characters to go with the people already in Friday and re-writing those for The Tempest. That’ll be cool. (Class observation, April 20, 2011)

Jaime immediately indicated negative views of Black perspectives and did not discuss how they would relate the discussion topics covered earlier in the process. The groups were seated in the computer lab, typing ideas and researching possible topics. Physically, Jaime aligned herself
with “The Mix” team, who were her usual associates, while her actual group was located on the
opposite side of the room. When I asked if she would like to move or needed help finding a
functioning computer closer to the “Black ppl”, she declined, saying she was comfortable in her
present position.

Despite promising work in their beginning stages, certain members of the “Duct Tape
Bandits” took issue with the level of creativity and problem-solving required to navigate the
Shakespearean text and personal perspectives. Cassie pushed away from the computer terminal
in a seemingly frustrated manner and began organizing notebooks pages and handwritten ideas.
Cassie revealed her frustrations:

CASSIE: We have so much freedom with this project, all these ideas, but we have
no idea what to do with them. (Class observation, April 20, 2011)

This notion of lacking agency began presenting itself with more regularity as the process
continued. While in the media center, group members chatted, wrote notes, and slept, despite
having a tight writing timeline with the performance only four weeks away. The student clusters
generally admitted in focus groups and exit interviews, that this segment of the project brought
the most procrastination and wasted time. I circulated amongst the groups attempting to discover
the reasoning behind their apparent disengagement to guide them in formulating possible
solutions. Nikolas appeared extremely frustrated with their work or his team members or both
and sat at a creative impasse:

NIKOLAS: Grazer, just tell us what you want!

RESEARCHER: It’s not about me or what I want.

NIKOLAS: This is so hard – why is this so hard?
CASSIE: [from across the room] Because we’ve been spoon-fed our education and now we’re having to problem-solve and create on our own. I’m blaming the government.

Nikolas: Gee thanks. So that was helpful and not helpful all at the same time. Can’t you, like, give us a rubric or project sheet or something that points us in a direction for our work? (Class observation, April 22, 2011)

That was not the first time I had been asked for explicit project directions and regulations from students, and from Nikolas specifically. I informed Nikolas and the rest of the class that feelings of frustration were normal for the complexities of devising and encouraged him to re-visit the list of talking points the large collective originally created. Because of the unique combinations of student personalities and perspectives, the teens’ writing process and created piece would be equally original (Oddey, 1994). I had no specific grading structure or curricular map to give them. Shaniqua mentioned that “The Mix” could explore the angle of homeless youth and imagined it to be an interesting topic. After a pregnant pause and confused looks from group members, they began discussing the definition of a hipster.

During class, the “Duct Tape Bandits” appeared to have a breakdown and a breakthrough all at once. Kate, especially, was passionately concerned that the group work would be for naught and that all their devising decisions would be swept away once the class general assembly dissected it. The floor around her was covered in wadded paper balls and torn sheets as evidence of her frustrations when she stated the following:

KATE: None of this matters. There is no point in us writing all of this because no one will like it and it will all change anyway! They’re going to hate our stuff [indicating the super-group, The Mix] and will completely change it around or re-write it because they
always get their way. We’ll take a vote and because there’s more of them, they will outvote us and change our work around. And we won’t get heard in the play at all. (Class observation, April 27, 2011)

I attempted to assuage her fear about the alterations of their group work, as no one had the power to change or remove their text but those specific individuals. It did not matter if the devisers disliked it or may be initially confused by the interpretation. Other students could suggest changes or ideas in the editing phase, but not actually enact them. Whatever the Duct Tape Bandits decided for the characterization and perspective structure of the piece in their particular section was how it would remain in the larger work.

Despite being the originators of their own project, some students could not connect with their developed perspective and the various plot and character demands of *The Tempest*. Rather than concentrating on a few sections that made sense to them and keeping groups in forward momentum, certain teams and individuals simply disengaged altogether rather than fight through textual confusion and imaginative lapse, a situation to be expected (Greene, 1995).

CASSIE: God, I just really don’t feel connected to this script or its characters. I mean, parts of the narrative are interesting, but what we have right now with the current story is not engaging my creativity.

RESEARCHER: Well, then write something you like and can be passionate about.

CASSIE: *[groans]* I really just wish we could quit the whole thing. (Class observation, May 11, 2011)

Rather than watch students continue to struggle and withdraw completely from the project, I stated that each team could work on an exposition and resolution section, which was
roughly Acts I and V in the play. Beyond that, different groups could write for different acts or scenes, depending upon the sections that appealed to them. Kennedy later decided he no longer wanted to contribute and complained that the Shakespearean text was too hard to translate into a Dungeons and Dragons perspective. Kate mentioned he should have no problem with it because the contemporary English translation appeared adjacent to the original text. Cassie simply stated that the work would be done and they would have it ready for class consumption by the next day. She suggested writing at a local coffee shop, a comment that enlivened the group a bit.

Soon after the writing segments began, Jaime switched from the “Black ppl” to “The Mix” team on the assumption, she later reported in an interview, that she would ultimately do the majority of the “Black ppl”’s work. However, they actually appeared fairly self-sufficient and comfortable in their collaborative process. Additionally, these students were the only individuals who incorporated their original pieces—a monologue, two poems, and a rap—into the text of the re-imagined sections.

Rather than struggle with the writing ideas like the “Duct Tape Bandits” or form community structures and overcome roadblocks like the “Black ppl”, “The Mix”—or the Hipsters—had refused to engage at all with the collaborative process on a personal level. Once settling on the hipster interrogation of The Tempest, their participation stalled. Shaniqua had suggested possibly studying the hipster perspective initially, feeling the most engaged and empowered with idea generation and the creative process. As a result, she developed all of the group’s sections, with very little input or interaction from other team members. When I inquired on the group’s progress in their written sections, Nikolas attempted to excuse their lack of activity because of the many assignments for other classes. The following conversation relates
the lack of ownership of all members but Shaniqua:

RESEARCHER: How’s your script coming along, guys?

NIKOLAS: Oh, Shaniqua finished it a few days ago, so we’re working on stuff for other classes.

RESEARCHER: So she put the finishing touches on it and you all looked at it further for group approval?

NIKOLAS: [looking sheepish] Not exactly. She sort of wrote the whole thing and we added bits and pieces when she needed help or wanted input.

RESEARCHER: And this process met everyone’s approval?

SHANIQUA: Absolutely! Please don’t think that the group just left all the writing in my lap. I started working on it several days ago, and I liked the hipster format and storyline we discussed so much, that I just kept going with it.

HUNTER: And it’s pretty funny. The dialogue definitely has some zing to it.

NIKOLAS: I guess, to some extent, many of us were feeling lazy and Shaniqua really wanted to take the script and run with it, so we just let her. (Class observation, May 11, 2011)

Coming Together

As the groups were finishing scripting issues, some more minor than others, I thought it wise that the devisers develop a collaborative cast from the twenty students participating in the project. One person from each collective would have a voice in deciding the various roles for the class actors. The Hipster group and the Ghetto team set about choosing representatives for the casting process, selecting Shaniqua and Desiree, respectively, as they probably knew the most
A Tempest in the Halls

about their devised scripts and would make the most informed and logical decisions for the performance. Cassie immediately emphasized her misgivings on the proposal and thought it rather insane for the writers to choose character roles for themselves. The students’ apprehension and disengagement are reflected in the following conversation:

CASSIE: I don't know if that's going to be such a great idea. Couldn't you just cast the show? The process would be so much faster and less chaotic.

KATE: [emphatically] And no one would die!

RESEARCHER: After keeping myself out of your work and giving you freedom to write about whatever you want and expression of thoughts in your play, I can't just sweep in all *deus ex machina* and take over by choosing your actors for you.

KENNEDY: [picks up head, sighs] This isn't going to be pretty. [Puts head back down and goes to sleep.] (Class observation, May 11, 2011)

Antonio asked a few days later if I were directing the piece and was disappointed by my refusal of the director’s chair, the ultimate power and control position on the theatrical stage.

The Ghetto and Hipster groups then loaded their scripts onto my flash drive for easier addition and combination of pieces. The “Duct Tape Bandits” had magically morphed into the “Rockers” in a writing epiphany stemming from in several hours of socializing in Cassie’s basement. Instead of creating their devised sections based upon the previous theme of underdogs, Kate, Kennedy, and especially Cassie decided to re-invent the work under the guise of a “battle of the bands” motif, setting up Prospero and his brother the Duke as competing classic rock and punk acts. Cassie summarized their creative choices:

CASSIE: Well, we addressed the competitive nature within music, and how people will
trash talk you in an instant without ever blinking their eyes. (Focus group, Duct Tape Bandits, May 24, 2011)

They later loaded their files with the others for print-outs of actual scripts.

In a final interview, Cassie confides that she wrote the vast majority of the re-invented script and was the first to conceive of the Rocker motif as the guiding perspective of the work. As long as she was content to take charge of their segment, Kennedy, Kate, and the others allowed her to speak for them through her textual creations. While the Rockers emphasized in a closing focus group conversation that their musical theme represented the entire collective, some admitted that Joanne had been often left out, as she was not very vocal concerning her ideas.

Students gathered around several tables at the back of the media center to conduct their first read-through of the script, with the casting team assigning roles the day before. Their progress was stunted as they attempted to navigate the often confusing segments of text. Since this was the maiden voyage of the combined script, the reading was extremely disjointed, and bewildered actors stumbled haltingly through the piece. Those who did not have seemingly integral roles casually thumbed through the script, but were not engaged in the rehearsal. Cassie mentioned that she had included a narrator device in the Rocker pieces and thought a storyteller might be an effective convention for communicating the story’s complex plot more easily. Desiree suggested that perhaps all the perspectives employ a specially selected narrator to represent that particular group’s work in a comical and audience-friendly manner. Cassie and Desiree were chosen from the Rocker and Ghetto factions, and Hunter grudgingly agreed to represent the Hipsters, as he was the most adept at witty ad-libbing.

*Production Work*
Upon beginning the work session the next Monday, the class revealed that they had not altered the script in any manner over the weekend. Though actual performance for a live audience loomed only days away, the students were surprisingly lackadaisical concerning rehearsal preparation:

RESEARCHER: Hey guys, you might want to actually get the show on its feet to see how it feels on stage. Maybe figure out what furniture pieces you might need...
NIKOLAS: Yeah, we know Graze, but no one really wants to do anything today.

[Stretching out further on stage floor.]

RESEARCHER: Well, your performances are Friday, and since the morning show is first period, and we have Senior Citizen Day to work on, we're not going to have much time the day of.
SHANIQUA: I think right now we’re brainstorming about what we want it to look like.

[Ava rolls her eyes and continues to read her book.]

RESEARCHER: If you're not going to do any actual blocking rehearsals, it might be a good idea to lay out your stage ground plan so you know what the set will look like and what pieces and props you might need.

NIKOLAS: [shouting, but still lying down] We probably should. Guys, what are we going to need? Didn't we say we wanted to keep the set neutral?

ANTONIO: [moaning slightly] Suppose we should go backstage and get all this stuff now, huh? (Class observation, May 17, 2011)

On Thursday, a mad rush took place on stage as it was the day before the collaborative performance. Nikolas, Antonio, and Hunter manipulated blocks, crates, and spools around the
blank stage. Desiree stood down front, and conferred on notes with Cassie concerning narrators’
interactions with the script. The current plan seemed to sound like a play-within-a-play concept
in which Hunter would open and explain the setting, characters, and some type of expository
conversation. This introduction would be shortly interrupted by the other two groups in turn.
Each would decry the incorrect or inappropriate nature of the other script and then request the
cast change the theme to a "true" showing of the events based on the various groups’
perspectives. Shaniqua and Natalie examined costume pieces in the prop and costume room for
items that could work as Starbucks barrista outfits in the Hipster sections.

The Rocker and Ghetto groups were far less involved, with most members sitting in
house seats listening to music, doing work for other classes, reading, or chatting with friends.
When I inquired as to their progression, Kate and Tammara complained that they did not
understand the perspective of certain sections and could not change the character bits or enhance
dialogue. Upon hearing my suggestion that they converse among the groups for a stronger idea
of character point of view, they begrudgingly took their scripts and went in search of other
actors. Stephen was at a loss for costuming suggestions and loudly asked the class collective
what Black people wore. I redirected this question in favor of a more civil one, suggesting that
instead of demanding to know what to wear, perhaps he needed to ask the group what pieces
would be most appropriate for their interpretation of their characters. Alisa responded in a
defensive manner:

ALISA: I don't know—wear whatever you want. I don't care.

STEPHEN: Okay, but I'm not sure what type of stuff to—

ALISA: It doesn't matter, just wear whatever.
STEPHEN: Yeah, but I don't know if I have anything that would be, you know, kind of ghetto.

ALISA: [heated] Look, I don't wear any of that stuff, so just use whatever you have and figure it out. (Class observation, May 19, 2011)

Performance Interrogations

This section of the project represented a very small part of the students’ process as they admittedly continued to procrastinate even when they had only a few days to walk through the script and rehearse it onstage. Despite the lack of preparedness, no one suggested after school rehearsals or additional outside practice time, with some still clinging to the belief that I would cancel the performance at the very last moment based on a desire to teach life lessons. The show actually did go on, much to the students’ chagrin, because although the researcher did not require a production to explain the project data and its outcome, I required a series of grades to represent the devisers’ work.

Additionally, the students created their own biographies, similar in concept to what a theatre-goer might review in a production’s playbill. Instead of listing the various roles and performances to each individual’s credit, the devisers discussed personal situations and unique proclivities that identified them as unique entities. The following biographical entries provide key components to understanding their creative process, necessary elements of effective instruction (Greene, 1995):

ANTONIO: My mom and dad got divorced when I was four, and then he left. IDK why, but he did. My mom quickly picked up a new man, and pretty quickly. In about four years he became a coke addict and began beating my mother. This situation gave me my
strong family values.

ISABELLE: I have a bucket load of chores to do every day. AND kids to watch. It's not easy. But still, minus all the responsibility, my hobbies, and my hectic schedule my life is okay. I'm not complaining. But it would be nice to get away from everything once in a while.

MACKENZEE: My mom and dad started fighting at the beginning of seventh grade. The fights progressively got worse. It got really bad after doors were broken and the police were called. One night, they both got into a huge fight and the police were called. Both of my parents went to jail that night.

SHANIQUA: Every time I think of my biological parents, I developed goosebumps on my spine, because at this moment I myself am 17 years old. The thought of being the same age as my mother when I was in her womb creeps me out.

DESIREE: She went from writing and directing home plays to writing raps and battle rapping by the time she was 12. When she was 13 she mastered playing the violin and keyboard and actually wanted to be a hip-hop violinist. (Student Biographies, May 15, 2011)

While some students readily volunteered biographical pieces, several participants did not. Joanne, Kate, Natalie, and Cassie never completed their pieces as part of the overall project. Every female member of the Rockers had declined to write a biography. Joanne appeared intimidated by the acting and life experience that some of the other students brought and sometimes seems at a loss for what to think and write, a characteristic typical of insecure teenage actors (Oakes, 1998). Kate admitted in a final interview that she had simply forgotten to write
one, due to the stressful rush of graduation. Natalie declined to craft a bio; she chose her own measure of involvement and commitment to the project. Apparently, she did not necessarily trust her classmates, or even her teacher, enough to reveal overtly personal information. She was having trouble dealing with the stress of high school, being an introverted and thoughtfully logical person. Her parents were elderly—old enough to be her grandparents—and her mother passed away the previous year, so she no longer had a guiding female figure at home. Cassie was so disenchanted with the collaborative project, public school education, and life in general, that she admitted in an exit interview that she disengaged with all aspects of her existence. Nothing that she wrote or created was able to hold her motivation for any length of time, and she asserted that each assignment or collective endeavor became an unbearably difficult chore, devoid of interest or enjoyment.

I created the following as a concluding vignette that details the day the students performed their collaborative work. It serves as a fitting capstone for the culmination of their ill-fated devising endeavor:

_I knew that doing performance during first period would be a risky undertaking. We had so much going on with the old age makeup extravaganza for senior week, but since folks were having scheduling issues with the devised performance, a first period morning show was our only viable consideration. As we were finishing the old aged senior students, I sent the majority of the fifth period class down to the theater to begin setting up the stage and preparing for an audience. I shadowed and highlighted the last student and closed up all the boxes and cream pots that could possibly dry out or attract bacteria before I headed to the Fine Arts Building._

_Needless to say, I was more than a little irked when Ruth told me that several students_
had not yet reported for the performance. Tammara, Alisa, and Ray-Ray were not in the theater; Zona was also a no-show. I was still confused about whether she was suspended, not suspended, or expelled, and Cassie was still MIA. She is notorious for being late, even more than fashionably so, but she normally takes performances seriously. However, since her emotional breakdown in January and February and her stint in a mental treatment facility, it's been much harder to read her, which worried me. Thankfully, Kate stepped up and said she would take over Cassie’s narrator part, but I was concerned that she doesn’t have the improv ability to compete with Hunter’s zaniness and Desiree's snappy comebacks.

I couldn't wait on folks who were late, however, because we had an audience coming who should not be kept in the dark. Thankfully, Tammara and Alisa arrived with Ray-Ray in tow, who apparently had forgotten he was performing first period and went to class instead. Initially, I wanted to record both shows for posterity, but the video equipment was not ready. We had no cassette with a high-eight player on which to record. Joanne, who was elected as an assistant stage manager, simply had to wait until the second show to record. As students filed into the seats, I tried not to have an overly critical eye on the production piece and just experience the show as an audience member would.

Immediately after the curtain rose, I was concerned that Hunter, as the first narrator, would be so deprecating concerning the performance before it had even begun. All the actors had their scripts, playing off their use as if the audience were witnessing a piece in rehearsal—which it really was. Hunter and Desiree worked well together as narrators, but the addition of Kate’s weak interjections didn’t jive, and she couldn't keep up. Nikolas and Jaime seemed fine with flipping back and forth between scenes and perspectives, but others were not as at ease.
As the show progressed further, it became more obvious that the script was being used less and less. The audience appropriately laughed at the comedic intervals, and, as the show developed, when cuts in scenes and improv were more apparent. However, this class of students has told me how uncomfortable they are with improv. So why then were they abandoning their conjoined script that was designed to keep the piece on track and understood? At one point, Hunter took it upon himself to cut out several pages of the text, losing information that might have been useful in understanding the students’ stories. The piece concluded near the end of the period rather abruptly, which made for a confusing finish as all the characters simply walked off the stage. Antonio then tipped one of the wooden spools on its side, and hopped on the center beam, walking on it like a water-log competition to the audience’s delight and slightly confused amusement. First circus over.

In between the two shows, I texted Cassie and said that by missing all of these activities today, she was in danger of not only failing one class (Drama IV), but the Technical Theatre class as well, which may or may not affect her graduation. Pretty quickly, I received an actual phone call—Cassie. She had been awake and was on her way to school when she received a call from her grandmother, who had fallen down the stairs at her Aunt’s home and possibly had broken her leg. Apparently no one else would respond, leaving Cassie as the first line of defense. She would be able to come to school for an hour or so to deliver her tech project but then would have to leave early because her grandmother would be going into surgery, and she needed to pick up her little brother from school.

The other students refuted her story, feeling that she simply did not want to be involved with the performance and built an outlandish, albeit convenient, account to structure around her
absence. I wanted to give her the benefit of the doubt, and truthfully it affected the other students more than it did me. Very few of them appeared to notice or even care. Ultimately, it was Cassie’s decision and educational ownership, and she would have to deal with the consequences concerning her peers, many with whom she still had not reconciled. She stayed long enough at school to explain her story of the morning to a few folks and figure out how to work the LCD/laptop/amplifier mechanism and give me a viewing of her group's final semester project, which was rather lackluster and disappointing.

The second show appeared more cohesive and together, but the audience was much smaller. Kate played the Rocker's narrator again, and Mackenzee asked me if she could maintain one character perspective throughout the whole show. I told her she would have to consult the rest of the cast to be certain if it was all right, as it really was not my call. The cast was apprehensive about the second show; however, several members were pleased with the response from their peers and the fact that they liked the humor within the different perspectives. Jackson Price, a fellow teacher, also remarked that he enjoyed how the students were clearly making their own choices on stage and being authentic with their characterizations.

The beginning of the afternoon show seemed tighter and more relaxed, but Zona suddenly became a part of the cast again after a week’s absence, which threw folks off slightly. It was her idea to create the Black ghetto perspective, yet she was rarely in class to participate in the script cutting or writing processes. However, the group still kept to that idea, even though the most vocal proponent wasn't present. Jaime said that this was one of the major reasons she left that group and shifted over to Nikolas and the gang—or “The Mix” as they deemed themselves—as she did not understand the ghetto perspective and was tired of working on a project that gave
her no connection. Tammara and Alisa apparently felt the same way, but stuck with the theme anyway, presumably because they didn’t have mobility between groups. (Jaime was also concerned she would end up doing the majority of the work.)

The second production concluded, much like the first performance—quasi-improv with a few nods to the script and narrators ordering the plot of the show without much resistance from the rest of the cast. Ruth, the stage manager in the sound booth next to me, was dumbfounded about the finale, in which all the narrators appeared frustrated with the actors and seemed to abruptly end the performance in a huff. I wondered how much of their presentation was acting and how much was actual response to their being tired of the piece. Nikolas arrived in the booth clearly angry about the ending and the lack of adherence to the script. He complained the narrators had too much control and that they sacrificed the end of the play and the audience’s understanding simply to be done. Then again, the cast members didn’t take the time to work out these decisions among themselves and had to be content with these performances as representations of their work.

Epilogue

To conclude the study, I conducted final focus group discussions, interviews, and general reflections of the project. Each of the devising teams attended a closing focus group appointment with me to discuss their thoughts on the collaborative work as well as their development process during the project. All were forthright concerning involvement and general participation, and it was clear that most were relieved that the production had concluded. The students collectively realized that their devising process and collaborative work required re-evaluation for more effective and successful outcomes. The Hipsters related the following in their focus group
discussion:

NATALIE: Maybe if we had a process, it would've turned out differently.

NIKOLAS: I think that if we had more days to prepare [most give their consent to this].

RUTH: And we all could've worked a little harder to put it together.

MACKENZEE: And probably the timing.

NIKOLAS: Yeah, I think if we would've gotten the script done sooner we would've had more, a lot more time to practice. (Focus group, The Mix, May 23, 2011)

The “Black ppl”’s focus group also discussed the time issue:

TAMMARA: I don’t think we understood the amount of time, work, or whatever that would have to go into this. Honestly, I would have liked a written script so much better—something that I didn’t have to write or work with other people on—

ALISA: And have Grazer direct it so we would have somebody in charge of the whole thing.

DESIREE: I mean, I wouldn’t mind trying to direct, but we never even discussed stuff like that—we didn’t have time. (Focus group, Black ppl, May 23, 2011)

Tammara and Alisa both discussed the difficulty of working with other teens in collaborative processes. Alisa’s comment on directorship of the devised piece echoed Antonio’s suggestion earlier in the process that I take control of the project and re-order the collaborative sequence. Desiree relates her interest in directing, and she is extremely organized and consistent with her ideas and decisions. As she indicated, however, there was no time left in the project for discussion concerning the direction of the devised play or much conversation to do with theatrical production elements of any sort.
In their focus group discussion, the “Duct Tape Bandits” relate their disconnection with the script:

CASSIE: It would be a lot easier to start out with a script that is more relatable to us. Because I wasn't too thrilled about the choice of *The Tempest*, but that's just a personal bias.

STEPHEN: Well, I mean, I was thrilled about it, but it was like we got shut down day one, and I think we're just recovering from that. (Focus Group, Duct Tape Bandits, May 23, 2011)

Throughout the project, Cassie maintained that she had disliked the class choice of *The Tempest* as the scaffolding work, but the production revealed that neither she nor anyone else in the team had used the play as an intended vehicle for their social commentary. Cassie stated that the choice of the play dissolved her interest, but the class had agreed that it contained all the conversation points they felt were poignant for teen audiences. By the time the Rocker group actually began writing from their proposed perspective, they had little time other than to spoof the original text through that particular viewpoint without mining deeper for significant topics. Stephen’s comment underlined how fragile was their learning and creative agency. The group felt artistically stunted by opinions of the Hipsters, unable to free themselves fully and create an autonomous piece.

The participants collectively agreed that one of the most difficult aspects of the project involved developing a group perspective through which to discuss *The Tempest* because of the diverse nature of the participants and the varied opinions they possessed. Several students thought this investigative element took far too long to develop which later affected the project
timeline and strained the relationships among the three groups. However, two of the teams remained negative about various occurrences and blamed other collectives for difficulties encountered within the devised play. The Rockers and the Hipsters seemed to believe that their pieces’ perspectives were in direct opposition to each other and mocked or directly lashed out at differing viewpoints:

KATE: I mean, we thought zombies would be perfect for *The Tempest*, being stranded on an island and that would've just been perfect, but then it just got voted out.

CASSIE: Some groups were more concerned than others with looking like total morons in front of the school. And I think we even had full class discussions about, like, zombies and how we were all like, "Oh yeah zombies!" But then the people that didn't want to do zombies were really the people that were actually like "Oh my God! They're going to judge me so harshly for dressing up like a zombie! My life is over, cuz it's high school."

I mean, it is what it is. (Focus group, Duct Tape Bandits, May 23, 2011)

The Hipster focus group reveals similar feelings of opposition:

SHANIQUA: People just decided that they were going to do their own thing.

NIKOLAS: Yeah, their own thing, or they would go against what the group had voted on.

ANTONIO: Zombies.

NIKOLAS: Yeah, like zombies.

MACKENZEE: It was so weird, but they did zombies anyway.

AVA: When did they add zombies?

JAIME: Kennedy decided to be a zombie half way through the second performance.

SHANIQUA: Did they write zombies in the script? (Focus group, The Mix, May 23,
Nikolas later admitted in an exit interview that he realized the majority power the Hipsters would have in decision-making for the production, but since he wanted his group’s perspective to forefront the work, he never questioned this situation. Despite their lack of negative comments for either of the other two teams, the Ghetto collective’s work was scorned by both the Hipsters and Rockers for its seemingly simplistic perspective and use of traditional Black slang and syntax:

KENNEDY: And the Black ppl have the other bases covered, even though I really don't understand what's going on, the Black ppl do. (Focus group, Duct Tape Bandits, May 23, 2011)

CASSIE: At least ours had proper grammar and syntax, and you know what we were talking about. Our at least was sort of together. (Cassie, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

In spite of the hardships students faced during the devising process, exit interviews reveal that they would attempt such a production again but with certain stipulations. They also offered sage advice and possible guidelines for the basic development of a future devised pieces for unsuspecting participants unaware of the difficulties of collaborative work:

JAIME: Right now, I’ll take away the fact that you need to know your group members well; and know your project, especially if you have to perform it; and make sure your opinion is heard, so that you’re more eager to do it. (Jaime, personal communication, May 25, 2011)

CASSIE: As far as a learning process, for me it was a good thing. Because I reaffirmed to
the fact that I don't like people in groups, but I appreciate the things that people can contribute to a group … And it's nice to be able to look at somebody else's insight, whether or not you use it, it can help you further your perspective. (Cassie, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

NIKOLAS: Do *Romeo and Juliet*, or do something that's well known, do something that has a name and that everybody automatically knows what you're talking about. And you’ll get a lot more participation from your writers, from your workers, your actors. (Nikolas, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

DESTINY: Have people that are actually dedicated and have ideas about making the play happen … people who want to do it, and get involved into it, and make a good product. (Desiree, personal communication, May 25, 2011)

SHANIQUA: Next time, we're all going to sit in the same room, all on the same table, and we're going to figure out what to do and how to do it and when to do it. You just have to make sure everybody enjoys it, and understands it. It's hard. (Shaniqua, personal communication, May 25, 2011)

Not all students were able to participate in a face-to-face final interview because of graduation activities. Therefore, I asked that they write their thoughts on the semester’s work in concluding opinion pieces. The final reflections of the Drama III and IV students were varied concerning the devised play project and their learned experiences. For the most part, the responses appear straightforward and honest, with many purporting negative outcomes and happenstances within their projects:

DESIREE: I think personally the play went more successful than I expected. People were
laughing and actually enjoying it and actually understood what was going on. I think one thing I would have done better or different was the preparation for the play.

RUTH: The project we had that was set up by the play, *The Tempest*, was honestly a flop. It could've been an excellent play, if we had just put the effort and time into it.

ANTONIO: We had a huge lack of interest. Which was understandable considering the play/class was run by a select few.

AVA: I'll be honest, I didn't enjoy *The Tempest* remix. I don't think I enjoy rewriting plays. I felt too crowded by all the people trying to put in their two cents. I think the whole process would be easier if there were fewer people.

STEPHEN: Our processes from the beginning were flawed. We were working with a short timeline, and I'm certain many people believed the play would be called off. Most of us were lazy, focused on other things, and when we did try and get focused, then all we could do was focus on the minor details. (Student reflections, May 26, 2011)

Even with the negative outcomes related in their final reflections, one student shares that the project provided the opportunity for two meaningful life lessons:

SHANIQUA: In a way, I am sort of grateful that our version of *the Tempest* fell flat. If all went smooth and well during the performance, I wouldn't have learned important knowledge that I would soon have to face in the real world. Lesson 1: You must make your vision as clear as possible. Lesson 2: To be confident in your voice. (Shaniqua, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

Despite these frustrations, the startling knowledge that the collaborative project reveals might empower and inspire other intrepid teachers/researchers to investigate and trouble the social
intersections of their own theatrical spaces. Greene (1995) encourages other educators to engage their students in active and ambiguous learning:

   All we can do, I believe, is activate multiple ways of seeing and multiple dialogues in the world where nothing stays the same. All I can do is to try to provoke my readers to come together in making pathways through that world with their students, leaving thumbprints as they pass. (p. 16)

Several participant reflections illustrate that while the students supported the notion of emancipatory learning and collaborative dramatic situations, they were unprepared for the complex realities of creative devising.
Chapter Five

FINDINGS

Introduction

The purpose of this study was to investigate the imaginative processes of students within advanced level drama courses and how those experiences with creative play development affect standardized learning environments. I was especially interested to discover whether students’ theatrical interactions would lead them to take ownership of their educational paths. Could they develop agency and empowerment within an educational institution that traditionally precipitate disconnections between dominant discourses and personal knowledge? Looking through the lens of social justice as outlined by Freire (2000), I wanted to examine how students could obtain their educational independence using dramatic technique and performance as vehicles of expression. Boal’s (1979) work in countering oppression with emancipatory drama scenes and focused community exercises further cemented for me the importance of examining students within theatrical school spaces. Greene’s (1995) treatises on imagination and aesthetic arts education emphasize the need for further investigation into how an educator might take emancipatory steps within learning spaces. Greene challenges educators to widen the scope of classroom lenses and view their spaces and their students with detail and dimension that cannot be quantified.

As a teacher/researcher, I employed strategies from devised theatre (Oddey, 1994) and Collision theatre (Elman, 2007), as students discussed topics from scholastic and personal life that they determined were integral issues. Although a good deal of literature exists concerning devised theatre in addressing local social justice themes, few studies relate to teen experiences
with play creation. Brian Norris (2009) discusses the notion of “playbuilding” in which actors/writers present original place-specific pieces and directly engage the audience within the text in a partially-improvisational and highly participatory method. This genre relates directly to Boal’s (1979) Forum Theatre, in which audience members become “spect-actors” and join the action of the scenes for more personally authentic perspectives. The majority of these studies examine Forum Theatre during theatre programs in the college setting (Gallagher, 2009; Goldstein, 2012), and high schools are seldom addressed as possible venues for creative collaboration and performance. On a logistical note, even fewer dissertations examine teen dramatic study and social justice as doctoral research.

Having examined the copious amounts of data for this study, I utilized Richardson’s (2003) notion of crystallization wherein she discusses the innumerable facets and perspectives through which research may be viewed. I found the possible combinations of compared data and findings to be endless and determined to narrow my focus for a more centralized conversation on social justice and theatre education within Chapter Five. Leavy (2009) reiterates that knowledge, truth, or fact—especially within arts-based research—is partial, as the viewpoints and experiences of many individuals must be considered, each with a personal story. Consistent with Richardson’s (2003) and Leavy’s (2009a) schemas, I believe my research questions were only partially answered because inquires continue to present themselves. The following questions guided the study:

- How might drama studies create spaces for “releasing the imagination” and counter the standardized educational environment that negatively affects diverse learning populations?
• How might drama students develop as creative inquirers of devised/collision drama performance and take ownership of their learning?

• How might teacher researchers, drawing from self-reflective personal and classroom experiences, develop into social justice-minded and culturally aware practitioners?

Within the journey of this project, I was better able to grasp the complexities of student learning and social justice through subject interviews, focus groups, examination of student writings, and researcher observations of students’ interactions. Continued questioning of my own position in the study as a teacher/researcher and the privilege of social standing as a White, middle class female educator also led to an interrogation of personal and professional domains that affect classroom learning.

Discussion of Findings

In this study, the student participants engaged in crafting their own play based upon discussion topics significant to them and based on a chosen dramatic plotline to aid in tightening the story (Appendix A). Having students devise their own works for performance provided a venue for socially just pedagogy whereby they could voice ideas through a theatrical medium. Likewise I sought a means by which to present the research in an equally expressive and unique vehicle to illustrate and honor the collaborative and individual endeavors of the students. These goals resulted in the creation of my own currently unpublished ethnodrama (Saldaña, 2003), which is based upon the students’ processes in brainstorming, writing, producing, and finally performing their devised work. I attempted to take no stories or student ideas out of context to create a researcher’s grand narrative (Connelly & Clandinin, 2000); furthermore, I attempted to credit students’ contributions, both personal and devised.
Upon closer examination of the ethnodramatic work, however, I realized that my skills as a playwright required additional honing, a complication that could delay the study’s completion by several months or even years. While Tara Goldstein (2012) enrolled in play scripting classes embedded within her Masters Degree program as a method of increasing her dramatic writing prowess, doing so was not a viable option for me as a teacher/researcher because no such program was available, and time restrictions concerning professional responsibilities as a high school teacher were prohibitive. During the course of this study, I did, however, commit to pursuing my gifted endorsement based on the fact that several students in the participating study group were identified as gifted, and I desired to effectively instruct these advanced learners. Ultimately, Chapter Four became a much more conventional incarnation of researcher strategies, but the additional theatrical perspectives and dramatization of the heavily coded data created by the ethnodramatic device proved invaluable for developing the themes uncovered in the study.

Initially, I imagined that the study would embody the original, creative work of excited students actively exercising agency in their learning. This aspect of agency was observable in some individuals on particular days during the process; however, a more accurate situation, visible even in the students themselves, was their admission of the daily struggles of writers/performers who were uncertain about how to approach the project and often willing to abdicate their production ownership to anyone desirous of leadership or offering workable ideas. Through continued interaction with the data, I discovered the research findings not only reveal the direct involvement of social justice within the theatrical project but also indicate how the prolonged absence of social justice may inhibit students’ innate creativity and imagination. By not directly engaging with disruptive discourses concerning racial and cultural presumptions and
notions concerning academic standardization, the participants and I unwittingly reinforced the domination of the current status quo.

During project conception, I imagined that an autoethnography piece concerning the artist/researcher/teacher would embody a significant section of the study, but based upon the advice of my advising committee, I opted instead to concentrate on data I collected from students for this social justice investigation. My role became that of observer and facilitator as I attempted to minimize any influence my involvement would have on the students’ work. I desired that they enjoy the process of devising dramatic writing and develop a thoughtful piece that reflected their struggles as teens both inside and outside of school. However, any suggestion or passing comment I made about structural edits, story themes, or characterization was immediately perceived as the “right answer.” The students battled daily against the ambiguity of the project in that there were no set guidelines or regulations—other than what the class collective had established regarding behavior—for dramatic production (Heddon & Milling, 2006) and creative play writing (Oddey, 1994). Several individuals asked if I could provide a rubric for specific theatrical elements such as number of pages and characters and specific themes or ideas. In the middle of group collaboration, one frustrated student yelled out in the library, “Just tell us what you want!” While the moment itself appeared comical, it distressed me later to think that these bright, unique students believed their thoughts and experiences held little significance unless I directly validated them with exacting standards and instructions. For my part, I still sense my reticence at having the students’ last project of the year—and for some, the last performance of their high school careers—continue to production fruition despite its textual lack of readiness. During final interviews, focus group discussions, and personal reflections, most students
communicated their dissatisfaction with the final performance outcome and their devised process itself, commenting candidly on their lack of engagement and urgency despite the freedom to infuse individual voices and subject matter into the play.

This study examined students’ work within a social justice framework and how these teens could possess a greater level of educational ownership using devised drama techniques to interrogate their current standardized learning environment. Eliot Eisner (1999) stresses the importance of the arts in developing creative thought and imagination, thereby enabling children not only to master difficult abstract concepts but to also increase emotional maturity through personal reflection and connections with diverse perspectives. As students incorporate creativity into their writings, Eisner (1999) claims they also tie into situations of powerful shared experience. My research, however, did not yield such conclusive results, and it serves more perhaps to reveal the troubling atmosphere of public high school education.

I uncovered several themes during the study through multiple coding, re-coding, and collapsing sessions that presented new areas of concentration for student activity and professional development for educators concerning notions of collaboration, engagement, imagination, and learning ownership and agency. Trends revealed in the analysis of the data include:

• Student collaboration and group dynamics within arts spaces require further investigation on basic levels to provide effective classroom use.

• Intuitive leaps between learning concepts and creating connections across diverse perspectives are problematic for even AP and honors students as educational expectations have become rigidly standardized and extrinsically motivated.
• When students are challenged in the areas of creativity and imagination, they at times reveal a lack of ownership, a forfeit of agency, and an easily discouraged learning mindset.

• Drama spaces might be continually questioned and interrogated for social justice practices as cultural, racial, and class (SES) divisions exist, but often they are not openly discussed.

These themes emerged as a result of extensive examination through traditional methods of data analysis and the addition of crystallization (Richardson, 2002) to further question the intersections of theatre education, social justice, and standardized learning. While the uncovered topics partially address my research questions, they appear to open landscapes for future queries into arts-based methodologies and action research in education.

How Might Drama Studies Create Spaces for “Releasing the Imagination” and Counter the Standardized Educational Environment that Negatively Affects Diverse Learning Populations?

In this section, I confront assumptions I held at the beginning of the study that proved to be erroneous. Because I have been a high school drama teacher for nearly a decade and a performing artist since the time I could talk and hold a pencil, at the outset of my research I believed that this question concerning the power of arts could be simply answered with a few obvious interview questions and observational field notes. I thought, perhaps naively, an action research arts-based study could illustrate overt agency and social justice themes in high school spaces. Yet I had not taken into account that the complexity with which the arts function in a public school framework requires close and careful interrogation far beyond what I had initially
imagined. For my part, I greatly over-estimated my students’ abilities concerning playwriting and working collaboratively, and I incorrectly assumed they would be successful based upon their participation in the high school drama program for at least three years. While I do believe these students capable of excelling at any venture they choose to undertake, my shortcomings with them involved the lack of proper instruction in devised theatre, social justice dialogue, and conflict resolution.

Interrogating Dramatic Spaces

Were I planning the study anew, I would be aware of the discrepancies revealed in the students’ class conversations concerning significant topics within their playwriting piece. I had initially noticed that the participants wanted to address discrimination as an investigative subject, but they mentioned most types of prejudice except racial, sexual, or socioeconomic inequities. While this noted avoidance of apparent prejudices definitely struck me as strange, in my quest to provide the students a social justice-based dramatic experience, I neglected important opportunities to examine false perceptions in myself and my students and the dangerous specialness of the arts space (Oakes, 1998). Relationship and social divides appeared more visible between classmates as the devised theatre process became difficult and demanding. Students had originally established a few basic ground rules for their group structure, such as equal division of labor and use of majority voting for critical decisions. However, they did not venture much beyond those precepts in fashioning further guidelines for collaborative work, and in fact, one group abandoned them altogether. Greene (1995) notes teachers could not only enable the emancipation of students, but they could open their creative spaces for active questioning and interrogation. These investigations make institutions as well as individuals
responsible for the growth or regression of participants, and teachers are challenged to construct arenas for reflective conversation.

The ultimate results of these discussions led students to separate into smaller social units for project participation. Admittedly, the groups formed across pre-existing familiarity and racial constants in which the students functioned comfortably and with the least amount of friction (Lei et al, 2006; Webb et al., 2009). Additional writing and story development occurred in this segregated setting among the students; however, the division later created racial misconceptions, a concept students failed to recognize at the outset. Furthermore, social stereotypes and disjointed plot structures overshadowed any immediate positive outcome, a result that I later recognized but had not capitalized upon during the project. Several students revealed that despite initially deciding to split from the larger collective, they regretted their choice later in the process when they attempted to generate ideas for writing and when students frequently exhibited poor work ethics. Friendships with immediate group members did not ensure that all individuals would employ similar diligence and thoughtfulness to the project. Students perceived the value of diverse perspectives during the brainstorming, writing, and production collaboration processes, but ultimately favored social grouping instead of ability grouping.

While such discoveries within a drama class may appear especially troubling, scenes of communal conflict are customary occurrences at Greenview High, where significant shifting in demographic circles is occurring. We are currently the most racially diverse secondary school in the county with a nearly 50/50 split between minority and non-minority students in a suburban-esque area that was historically White and rural. Darling-Hammond (2009) notes that many schools with transforming student groups are unprepared to effectively instruct diverse
populations. Teachers may have a single professional development session concerning diversity on an annual basis, but students are expected to resolve their own serious issues of racial and cultural difference, and teachers are provided very few intervention strategies to dissuade deep-seated ignorance. Much like the project participants, students and teachers at this school generally reduce individuals to common stereotypes and simplistic classifications rather than engage singly to honor and respect the power of each voice and story (Delpit, 2002).

**Student Personal Experiences**

This notion of individual student stories became especially significant when the drama deivers wrote their own biographies explaining who they were and what life events provided particular impact in shaping their personalities and present perceptions. An especially noteworthy discovery is that despite the several semesters most of these students spent in my classes, many had incredible life experiences of which I was completely unaware. The stories shared by the Drama III & IV students in their autobiographical accounts, some of which appear in Chapter Four of this study, reveal a willingness to allow their lives to be examined by others, and to commiserate or condemn as they saw fit. A composite of comments on their significant life experiences includes the following:

- **RAY-RAY**: I fell off the side of a gigantic yellow slide and fractured my back.
- **MACKENZEE**: I battled with an eating disorder, up until 10th grade. I would eat in front of everyone and while no one noticed, I would go make myself sick.
- **ANTONIO**: He was hurting my mom really bad. So I went and got the gun from between their mattress. Told him to leave her alone. He charged at me and I pulled the trigger, hitting his leg. He wasn't ‘badly hurt’ said the police. Because it was self defense I didn't
get in trouble. Shortly after that, he OD-ed on coke.

NIKOLAS: Born to a 16-year-old HIV-positive mother, I was almost aborted. All the doctors suggested it. The likelihood of HIV transmission in the 90s was skyrocketing. Luckily, I was born HIV negative.

TAMMARA: From being in the hospital with childhood leukemia, and making it out, I knew I had a purpose. (Student biographies, personal communication, May 15, 2011)

After reading the various pieces written by the students, I realized that I did not know of these major events that had such an impact in shaping their lives, despite my teaching position that allows for involvement with individual learners throughout multiple school years. I had presumed that my extended classroom and dramatic experience with these participants afforded me an insider’s knowledge and perspective into the lives of the students. Clearly, this was not the case and I needed to examine my assumptions and create a more relationship-oriented environment going forward. Gary Howard (2007) notes that teachers be conscious of the diversity in their students’ lives in order to more effectively instruct them. Educators with a culturally sensitive stance open spaces to dialogue and interaction that widen learners’ perspectives (Ladson-Billings, 1999). I initially believed they would come to feel comfortable enough throughout the course of this study to release these memories to others outside an immediate circle of friends. However, not all students participated in creating autobiographical selections, for several were unwilling to release potentially uncomfortable memories.

I found the students’ choice of interrogation topics incredibly significant to the findings of the study. While electing to divulge highly personal information for the class and readers of the study, most avoided discussion of social issues that, from a teacher/researcher perspective,
were not nearly so delicate in nature. Students were generally casually polite with each other, having the benefit of extended class and stage time together, but they were not comfortable debating their own beliefs and learning spaces beyond the occasional discussion with close friends. Including the entire class in an open dialogue on race and cultural differences was not an undertaking student actors were prepared to experience. Greene (1995) recommends rather than avoiding difficult social subjects one might engage students in complicated conversations that widen cultural perspectives rather than narrow them.

Due to my position as teacher/researcher and the determination that the role of observer took precedence over my role of facilitator/instructor, I chose not to intervene and guide their conversations. The decision was based on my realization that my daily reality and my experiences in White, middle class culture differ from my students’ experiences. Because I was unprepared for their reluctance and had no strategies for addressing their situations, I allowed the students to continue with the seemingly superficial discussions.

**Personal Project Connections**

A decade as an educator has taught me that students need to see themselves within the text of a short story, novel, or play and sometimes to draw personal parallels concerning particular issues or abstract concepts. Drama students discover themselves within a play or certain scene and make meaningful connections with characters and the realities found in fictitious situations (Gallagher, 2009; Gonzales, 2006). In rewriting *The Tempest* to reflect their own life circumstances in personal and public circles, the students were allowed the freedom to create character interactions that accurately portrayed their perspectives concerning student relationships, misuse of teacher power, and an over-emphasis on sports, among others. I had
again assumed that because the students were upperclassmen in advanced-level classes and had the opportunity to engage with personal topics, significant connections could ultimately be made.

From the outset, however, the students had difficulty assigning importance to various discussion topics and connecting those to themes in *The Tempest* and to their personal talking points. Though they did decide collectively to use *The Tempest* plot structure as a framing device, many students later disclosed in final interview sessions and reflective writings that they could have chosen a different piece, one that held more individualized meaning. During discussions, they enjoyed the notion of having a plot cornerstone to ground the movement of the play but were having difficulties collectively deciding on a known piece that could address their bevy of topics. While several solid candidates were enlisted, including King Arthur legends, a zombie apocalypse, *Taming of the Shrew, Peter Pan*, they settled with *The Tempest* probably because I mentioned it in conversation, and if the project collapsed, they could blame my choice and not each other.

Students mentioned later that they needed to build upon a more teen-recognizable piece rather than a late Shakespearean romance, with Desiree and Alisa voicing the opinion that a proper selection could be medieval legends as most twelfth graders were familiar with those tales from the traditional British literature curriculum. Admittedly, I was confused by the connection as both students were Black, and the knights of the Round Table stories are a definite fixture within the White Western European canon. I also realized that in my quest to promote learning emancipation for my students, I was imposing my own racial bias by supposing that diverse teens would be immediately attracted to diverse and unconventional pieces as their writing framework. However, as most students of Color experience the whitewashed texts of
conventional British prose and poetry in high school, perhaps Desiree and Alisa were simply attuned to tales that engaged other students to a greater extent than the curriculum maps and unit plans devoid of student input and interest (Howard, 2007; Schultz, 2009). *The Tempest* enchanted the majority of the class with its readily-available script and access to a *No Fear Shakespeare* version that presents the story in a modern vernacular easily understandable for teens. Despite these assistive devices, students continued to struggle with deciphering the script and how to reorient it for their purposes concerning teenage topics in high school settings. Others commented that although they had ultimately made the choice to incorporate their social overlays *The Tempest*, they remained disconnected from the project and found building creative bridges to the story’s characters and plot and the circumstances of their own realities nearly impossible.

In response to the first research question, I found that this assignment apparently failed to open spaces that allowed the students to imaginatively create their own curriculum. Instead, they kept looking to me for expected answers, which I declined to provide. In these actions, students forfeited ownership of the project to me. In light of this realization, I constructed an additional research question that focused on how instructors might shape an environment that promotes student engagement and ownership, and I reviewed the data seeking further and future development. The following research question emerged:

- How might teacher researchers, drawing from self-reflective personal and classroom experiences, develop into social justice-minded and culturally aware practitioners?

The continued evolution of this research question and its effects on the study are further examined within the chapter.
Wrestling with the discovery that the young actors still suffered from detachment with a venture specifically designed to cater to their personal experiences and ways of knowing (Heath, 1983) troubled me. Throughout the process, the students constantly attempted to engage me in creating a tangible roadmap and explicit planning structure for the devising project. The more I encountered their desire for strict guidelines, rubrics, and deadlines for writing, collaborating, and producing their piece, the more clearly I viewed a primary culprit to their learning obstacles and oppression: standardization. Regardless of the students’ outward eschewing of control and direct facilitation in focus groups and interviews, in the writing process they grappled with creating original material and tying together their pieces both individually and in groups. Participants developed their own works but appeared apprehensive of the ambiguous and complicated nature of collaboration. Students fear assessment of an inferior product when they engage in collaborative assignments, as I recently reviewed (Park & Hinsz, 2006). The Rocker group specifically wished to remain alone and did not enjoy interference from outside members, regardless of having idea-generating difficulties and requiring direct assistance later in the process.

I had never taught such a large group of gifted students and had presumed from the outset that they would excel in the complexities of devised theatre. I was incorrect in this assumption, basing it on my own experiences as an AP/honors student in high school. My native New York State only recognizes gifted students through advanced class placement. Accelerated courses are not officially sanctioned or supported, nor do teachers receive specialized training to instruct gifted individuals. Georgia, however, despite its low ranking in national education standings, is
one of only a few states to recognize and fully support the development of gifted programs for students and teachers.

Students interested or showing proclivity for giftedness usually are evaluated in elementary school using various assessments to examine their individual skills sets and cognitive abilities. Davis and Rimm (2004) state that in the past many school districts favored conventional gifted testing measures as they catered to conventional discourses that resulted in a majority of White, middle class gifted students. As school populations undergo cultural shifts, administrations recognize additional facets of giftedness through more creative and diverse means. Some talented students have gone unrecognized into their high school years, resulting in frustration with and disconnection from formal education. I have since learned in my gifted endorsement program that students excelling in one area may require learning strategies that promote success in other areas. At the outset of this study, I failed to grasp the idea because I presupposed that the students’ past camaraderie and work would, because of the novelty and innovative nature of the project, allow them to succeed despite initial difficulties. I was unprepared for the complexities and challenges that devised theatre and gifted students presented.

Despite wanting to address the standardization of education using a social justice approach—the devised theatre collaborative project—directly within my classroom, I found the effects of their long-term marginalized learning often overwhelmed the students’ creativity. They generated successful initial ideas using *The Tempest* structure and explored social perspectives within each of the three groups, including homeless teens, the popular crowd, jocks, gifted over-achievers, geeks and nerds, cliques and outsiders. However, they experienced a breakdown when
they attempted to fuse with their topics with Shakespeare. Upon reaching a mental block in
devising their works, the writers briefly battled with certain characters or plot structures before
scrapping them completely, as they felt uncomfortable that they were not immediately provided
with an answer. Grappling with ambiguity and the lack of instant gratification proved an
unbearable discomfort for the students (Greene, 1995), an experience to be consistently avoided.
The students could not make the cognitive leaps between the subjects, and the writing results
concluded in a parody of stereotypes. Natalie had warned the group that classifying topics in
simplistic terms would negate an otherwise effective, original piece that moved teen audiences.
However, the students abandoned creativity in favor of quickly-penned stock characters that did
not reflect the students’ experiences or talking points; instead, they generated a performance that
weakly represented Shakespearean satire using hipsters, rock and rollers, and life in the ghetto.

I had incorrectly assumed that the devisers were free from the lifeless, rigid effects of
strict learning standards that hallmarked so many other subjects. Regardless of the practices
employed in my classroom, students still contended with other spaces that embraced—whether
willingly or unwillingly—the use of high-stakes testing and the confines of a one-size-fits-all
core curriculum, actions that I found surprising. Why were they continually bringing standards-
based curricular ideas of their core classes into this space? The students had expressed that they
found drama “freeing”; in this environment they were free of biased judgment based on their
social standards.

They brought these attitudes with them, however. I had assumed that their concepts of
education would be compartmentalized to reflect the environments of each of their academic
subjects. For my part, I was asking the students to expand their imaginations without doing the
same myself. I could not comprehend that the Drama III & IV devisers would require project scaffolding and team-building measures, which in Greene’s (1995) estimation, closes one’s imagination to the students’ learning possibilities. Instead, the students had been indoctrinated with standardized, one-right answer precepts. More concerted effort was required to address the multiple choice structures that encourages test-taking skills and recitation of standards without creative demonstration of their usages. Standards in and of themselves are not inherently negative, but education becomes muddled and problematic when diverse learning populations and family and community knowledges are not recognized and honored as appropriate tools for student growth (Kraehe, 2010). Educators might incorporate other forms of knowing, such as those revealed in personal histories, group dialogue, and interviews into a student’s schooling in order to provide a holistic environment for learning.

I imagined that a natural and holistic environment for learning already existed and that once freed from scholastic restraints, such as predetermined topics and teacher-selected collaborative groups, the students’ imaginations would reactivate their educational vigor. However, Greene (1995) purports that teachers make learning assumption without considering the effects of students’ individual lived experiences and current influences. Educators could not seek to free their students from daily struggles but to empower them and give them the dialogic tools to free themselves.

The unique structure and curriculum of aesthetic classes make assessment difficult and time-consuming, and in the attempt to address this problem, different states have created standards that reveal a disparity between core and arts classes. For example, the use of specified standards in Texas’ visual arts syllabus caused a severe narrowing of cultural perspective
concerning artist ethnic background and student experience while simultaneously expanding on
customs covering the traditional Western arts canon (Kraehe, 2010). Instead of practicing
severely standardized measures that decrease student connectivity, portfolio methods of
assessment—such as opportunities afforded in an advanced placement (AP) Studio Art class—
would prove a more authentic appraisal of student skill (Graham & Sims-Gunzenhauser, 2009).
Portfolios are developed through ongoing dialogues between assessment specialists, college
instructors, and high school teachers, with evaluations open to experimental and yet unidentified
forms of expression. These courses defy current testing procedures and embody the organic
nature of individual artistic expression using practiced technique and personal creativity.

As the No Child Left Behind (NCLB) mandate approaches a decade of existence in
American public schools, its footprint on our educational landscape is far from subtle.
Admittedly, many of the constraints associated with NCLB, including testing and limited
funding for the arts, are actually decisions made at the state level by school districts afraid to lose
federal funding based upon low assessment scores in population sub-groups and by declining
graduation rates (Spohn, 2008). Such an atmosphere creates apprehension about the rigor of
academic and aesthetic courses, often leading to an increase in study time for core classes,
specifically math and reading or English language arts (ELA). This requirement parallels
decreases in arts education, so students have additional remediation in subjects attached to high-
stakes assessments (Spohn, 2008). Failure or low test scores in such pivotal classes translates
into fewer chances for creative expression that keep students engaged and focused within the
school day.

In my high school’s district students are often pulled from fine arts classes for tutoring or
“kill and drill” sessions concerning state exams in order to increase the overall Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP) rating. Middle school drama programs were completely removed and visual arts substantially reduced to allow for additional preparation for CRCT assessments. Such actions send a message that aesthetic courses lack the necessary skill and knowledge base of other subjects. While excessive testing has not proven to narrow the achievement gap of diverse populations or improve overall learning (Beveridge, 2010), the connections to needed government money will continue the trend of hyper-accountability and relegate the arts to elective status. The students in this study chose the course as an elective option, and several students were unable to enroll in the course due to its limitations in the curricular schedule. Such steps again push visual arts, music, and theatre into fields of almost privatized learning for those who can afford to pay for specialized classes. The decline in arts classes creates a deficiency in the holistic approach to education that has kept American innovation and industry competitive for several decades (Graham & Sims-Gunzenhauser, 2009; Valquez Heilig, Cole, Aguilar, 2010). This decline in access to arts courses such as Drama III & IV severely restricts student creativity and promotes the standardized, one-correct answer approach that the educational system of America has adopted and that students have accepted, as evidenced in this study.

How Might Drama Students Develop as Creative Inquirers of Devised/Collision Drama Performance and Take Ownership of Their Learning?

The research project involving the Drama III & IV class of acting students entailed the collaboration of large and small groupings to develop devised theatre topics for playwriting. The students in this course initially seemed to thrive on cooperation and creating collective knowledges to further personal growth cognitively, socially, and emotionally. Because they had
spent several years together in various elective and core academic classes as well as extra-
curricular performances, I imagined that expounding on student-generated themes together
would prove a simple enough task for these sophisticated upperclassmen. This presumption was
based on the premise that their gifted and AP status and three or more years in the drama
program had well-equipped these students for the challenges of the project. Because Hunter had
written an entire original play script the previous year and was familiar with the demands of
creative authorship, he would, I believed, successfully navigate the completion of devised
theatre. Several other students wrote personal short stories, poems, raps/beats, and various
combinations thereof using devised theatre methods in conjunction with Collision theatre
techniques which seemed a powerful indication of success.

Again, I acted upon my bias that AP and honors-level drama students were more capable
of functioning within diverse populations and in complex contextual situations. An important
ingredient of the collaborative recipe was learning ownership and student agency, and I was
certain it would accompany the teens’ original writing constructs, conceived singly or in
collaborative processes. Surprisingly, most devisers felt little personal ownership of the dramatic
written piece and held no clear responsibility toward the groups and or the creative methods
developed during the project. The student scenes divided along social lines, because all group
members in the three teams were socially connected. However, some individuals had no
compunction about blaming other team members for the dysfunction, mediocrity, or outright
failure of their artistic attempts:

JAIME: I thought that I would end up being the one writing everything so that's why I
left. I was thinking more of Tammara and Alisa and Zona and how they probably weren't
going to do shit. And I was going to end up writing the whole thing or whatever, so I left.
(Jaime, personal communication, May 25, 2011)
CASSIE: I know that I'm probably being harsh about it, but the effort that I put into the project was not reciprocated in the least by any of my crew members, save Stephen, who was sick during the major construction of the script. (Cassie, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

Greene (1995) cautions educators concerning the shadow side of American culture—uncaring, separatist notions associated with freedom—which is present in students’ interactions. Teachers’ recognitions of these traits are not a condemnation of students, but they are an additional characteristic about which educators might be aware.

**Student Collaboration**

By the time students reach high school, they have presumably experienced cooperative learning, peer tutoring, workshop models, and problem-based projects throughout their school experiences. Although I had experienced dysfunctional student groups in the past, I assumed advanced drama students would be experts at navigating group dynamics and collaborative structures. I imagined that due to the students’ generally social natures, working together would be an innate movement in the devising of their class play. While students needed to operate independently, in several instances it appeared that most of them were creatively stronger when developing ideas with drama peers, and initially they fed off each other’s excitement concerning the project, creating the dynamic classroom program. From the outset, the class began working together as an intact group, discussing ideas within a circle of 20 voices, an indication of the social justice component of the classroom (Freire, 2000). The structure of the class space was
such that all students could be heard equally in the large round, an invitation to all individuals to participate.

Throughout the project, teams became flexible, morphing into various clusters to accept or reject members who appeared to meet or defy certain qualifications and social obligations (Appendix F). The large group remained intact during the play scaffolding process. I had rather predetermined to use Collision theatre in conjunction with devising original collaborative work, reasoning that stemmed from the reality that writing completely unique performance pieces involves a considerable amount of time—several months or sometimes years of effort. Piggybacking with Collision allowed for pre-designed plot schemes while still providing personal and group-oriented creative license. Students conversed vigorously on possible play titles, researched copyright dates, considered student accessibility and understanding, and sought connections to the individual discussion topics. Moving forward, all students examined structural pieces already familiar to them—*Romeo and Juliet, Peter Pan, the King Arthur myths*—and decried the virtues and vices of each. Students eventually settled—by majority, not unanimous vote—upon Shakespeare’s *The Tempest*, probably due to my passing mention, I realize in hindsight. In actuality, I had wanted the participants to use a pre-cut, 60-minute version of *Romeo and Juliet* that students creatively edited last year; however, general consensus appeared to reflect boredom and overexposure to the themes and characters of star-crossed lovers. A project on the strengths of social justice in high school spaces could not commence with a teacher-selected play that made the researcher’s job easier but frustrated the participants.

After several students indicated a desire to use portions of the original text within the body of their work, it was communally decided to review the individual acts, cutting extraneous
sections of poetry or prose. For this process, students migrated into smaller groups based upon the number of script copies I had made. Despite the amount of work that appeared to be conducted through these sessions, the devisers took an extremely long time to complete the editing process. The students physically sat in groups and frequently socialized when not armed with a script, but they appeared to cut character lines and interactions on an individual basis. I did not intrude on their process as my position in the study was that of a just-in-time facilitator, intervening only in moments of complete impasse or project breakdown. I knew, too, that part of the development of the work would involve socializations on certain levels (Taberno, Chambel, Curral, & Arana, 2009) which could generate ideas we could incorporate as creation vehicles later on. When discussing *The Tempest* in general, students unequivocally decided that lengthy monologues or speeches must be edited out as well as any deviations or dramatic rabbit trails that might diminish plot action. No one wanted to memorize paragraphs of Shakespearean verse for a class project.

Discussion turned towards building upon previously selected topics for use with *The Tempest* story structure. The class came together in a large circle and a 20-member discussion progressed. It was quickly apparent that general consensus could not be reached as students struggled to reconcile their myriad plot, thematic, and character concepts under a single umbrella. These class discussions formed the basis for the remainder of the project’s group participations. Students struggled to maintain coherent and timely topics in their devising, especially in determining how to re-create *The Tempest* story through a teen-savvy perspective. Ultimately, the class decided to break into three separate teams, each to write their own version of the play with a specialized, group-chosen point of view. While having smaller groups
appeared the most sensible course of action at the time, a concept suggested in Hmelo-Silver (2004), some students identified the break-up of the class collective as the project’s Achilles’ heel.

Despite collaborating with friends, none of the teams was without friction or major devising to some extent. Robert Barfield (2003) explains that individuals less accustomed to collaboration will continually seek the social circles to populate working groups while more experienced collaborators consider diligence, motivation, and project dedication larger priorities. However, socialization appeared to be paramount within each group, despite the fact that they had known each other for several years and in many class situations. While collaboration was made easier by reducing group sizes (Block, 2008; Hmelo-Silver, 2004), it did not increase their respective levels of maturity, motivation, or urgency for writing completion. When devising their play sections, group members functioned individually, writing in relative isolation, which according to Susan Orr (2010), makes their project practices difficult to assess in terms of personal or collaborative contributions. In the case of the largest group, Shaniqua—who chose the hipster perspective—also penned the entire text for her team. These students in this group agreed that in order to keep the piece cohesive and fluid, it seemed logical to empower a single author. As Shaniqua enjoyed the topic and was eager to flesh out characters, other members happily agreed to give her license. They reviewed her attempts at *The Tempest* re-working, but they still had little direct involvement with the actual script creation.

The self-named Rocker group appeared to encounter constant obstacles, including absent members, low motivation, and conflicting themes, within their frequent collaborative attempts. While professing their cohesion as a group in earlier interviews and focus groups, concluding
conversations revealed that members felt a distinct lack of collective harmony:

CASSIE: I think we are too friendly, and we all know that we like to chat and be social. I need to work with people who are on my same intelligence level. And they just weren't cutting it. I mean, I love them. They're very nice people, mostly. And we could have some good conversation ... they're not even close to being on my intelligence level, and it’s frustrating, it really is. (Cassie, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

KATE: I don't think that most of the people in the class really liked each other. But after, you know, your four years in school, and you know that person kind of gets a certain reputation and all that kind of stuff, your friendships expand, or they kind of grow apart, and then I realized well, maybe I don't know them that much. (Kate, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

I determined as the teacher that direct instruction was required at this point in the project and that this shift in positioning was necessary in order for students to meet deadlines for their written sections. While Webb et al. (2009) caution that student on-task behavior decreases as teacher intervention increases, the lack of progress demanded my attention. The limitations of the school semester and access to these students required this action. I felt at this point that the students needed a model to help them focus on their expected outcomes of the written script and performance of the piece, so I temporarily shifted my stance from teacher/researcher to model/director. I found the completely holistic environment to be unrealistic in this situation, and I needed a final product as the basis for assessment to meet the potential grade demands and administrative expectations. In some group situations, a “just in time” approach asks teachers to allow students to wrestle with difficult problems over sustained periods and give assistance only
in dire circumstances (Hmelo-Silver, 2004). Despite my suggestions for engagement and involvement, the students remained divided in their approaches to social topics and text.

The most seemingly cohesive unit was the Ghetto perspective group, who professed that they encountered few obstacles in their devising process. Despite having one member habitually absent, they equally shared writing tasks, collaborating on major sections and characterization issues to complete their sections. Martijn Zomeren, Russell Spears, and Colin Leach (2008) state that racial affiliation among members of collective units leads to strong group identity and working cohesion, which may explain the relative success of these students. They were the only truly collectively functioning group to do so, creating a much more personally connected and group-oriented piece than did others. With that said, the overall ghetto perspective was not a thematic notion that bonded most group members. Individuals enjoyed the topic as parody, but they did not believe themselves strongly joined to its point of view. A few team members later admitted that while they enjoyed the humor of the stereotype, they could not speak to the greater realities of ghetto lifestyles.

The three groups didn’t necessarily want to re-tell the Tempest tale continuously throughout the project when slamming their story sections together. Class members suggested that different groups be responsible for various scripting portions. Overlap would be permitted so long as it was explained properly to audiences to prevent confusion. Students introduced the narrator convention, with one accompanying every story to clarify or argue in favor of a certain perspective.

To speed the final devising phases, I took the student script sections and placed them exeunt and unedited within a logical but loose framework so that further production work could
continue. The script demanded staging for a live audience, so a casting process occurred, but instead of a single, traditional director assigning roles, one person from each group contributed ideas for character parts in an attempt to maintain equity between the teams (Orr, 2010). However, Tabernero et al. (2009) warn that without presence of a strong, task-oriented leader, collaborative work becomes stagnant and ineffective, lacking in satisfying and meaningful results for members. When all the students reconvened as a large assembly for final devising sessions, the cultural fractures of collaborative inexperience with diverse partners became more apparent, a notion that Sue Wright & Denis Lander (2003) have observed. Veils of politeness quickly fell away amid joint frustrations and personal disinterest, as indicated among my students in a focus group discussion:

CASSIE: We would've gotten to sit down and write what we wanted to write. And everybody else would've been just as serious about it. Not necessarily whatever group I was in, but all the groups would've been serious about it. And not just, "Oh, I have to do this because I need a grade," which is totally what happened with Ray-Ray and the Black Girls. I mean, at least our group put in an effort, kind of. Because we really did want to perform it. At least with our script, it was punctuated correctly and things are spelled correctly and, you know, it might not have been the best thing ever written on paper, but it was grammatically correct and spelled correctly and we had most of the components we were required to have and stuff like that so... (Focus group, Duct Tape Bandits, May 23, 2011)

I find it interesting that Cassie, whose Rocker group had the most devising difficulties, openly attacked the Ghetto team who had a far more cohesive story line and stronger member
relationships. She had no interest in delving deeper to understand the other perspective and remained at surface level with her critique, commenting on grammar, punctuation, and storyline without attempting to interrogate other significant issues. Trainor (2005) emphasizes that status quo students may feel threatened by the inclusion and success of diverse narratives that question the position of Whiteness within traditional learning spaces.

The students’ lack of ability to function effectively in collaboration revealed itself most fully in the final phase of the project. Many students felt the production was unfairly cast despite having representation from each group in choosing roles. Most worked cohesively during the initial read-thru and walking rehearsals with the collided script, but because we were confined to the media center, we experienced the sensation of contrived unity. Once in the theatre, the collective cracked once more into social communes and students appeared to ignore the collaborative demands of the devised project, a characteristic Wright & Lander (2005) have observed. During the concluding days of the semester, I took a more directorial stance, although I had no artistic influence on the performance piece. I had not discovered any precedents created by instructional models or strategies for this dramatic method and was uncertain of how to proceed most effectively. Daily prodding and questioning students into action, I realized I was overstepping my social justice position, but I feared that the work would remain unperformed. As Eric Park and Verlin Hinsz (2006) warn, the teens who fight the difficulties of ambiguity and risk-taking want to totally deflect their working responsibilities, and in the case of this project, they wanted to cancel the two live performances for the English classes. Despite the raw elements within the barely rehearsed piece, the collaborative student project was staged nonetheless for audiences for reported mixed reviews on the experience.
Ultimately, the group work within the Drama III & IV class appeared undecided about the results concerning success or failure of their performance. Barfield (2003) suggests that students have training in effective team collaboration beyond simplistic instructions from teachers and other adults, but we did not engage in such measures within the project. The safety of the team membership had benefits, including social interactions and group affiliations (Park & Hinsz, 2006), which caused individuals to become more insular and close-minded in their collective involvement and even possibly aggressive in their group power structure (Wright & Lander, 2006). The Rocker team reported that they felt bullied and oppressed by the dominant actions of the larger Hipsters with their ten-member clan and longer, more interrelated story section. I had previously spoken with them on these concerns and how they might assert ownership of their writing, but had not conversed with the entire class collective on this subject, a missed opportunity for disruptive dialogue. While no one else claimed encounters of outright or perceived dominance, it was troubling to experience social injustices among drama students and in dramatic spaces that I had expected to confront elsewhere, further evidence of my researcher bias that drama classes are somewhat immune to prejudicial situations. Greene (1995) emphasizes that groups of learners do not appear spontaneously or forcefully; rather, communities develop when participants discover commonalities through conscious awareness and work collaboratively toward shared goals.

Student Ownership and Agency

While the notions of student ownership and agency emerged as a significant pattern within the course of the study, they cannot be truly compartmentalized into a single section. Personal involvement with the project and learning engagement, in general, were woven
throughout all aspects of the work and played pivotal roles in the drama space and in the academic lives of the students beyond theatre. Based on the personal nature of devised theatre labors and the themes that teens previously discussed concerning the project, I believed at the outset they would seize immediate possession of the piece and that motivation and urgency to create would sustain them throughout the semester’s progress. However, I did not factor the other influences of standardization, social and cultural divides, and the lack of collaborative ability into the equation when we began. Darling-Hammond (2009) cautions that when such elements are not addressed or at least acknowledged within schooling spaces student learning may be greatly diminished because of institutional disconnections. These issues profoundly affected the student devisers in manners I was not anticipating.

Within class discussions, it appeared that all students were able to initiate ideas and negotiate plans for collaboration, especially after the introduction of the talking and rebuttal flowers. In general consensus, the students agreed that if an individual desired to argue a point or disagree on a course of action, an opinion could be voiced instantly and for the benefit of the whole group or not at all. Unfortunately some students did not take into consideration the delicate balance of personal relationships nor the perceived influences and experiences of various members that chosen not to trouble the status quo (Barfield, 2003; Wright & Lander, 2005). Some students felt oppressed even after the class collective dissolved into smaller groups. Greene (1995) states conversation cannot occur within an environment lacking in hope and respect, and the critical and aesthetic thinking strategies might converge to overcome oppressive situations. The students in this study believed the reduced size of the working circles would lend more freedom and decision-making to individuals who considered their ideas belittled and
discredited by the larger class or by certain members specifically (Block, 2008). However, the following focus group conversation indicates their lack of agency:

KENNEDY: Some people didn't like it because not all of the scripts were theirs.

KATE: Exactly.

KENNEDY: It had pieces of ours they didn't like, and it had pieces of the other group they didn't like.

STEPHEN: Yeah, but I mean, that's just sort of in general, I mean that there's going to be lots of stuff that people won't agree on in one single script.

KENNEDY: Yeah, but that didn't matter at all. The show didn't go their way; they weren't happy with it.

STEPHEN: I don't know, I don't see that part.

CASSIE: No, it was if I am going to do something creative and write something, I want to do it my way, I don't want to have to listen to other people's crap.

KATE: Yeah, that was the problem.

CASSIE: Yeah, because after a while we were just kind of like, “Your ideas suck!”

KATE: Yeah, kind of like what Cassie was saying to you for writing something, I would rather have somebody tell me what to do. I mean, if there is something really important that somebody wanted to keep in the play and they would've said something, then I wouldn't mess with it. I mean, there's times when you’re leaders and times when you’re followers.

CASSIE: I mean, I personally felt that there were some parts that I wanted to leave and say, "Hey, that's mine, don't touch it." But then a lot of people were like well some of us
are feeling that way too so. And it was just like it was too much of everything. And then that was the end of that. (Focus group, Duct Tape Bandits, May 23, 2011)

Despite professing drama to be an open-minded environment with relatively few roadblocks to personal expression and creative experience, some students were fairly disinterested in understanding other classmates’ perspectives and ideological positions. Melisa Cahnmann-Taylor and Mariana Souto-Manning (2010) note that theatrical participants may desire disengagement with the creation process as they experience conflict and ambiguity, however facilitators may encourage continued involvement with diverse perspectives to experience wider world views. As the project progressed, most students even disregarded their own points of view and standards of quality in favor of simply completing the performance piece and being rid of the process of devised theatre.

The actual writing of the collaborative piece elicited more questions than answers concerning students and ownership. From a document or contextual analysis standpoint, the selections seem deceptively simple. Three groups developed from the class discussions whose members appeared to have social affiliations with one another (Lei, Kuestermeyer, & Westmeyer, 2010). The groups were exploring a hipster, neo-individualistic hippie vibe, a stereotypical ghetto cultural Black perspective, and a classic rock, battle-of-the-bands point of view.

Of all the small group collectives, the Hipsters gave me the most pause. I imagined they would have an extremely strong team-devised piece in which multiple voices would discuss the myriad of topics they had earlier believed as integral issues within the school and student body. What was ultimately presented for the process contained the voice of a single author who neither
questioned the status quo that the students supposedly contested, nor was the voice highly personal to the team, encouraging deep involvement and group pride. The sections mocked the notion of Hipsters and the pseudo-beatnik culture, and while the writing—crafted almost completely by Shaniqua—was identifiable and clever to the team, it did not evoke anything other than a surface loyalty. My assumptions of this group’s imaginative collective was challenged in that I believed these participants would have the most success due to their increased involvement with dramatic studies. Greene (1995) cautions teachers and students against shallow engagements with learning and social topics; individuals may appear involved with significant issues, but they may decontextualize experiences and do not make substantial connections. When I questioned the group concerning their decision, most felt they had made an intelligent choice because Shaniqua truly enjoyed the scripting character and dialogue process and all stated she had performed an exemplary service in keeping the piece cohesive. However, from a researcher’s standpoint, it seemed that while the Hipsters came together socially to diffuse the risk of failure across member involvement (Park & Hinsz, 2006) and divided responsibility, they gave away their ownership of the project rather than navigate the complexities of ambiguous issues (Roberson, 2011). For them, Shaniqua appeared to have some sort of direction, and in the absence of formal leadership or direct instruction, her writing impetus was just the excuse that many needed to disengage with the difficulties and personal reflections of open-ended learning experiences.

The “Black ppl” team unified around the single ghetto viewpoint inspired from Zona’s suggestions of the Friday movies. Two interesting negotiations occurred because of this choice: Jaime, a young Black woman who originally belonged to the team left in favor of the Hipsters as
she was unfamiliar with the aforementioned films and had no desire to view them to provide a contextual reference. She discloses her refusal to engage with the project perspective:

JAIME: If I had stayed with Ray-Ray and the Black Girls, my butt would have been doing all the work. And that’s how it’s been, so no. And I still haven’t seen *Friday*. I just don’t want to do it. And even though it’s really, really ghetto, and I could do it, I uh, I just—I kind of feel bad, because I still haven’t seen the movie, which means I really haven’t done the work to get into it … *Whispers* And I just really don’t want to see the movie. (Jaime, personal communication, May 4, 2011)

The second issue arose concerning the group’s decision to adhere to the stereotypical umbrella regardless of Zona’s lack of participation. As the project concluded, Alisa and Tammara revealed that, like Jaime, they had no personal connection to the notion other than as entertainment. In fact, they actually resented any parallels drawn by others that linked them to the story’s subjects:

STEPHEN: Hey, what do you want your characters to wear for your section?
ALISA: I don't know. Wear whatever you want. I don't care.
STEPHEN: Okay, but I'm not sure what type of stuff to …
ALISA: It doesn't matter, just wear whatever.
STEPHEN: Yeah, but I don't know if I have anything that would be, you know, kind of ghetto.
ALISA: Look, I don't wear any of that stuff, so just use whatever you have and figure it out. (Class observation, May 19, 2011)

Zomeran, Spears, and Leach (2008) reveal that students may continue with the initial perspective arc despite personal misgivings, a characteristic identified as community. However, apparently
based on their close group identities, the “Black ppl” students exhibited group cohesion, and well-being appeared more important than individual dissatisfaction. No blame was leveled at any one individual, regardless of stated disconnection; no one was labeled a freeloader or accused of not working to his or her fullest potential (Orr, 2010). According to Parks and Hinsz (2006), students function collaboratively for either strength to complete complicated projects, or for safety to protect against the negative consequences of irresponsibility. Similarly, the participants in this group used their collective status as an asset to showcase joint writing selections and personal creations concerning the script.

Unlike the Ghetto perspective, the Rocker group had challenges accepting accountability for any happenstance or decision that occurred during the project. Particular students felt their agency threatened when personal production concepts were vetoed or discounted in class discussions. Kennedy and Stephen felt especially slighted when the mention of zombies and ninjas within the script was ridiculed by various students. Even after the class collective formed their socially-related teams, these students were deeply affronted by the negative reactions to their devising ideas and remained stalled in their creative processes as a result. Eisner (2005) and Greene (2009) agree that developing art-based works is difficult, and functioning with these genres effectively requires patience and practice. Engaging with process is integral to understanding collaborative identity and the eventual creation of a unified product (Lei, Kuestermeyer, & Westmeyer, 2010). The Rocker individuals continued to be imaginatively paralyzed, lacking self-confidence in their expressive work, and they desired strong leadership to shape the direction of their attempts, needing or wanting a task-oriented rather than a relationship-oriented figure, a concept discussed in Tabernero et al. (2009).
Discussing the Hipster perspective has proven difficult because, while they embodied the most experienced and traditionally the most dedicated students in the drama department, their project involvement was the most puzzling and disappointing. While these particular individuals appeared to take the most initial ownership in the project, they eventually lost interest in the process and quietly refused to battle with the ambiguities and open-ended solutions that characterize real-world issues. I considered that the negative effects of multi-media engagement as suggested in Greene (1995) may have counteracted the students’ imaginative and collaborative processes. The participants’ preoccupation with burgeoning forms of personal technology created obstacles to collaboration and project engagement, not only in their groups but among the other participants. Instead of becoming insular, Freire (1999) poses learners use their social clout as members of the dominant status quo in the drama space and act as exemplars for educational liberation, aiding other students in discovering their own freedoms. Instead, the participants placed their agency with a single group member rather than explore the complexities of devising as an engaged collective. Scott Roberson (2011) states that American students want more control and choice in their educations but do not necessarily know how to go about obtaining them. The Hipster collective enjoyed the autonomy of the devising notion but grew apprehensive and frustrated with what the actual process entailed concerning original production in equitable functioning teams. Greene (1995) proposes that projects of an ambiguous nature are inherently difficult and frustrating, but with proper guidance such continued engagements may result in self-reflection and imaginative questioning of self and space, ideals only partially observed in the project.

None of the students in any group investigated the discussion topics in the play’s text or
in their personal short pieces. They struggled imaginatively with the synthesis of the storyline and their individual and group contributions, seemingly unable to stretch creative character and plot to suit their needs and perspectives. As the project continued, the participants became increasingly detached from their work as they had no authentic investment tied to it, a concept discussed in Roberson (2011). Some of the students requested an alternative assignment or play to produce, but I struggled with the notion of “just in time” facilitation (Hmelo-Silver, 2004) because a delicate balance is desirable to keep collective groups challenged yet engaged. Webb et al (2009) claim that this rescue technique illuminates pathways to greater levels of problem-solving and conflict resolution. However, I am still divided about whether I assisted students with valuable collaborative skills and motivational dynamics or if I inadvertently allowed them to fail.

While the students may perceive that this product failed to meet both their and my expectations, I consider that they learned a great deal about their unrealistic perceptions of time frames, believing that a last-minute effort would yield successful results. Some of their reflections indicate that they now realize the effects of this procrastination; therefore, learning has occurred. The statement, “Just tell us what you want!” reflects their realization that their choices affected them negatively (Wright & Landers, 2005). Admittedly, the teens did not reach depths of dramatic creation and understanding that I initially anticipated; however, they do report gaining knowledge concerning collaboration and personal ownership of work. While I may have disappointed or failed my students in this particular project, the lessons that I continually learn from the study data and reflections on past experiences serve to enlarge the boundaries of my emerging social justice mindset.
How Might Teacher Researchers, Drawing from Self-Reflective Personal and Classroom Experiences, Develop into Social Justice-Minded and Culturally Aware Practitioners?

A measure of the project’s difficulty originated in the tensions of the teacher/researcher paradigm. An educator plays several roles in an action research study of this manner, which complicates the classroom space and possible findings. At times, I experienced the pressures and responsibilities of my positions and did not know which function ought to take precedence. One needs to experience those tensions, Greene (1995) suggests, in order to provide students the opportunity to exceed traditional limits of education and society.

Teacher/Researcher Lessons on Social Justice Perspectives

Throughout the course of the study, I confronted many situations that tested my mettle concerning student engagement and agency within classroom spaces. At the opening of the study, I believed that my advanced acting students whom I taught for several years were in no particular need of internal questioning or reflection. I considered myself the eager teacher of Greene’s (1995) writings, the instructor who motivates students to discover their agency by helping them question. Their liberation was secure in that they were gifted learners who had chosen to take Drama III & IV and had professed to being open and unconventional in their approaches to collaboration and classroom conversation. Therefore, I initially determined that the project would focus upon the social ills and discriminations the students experienced at school, in spaces other than dramatic ones. It never occurred to them, or to me, to gaze within ourselves and our sacred spaces for answers before venturing out beyond the theatre walls to investigate school issues.
I considered creating an autobiographical section in the work to parallel my journey with the students’ process of theatrical creation. The enormity of this strand, however, caused the study to be cumbersome in size and unfocused in purpose. My original intent was to remain uninvolved as a direct instructor unless absolutely necessary while briefly admitting my assumptions and biases as a researcher. The initial scope of the project did not include an active interrogation of my role as a teacher/researcher because I did not presume my presence or voice would affect the students. I had wanted to remain an observer, or as Greene (1995) purports, an accidental tourist who happens upon off-chance experiences. I would not function as a tour guide who plans specific events and moves a trip forward; I would remain a recorder and analyzer, attempting to remain objective and somewhat detached from the students’ devised processes. I considered maintaining the integrity of the students’ work while not interjecting my own grand researcher narrative, as Connelly and Clandinin (1990) caution concerning the creation of qualitative research stories. Ely et al. (1999) also maintain that ethical writing be built on the original data provided by participants and not re-invented to reflect a researcher’s singular dogmatic mission. I could have reformatted my students’ work into a neatly and conclusively packaged study that illustrated the positive power of dramatic classes on teens and their school environment. However, I determined to avoid simplistic and clichéd endings and resolved to look beyond generalizations within the process and product dichotomy of high school theatre.

Communication Breakdowns and Parallels

When students began revealing the depths of their disconnection to each other and the devising process, I remained understanding yet felt disappointment. Adult performers and professional production teams have difficulty creating original pieces in-house using
collaborative techniques, and for that reason, Oddey (1994) comments, few companies actually commission their own works. Initially, I was frustrated by the outcome of the students’ work, and could not immediately ascertain the nature of their creative breakdown. I imagined what I might have created as a collaborative deviser, all the connections I would have made with the characters, and the unique twists I might have added to plot and scene styles. Multiple imaginative minds were present in each group, so why did the teens appear so paralyzed and uninspired by the project? Why couldn’t they work through their mental blocks and use the strength of their groups to develop their collective imaginations? Perhaps the students believed they had arrived at an impasse because their sense of community was missing. Greene (1995) suggests that community among teens is created when their imaginations work together for common goals concerning similar ideals, but my students commented in interviews and focus group discussions that they remained separated by their personal ideals for writing despite being in group settings. Few students wanted to openly defend their writings except for the de facto lead authors of each collective. The teens appeared more content to acquiesce their personal commentary to others as long as the project was ultimately completed.

I continued to be unsettled by the students’ lack of ownership and agency, and I reflected on what I might have done to stall their process. In hindsight, I realize, the participants needed more guidance with devising and collaborative group work, but I was initially concerned that my involvement in their process would allow undue influence in their work, thus affecting the social justice aspects of the project. On the other hand, if I had provided more concrete examples of devising beyond their previous experiences with Collision theatre work, the students may have been more successful. Kieler (2010) discusses her work with classroom students and admits
similar shortcomings; she wanted learners to create digital stories using various forms of media and technology but failed to introduce prior knowledge, previous lessons, or personalized topics that engaged the class. Likewise, I was energized by the concepts concerning devised drama and its social justice possibilities but did not scaffold assistive devices into the project for my students.

I attempted to find parallels with the students in our learning and community building practices to better understand where breakdowns in communication and imagination had occurred. The majority of the students in the Drama III & IV class were seniors approaching graduation, which would take them from the familiar routine of public school. I was finishing a doctoral degree with a qualitative research project and also felt as if I were ending a scholarly era. The students experienced roadblocks in devising and collaborating, and I considered what similar obstacles I had encountered that caused me to doubt my abilities as a teacher, as an artist, and as a researcher. If I could discover connections among my shortcomings and the students’ disengagement, I was progressing towards a more socially just mindset.

In March of the spring semester, I had several disagreements with an assistant principal who questioned with my teaching methods and curricular choices. Dr. Randall had informed me that when my class performances in the Fine Arts Building conflicted with his need to use the facility for End of Course Testing and graduation testing, I would be required to reformat my plans for several days to accommodate the assessment schedule. I asked him if he placed more importance on testing than on the fine arts program; Dr. Randall responded simply, “Yes.” The quantitative results of testing were preferred over the longitudinal and affective results of aesthetic learning. Students experience immediacy within exam scores but often fail to connect
with numbers that are not explained to them or deeply disaggregated on an individual basis. Schools may investigate scoring according to sub-groups or at-risk populations, such as Black, Latino, disabled, or socioeconomically disadvantaged students. Learner needs are addressed through group generalizations or classifications and are rarely discussed with individual pupils, a trend discussed in Darling-Hammond (2009). This situation illustrates the role that social justice might play in opening spaces for aesthetic arts classes that are generally overshadowed by state mandates and high-stakes testing. The encounter left me frustrated concerning our administrators’ lack of knowledge on fine arts programs and their importance within the general school curriculum.

This situation appeared to me to have direct connections to social justice and the drama students’ feelings of frustration and their lack of ownership. Just as I felt disempowered by administrators who are the school leaders tasked with assisting teachers through instructional developments, my students felt betrayed by their fellow performers, by the school hierarchy, and by me as their teacher. The institution charged with students’ educational growth and well-being was instead distilling their learning into a series of written exams and multiple choice assessments that did not address individuals needs or interests. Apparently I did not know my students well enough to grasp their educational requirements, a notion that Greene (1995) purports may reduce student learning to classifications. The current school improvement plan (SIP) for Greenview High focuses on raising tests scores and increasing graduation rates; it does not mention creating learning connections for students or activating prior student knowledge. Instructors in such environments may investigate educational methods for disrupting the status quo, as suggested by hooks (1996), and construct spaces in which students question and reflect
upon institutional shortcomings.

The failure of the project, or more so the collaborative process, was my responsibility. The students were unprepared for the difficulties of devising effective group work, and I, believing they already possessed that knowledge, did not develop a strong collaborative model for their educational process. I realized that I could not give my students the freedom or agency in their learning that Freire (1999) purports; that I might have worked with them to create conversational moments that would push the boundaries of comfort. Greene (1995) suggests that teachers intentionally experience the pain of ambiguity and unease as vehicles for deeper questioning and self-reflection. I needed to explore my personal biases and past histories to better understand my shortcomings in this project and continually interrogate my educational and social positions. I needed to become a learning bridge between my students and aesthetic and social justice experiences in the classroom space to guide them towards ownership and agency.

Prior Assumptions: Outside Looking In

In terms of master narratives, I realized that I had immediately considered myself an insider in the project and did not initially feel the need to reflect personally on past learning or current assumptions. I knew my students and myself as an educator well enough to forego basic questioning and team-building activities that I might use in different classes with younger less experienced actors. Based on my extended relationship with many of the Drama III & IV teens, I overlooked important collaborative concepts and social justice conversations that I imagined we had already addressed in other situations. Because of these oversights, I did not directly discuss important issues concerning culturally relevant pedagogy and imaginative communication with students. Some individuals commented during focus groups about feeling oppressed by certain
class members during focus group conversations and concluding interviews, but they did not raise these concerns in the larger collective discussions during the project. As the teacher, I could have required that the students engage in discussions on observed learning issues and avoided social topics, but I thought that such pointed intervention would affect the students’ power to direct the project. Greene (1995), however, recommends that teacher/researchers involved with social justice studies confront situations of controlling performance outcomes or leaving students to their own devices. While Freire (1999) maintains that members of the status quo are obligated to engage directly with marginalized individuals, these connections complicate the researcher and participant dynamic.

Again, part of my reticence to directly guide students in the devising process and social justice learning stems from the marginalization of certain aspects of my identity. Drama courses are considered electives in the curricular matrix, which allows registration numbers to easily exceed 40 students per class. Fine arts courses are also juxtaposed to AP classes, so students must choose between an aesthetic class or one that may offer college credit. Additionally, I am a female teacher working with many technical elements that are usually considered male-appropriate tasks. I function as a carpenter, a lighting and sound technician, as well as a scenic designer for most production elements within major performances. Because I am the one-act play director, the Georgia High School Association (GHSA) also considers me a head coach, a role traditionally reserved for men.

Given these comparisons, I initially considered myself in a culturally and socially neutral position, a precept Howard (2007) and Wise (2000) suggest White, middle class educators often assume. My upbringing in a Northern state and my relationships with diverse populations at a
young age did not preclude me from having to recognize my heritage and my identity. Though I am very comfortable around students of Color, I appear as the stereotypical representation of the dominant social power structure in America. Giroux (1997, 2005) states that White educators may ignore the effects of their cultural privilege in the classroom in attempts to connect with students or avoid race as an instructional issue. Drama, music, and visual arts allow me to connect with students on a personal level that transcends traditional textbook instruction. While I may empathize with students in oppressive situations, I cannot truly understand their individual circumstances because I am not from their backgrounds or communities. As Greene (1995) notes, one could not remove her identity and her experiences from study as they are relevant to the questioning stance, despite their complex and untidy nature. If I ignore conflicts or negative issues in my work, I am creating future obstacles which may further inhibit my journey with diverse students. I assumed with the Drama III & IV teens that I knew them well enough to relate on deep, internal levels, but the biographical stories they shared and their overall progression in the devising project illustrated that I did not.

I grew up surrounded by gospel music, rhythm and blues, and classic rock music. By the time I was nine, I was soloing in a racially mixed church choir led a Black Southern pastor, who also served as the congregation’s pianist. My brother is a rock n’ roll and blues guitarist, and our conversations usually start with him shouting over the phone, “Wazzup, Cracka’!” This telephone greeting illustrates our surface attempts to identify with the Other. In our blue-collar family, we were taught to hate racism and prejudicial attitudes and to treat all individuals with respect as equals. More correctly, we were taught indirectly to avoid racist questioning and open appearance of prejudicial dispositions.
This past summer while driving through the lower income sections of my upstate New York hometown, my mother mentioned that older apartment houses were being demolished to make way for new housing. Several streets close to downtown were lined with old family manor homes built during the 1910s and 1920s that were later converted into apartments. Many individuals and families living in these residences are the working poor, subsisting on welfare in generational poverty or making slightly more money than what qualifies for government assistance. My mother commented that these new homes would be shortly destroyed by the “trashy riff-raff” and habitual “porch monkeys” who would shortly occupy them. Again, as Wise (2000) suggests, this mindset is indicative of White middle class power that assumes all individuals have equal opportunities to succeed within society and capture the illusive American dream. As we drove past the broken down stoops and papered windows, I wanted to ask her if she thought people in poverty wanted to live in such circumstances. Did she truly believe all these people were simply lazy and content with a welfare check, that their current existence rife with crime and hunger was ideal for both them and their children?

I did not start that conversation. I rationalized that as I only see my family once a year, I attempt to keep visits friendly and stress-free and without thoughts of social responsibility or personal obligations to others. This situation forced me to realize that I lead two existences: one in which I have avoided the self and society when surrounded by Whiteness, and the other in which I confront my identities and social power regularly in order to be an effective educator of diverse students. In writing about situations of this nature, as Greene (1995) poses, we embrace our identities and open ourselves to greater learning possibilities. I write about these situations to
externalize experiences rather than constantly internalizing or even repressing uncomfortable interactions.

_Gifted Education Training_

One of my most significant lessons concerning the project occurred well after the participating students had graduated. I began the process of coding and analyzing my data and constructing frameworks for Chapters Four and Five. I originally imagined Chapter Four and its findings would be written as an ethnodrama, but after working with the script for several months, I realized that I needed a more concise vehicle for my research. I didn’t struggle so much with the writing format as with the findings and themes within the data and what it could represent for the nature of dramatic teaching.

I have partially completed the gifted program and feel it is re-inventing how I instruct not only my gifted students but all learners in my classroom. Initially, I believed that the courses would be fairly simplistic and straightforward, much like my personal experiences with honors and AP classes had been as a high school student. My first class, however, emphasized that gifted students are extremely diverse in their abilities and learning styles, with many individuals being unrecognized as advanced learners until middle or high school. Davis and Rimm (2004) discuss several classifications of gifted students who do not conform to traditional notions of talent and ability.

While I had friends of Color in high school, the majority of my advanced coursework classmates were middle and upper class White teens with similar learning styles and similar cultural and social privileges. My drama students, though no less gifted or talented, have very diverse educational, cultural, and social experiences that do not align with conventional
giftedness. Their learning needs are also very dissimilar from status quo gifted students, and as they may require assistance in navigating the dominant classroom discourses and teaching methods present within advanced programs, a concept Davis and Rimm (2004) clarify.

I was transferring or projecting my classroom learning experiences in honors and AP classrooms onto my students and creating assumptions concerning their abilities and project preparedness. I constructed a bias maintaining that gifted students needed as much independence as possible, required very little instruction scaffolding or modeling, and could be simultaneously creative and driven within the outline of classroom projects. As a student, I did not truly encounter diverse opinions and perspectives, unstable living situations, or socio-economic stressors. My students’ lives in a racially and culturally diverse southern high school in 2011 compared very little to my experiences in a White majority northern institution in 1996. My endorsement classes reiterate the students’ need for deeper involvement from an instructor, on both social justice and curricular levels. I could not provide students with the correct pathway to a successful devised piece; no such creation exists as Oddey (1994) suggests that it would negate the collaborative purpose of devising. However, the participants did require more guidance concerning structural models and functioning in effective groups, I finding I was not originally prepared to encounter. I believed that the students current involvement in gifted programs and advanced classes had already equipped them with the tools they required to succeed in a devised theatre situation. Greene (1995) and Delpit (1995) suggest this assumption is common and that teachers often believe that education is the great equalizer of all students despite equities in diverse students’ learning. Educators and other students of power groups, such as the shrinking White majority, do not see the unbalanced nature of hegemonic school relationships because our
privilege is partially based upon that inequity.

I was frustrated by this discovery so late in the dissertation data analysis and writing process. If I could have enrolled in the gifted program earlier in my career, the project outcome may have been much different and more successful for the student participants. A properly educated gifted instructor may have navigated students effectively through collaborative work and decision-making procedures. I am struck by the number of lessons and strategies embedded in the gifted program that would benefit all teachers, regardless of their students’ abilities. However, only full-time teachers of academic classes are invited traditionally into gifted cohorts each year, and of those individuals eligible, only four or five participate. Perhaps I was admitted because of my persistence with administrators as to the ultimate benefit of my learning on students and their achievement.

This situation illustrates that more professionally-equipped teachers may have gifted and advanced students, most of whom are White and middle class as they can successfully operate traditional school discourses. Ladson-Billings (1999) and Darling-Hammond (2009) emphasize that students of Color and lower achieving students are often assigned instructors who may not be as trained to educate diverse populations effectively. Again, Greene (1995) writes of all students having access to teachers who are culturally-informed, allowing educators to be their students’ connection to social justice and continued learning opportunities.

Significance of the Study

In terms of significance, the students still enjoy drama classes despite the friction and complexity of the devising process. They reported wanting to be in dramatic courses versus in a traditional academic class that was less expressive, creative, and receptive to their desires as
knowledgeable entities. The following reflective responses indicate students’ perspectives concerning dramatic courses:

RAY-RAY: I am able to express myself even when I am talking about things that are not so positive. I am just able to write it down or act it and get it out of me.

ALISA: I think it is kind of welcoming and you can just be yourself. I see right away is that you actually learn to listen and you cannot let things go in one ear and out the other. I feel like my opinion matters in this class.

CASSIE: There are points that you are so immersed in the character that outside reality ceases to exist and you just are that character, and it is the coolest thing in the world!

DESIREE: You sort of find out a lot of different perspectives, like I just love that we’ve got some gay people and learning their perspectives on stuff. When you talk to somebody else new, they give you some of this new stuff that you have never heard of.

NIKOLAS: In structured classrooms, you have a book or worksheet or your notes. But when you’re on that stage and you miss a line, you have nothing.

SHANIQUA: When you are shoved with knowledge and you are not allowed to say what you want or write what you want or do what you want; it is really frustrating. Drama allows us to learn and use our imagination and our minds the way we want to, and the way we feel we should.

AVA: Now, I’ll look at movies and other people’s plays in a different light now, after like I can’t just watch it and not think about it, I have to watch it and think about what they did to prepare for this and how I’ve gone through similar processes that they have.

JAIME: I love drama and I want to pursue this as a career. (Personal communications,
Many students even responded that they would attempt collaborative work again, because it prepared them to confront difficult issues and conversations with others. Several participants pictured the projects as a jumping off point for future creative pieces, possessing a deeper understanding on the importance of group dynamics, unified intentions, and personal ownership of a work. While these findings are encouraging, sparking students’ resilience dealing with complicated topics, they reiterate the importance of constant interrogation within fine and performing arts spaces. Amy Kraeche (2010) reveals the dangers of assumption and the standardization and de-personalization of the arts in discussing Texas’ state guidelines for updating aesthetic curricula. Within the new standards, art would be de-contextualized to objects or performances, completing discounting the political, cultural, and environmental influences on the artists. Because Texas functions as a windfall state in terms of national policy, other states could soon follow suit in reducing their fine arts programs to one-note classes intent on maintaining, rather than questioning, the status quo.

Another area of significance involved students in collaborative situations and the effectiveness of their project outcomes and group dynamics. By the time they have reached high school age, students supposedly have had hundreds of scholastic team experiences that instructed them in efficient collective endeavors. Current standards around the country emphasize skills and knowledge bases that could only be acquired while functioning with others, for example conflict resolution and shared project management. However, as the study highlights, current students, even those from AP, honors, and arts-based courses, struggle in collective situations. Roberson’s (2011) examination of the American Manager’s Association (AMA) wish list for incoming
employees includes a myriad of skills involving group dynamics, creative problem-solving, and diversity understanding. Very few experiences at the high school level traditionally interrogate students’ abilities to utilize those personal developments in everyday applications (Valquez Heilig et al, 2010). Given that the modern US education system currently caters to a bygone industrial era based upon an assembly line theory of narrow specialization, contemporary students are not being sufficiently prepared for a competitive global market.

The lack of agency and ownership of students in their daily learning illustrated a troubling disconnect between teens and high school education. The realities of the teenage experience paralleled with the outdated strategies and curriculum content of schools create a dangerous learning deficit. Increased standardization, the reduction of course electives and overall content reduced many subjects to a skeleton of basic canonical topics that do not address the complexities of diverse populations. The lives of the students are not represented in current textbooks or learning standards (Darling-Hammond, 2009); individual connections are non-existent in the wake of dominant discourses bent on maintaining the scholastic status quo. While the Drama III & IV devisers were definitely among the more creative and free-thinking students at Greenview High even they questioned their mettle and artistic abilities. The challenging, ambiguous situations developed throughout the project represented the authentic learning that frustrated and aggravated individuals to the point of disengagement, probably one of primary reasons we are plagued with standardized, easily scored assessments.

Implications for Policy

Given the findings of the study, several suggestions on policy concerning arts education may be made. Again, drawing from notions of Kraeche (2010), discussions entailing the fine and
performing arts be enlarged to encompass the changing landscape of school populations. Students in aesthetic classes have difficulty existing in a sterile bubble apart from the political, social, and cultural contexts that often serve to define and re-define them. The scope of the arts, specifically drama, might be widened in include the diverse representations of students, which would allow for deeper conversations regarding recent trends in school and classroom spaces. The narrowing of creative, synthesis, higher-order cognition in courses meant to be free-thinking and expressive signals a turn towards even more sterile subject matter in education.

At the district or building level, teachers of all disciplines require training in diversity, collaboration, and conflict resolution. Schools cannot ensure that students experience cultural diversity in their home lives, nor can educational institutions control individual incidences once students step into the halls of a large high school. Both Zamoren et al. (2009) and Wright and Landers (2005) emphasize that students of similar cultural and social beliefs tend to circulate together. In order to better facilitate the needs of these students, we need a greater understanding of cultural backgrounds and their effects on education (Howard, 2006). Training on teaching in diverse communities could include ongoing professional endeavors, sustainable beyond traditional “sit and get” sessions that result in the topic falling into ancillary status soon forgotten by budget cuts and waning interest (Singleton & Linton, 2006). Webb et al. (2009) examine teacher practices regarding student collaboration and report that the most effective educators are those with previous communication training, coursework not typical in standard college or university education programs. These teachers are better equipped to ask pertinent questions of student groups and probe into their processes without leaving them frustrated or co-dependent on the authority figure’s knowledge. Teacher training on diversity and collaboration may then
precipitate direct, explicit instruction for student team activities, which will immediately address their skill deficits (Delpit, 2005). Cahnmann-Taylor and Soutain-Manning (2010) use devised theatre strategies with professional development groups as a means of facilitating conflict resolution practices. Such methods, while unorthodox for teachers’ learning sessions, do not privilege one individual’s experiences over another’s, and may then be transferred for immediate student application in classroom settings.

Given the complex demands of a changing global society, students will require the soft skills outlined by Roberson (2011) from the AMA. Engaging in fine and performing arts classes is an effective method for potential acquisition of these skills. From an administrative standpoint, this practice would allow aesthetic classes to be more accessible to interested students. Rather than cut fine arts classes in favor of test prep and remedial classes (Spohn, 2009), offering classes on diverse arts topics could cognitively challenge students beyond multiple choice assessment measures. Course expansion could also open avenues to cross-circular activities in which the fine arts share equitable positions informing the development of various academic matters and skill sets. Zwirn and Libresco (2010) state through a combination of art and social studies teaching, more meaningful projects and document-based analysis are created, which afford more profound conversations in social justice and problem solving issues. However, dramatic classes might be honored as separate entities as well, with unique curriculum apart from conventional academics.

Currently, Georgia educators are working with new learning directives, Common Core Georgia Performance Standards (CCGPS). The previous GPS incarnations attempted to connect learning goals with performance-based goals that could demonstrate students’ development in
various subjects. The CCGPSs are similar in scope to the GPSs, but Georgia educational officials also endeavor to link them with other states’ learning standards. They believe that by adopting the mandates and practices of high-achieving states, then Georgia’s students will be more successful in a competitive national and international market. However, the English language arts teachers at Greenview High for example now provide the same mandatory readings and extended assignments per grade level, regardless of teacher preference or student interest. We remain uncertain of the students’ benefits concerning the new core curriculum or whether the CCGPSs will point to increasing standardization of learning across the state.

As of February 2012, Georgia qualified for the NCLB waiver concerning AYP, an action that nullified graduation rates and math and ELA test scores as the only indicators of academic progress and quality. In its place, the state will adopt the College and Career Ready Performance Index (CCRPI) which professes to be a more holistic examination of school development, taking traditionally excluded programs such as career teach and fine arts into the rating equation. It is currently unclear how the various components will be used in conjunction to create an encompassing snapshot of a school’s learning environment. However, arts classes will now be a measurable element in this scoring, and the inclusion of aesthetic courses into conventional curriculum has suddenly become very significant. This study supports the idea that students in aesthetic classes can be evaluated and provide an indication of a quality school that practices social justice. Conversely, the study might also be an indicator that arts classes might be conformed to the current model of standardized assessment to ensure that they meet expectations.

CCRPI
In June 2012, I worked at Greenview High as part of a technical support team for a math initiative sponsored by the State of Georgia’s Department of Education (DOE). The purpose of the three-day event was to introduce the new core curriculum standards to mathematics instructors from across the state. According to the presenters and the curriculum developers, the incoming standards will align Georgia more closely with math programs in other states that have high educational rankings. A speaker from the DOE maintained that while learning these new techniques and strategies would be initially challenging, the common core frameworks eliminate many learning shortcuts that often make understanding math difficult. He gave examples of the butterfly method in determining factions and percentages, and the foil method using quadratic equations; these popular routines help students obtain correct answers, but they do not teach them the logic behind the technique. Teachers with large classes often utilize the shortcuts of learning as a manner of imparting the knowledge of lengthy curriculum units quickly, and students have come to expect these strategies as learning aids.

Even in the arts, we reduce the complexity of projects to accommodate smaller budgets and greater numbers of students, but these lessons may be shallow learning experiences for teens. Within the devised project with the Drama III & IV students, I began to feel the pressures of time constraints to develop a measurable product for grading purposes as mentioned by Davis (2005). While the aim of the collaborative work concerned the process of devising and problem-solving rather than a finished presentation, administrative expectations dictate the need for tangible evidence that learning has occurred. Zomeran et al. (2009) conclude that assigning scores to group work proves difficult when determining each member’s specific contribution and level of engagement. I too experienced the weight of standardization on my curriculum in a classroom
space I originally believed was immune to outside negative influence. Lawmakers have waived AYP mandates for Georgia which allow other departments besides math and English to have more equity in students’ learning. The continued evolution of the College and Career Readiness Performance Index (CCRPI) may prove beneficial for fine arts programs, incorporating additional funding and resources to overcrowded classrooms. However, the new index currently does not list the arts as a separate curricular entity, and places it under the career and technical educational heading.

Reflections and Limitations

As the researcher, teacher, and facilitator for the project, I had difficulties remaining uninvolved, more in terms of a crisis of conscience allowing students to struggle in problem-solving endeavors. I personally needed more training with social justice pedagogical strategies, group collaboration, diverse populations, and conflict resolution, which may have greatly affected the outcome of team participation with devised theatre. While I have been with these students for several years, I have constantly reflected upon my position of power as a White, middle-class woman in a diverse teen population (Gonzalez, 2006), and question the ways in which my stance influences relationships and process.

My initial supposition of the students’ abilities and skills led to my incorrect assumption that they could tackle the ambiguities of a difficult, open-ended assignment. Despite having functioned within group configurations throughout middle and high school, the study members often floundered and disengaged with each other and the dramatic process. My inexperience with student devising and authentic collaboration activities affected the primary scaffolding and overall framework for teen play development and group interaction. Joe Norris (2009) outlines a
strategy under the devising arch called play-building in which provocative issues were investigated collectively then workshopped, scripted, and edited continuously for later performance. His work is similar to Saldaña’s (2005, 2011) in that it takes qualitative research and represents it dramatically through an arts-based approach. However, all participants in both texts were adults, with the youngest individuals being college-aged, so establishing a precedent for high school theatre projects has proven a complicated challenge. While Norris’ (2005) dramatic procedures did not fit my scholastic criteria, his precepts concerning team-building and textual creation could be modified to work for younger participants.

While using the Drama III & IV students in the research project appeared the logical choice, these eleventh and twelfth grade teens had personally perceived stressors that greatly affected their work. The pressures of graduating and specific course requirements often brought a few students to tears, distracting them to disconnection or mental paralysis. Some students felt that the polarity of high school ennui and the overwhelming frustration of four years did not soundly orient them for participation with a demanding, thought-provoking project. The original appeal of complete ownership and majority control attracted teens, but the reality of the commitment revealed an obvious dissonance confronting their logic. Simply put, they did not want to work that hard. A handful of students blamed the tangible phantoms of senioritis concerning their malaise and lack of discipline:

STEPHEN: We’re all in our own little cliques and we’re writing and we’re trying, and then you’ve just got overall kind of consensus aura thing that’s kind of just clouding everybody with “I just want to get out of here!” I think that’s the main problem—the senioritis. Yes, definitely. (Stephen, person communication, May 6, 2011)
KATE: Senioritis was a big factor. Basically it was we don't have lines, and we really
don't want to work that much, and we don't want to have to sit there and put lines in it.
Maybe it would have made a difference if we were still at the beginning of school and
you still are having fun in school, but then you get down to that last month and you're
like, "I don't care, whatever." We're about to leave anyway so it really doesn't matter.
(Kate, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

Others believed that given the various levels of engagements with the collaborative piece, the
outcome would have been the same, regardless of their status as graduating seniors:

NIKOLAS: I don't think it was really senioritis. I think it was people who were afraid of
not graduating, they had other things to focus on; for those of us who were in AP or
honors classes, who are unable to perform during certain periods and stuff because of
finals. I think if we would've started maybe even at the very beginning of the year writing
the piece and performed not around finals time, it would've had a lot more participation,
it would've had more intrigue and stuff. (Nikolas, personal communication, May 25,
2011)

As the teacher/researcher/facilitator of the overall project, I realized I had missed many
opportunities for social justice dialogue and instruction with my students. While my involvement
procedures embraced a research-based, hands-off approach, this sometimes led to attitudes of
apathy and disengagement that stands in opposition to social justice pedagogy. The following is
a list of points that details areas of unused prospects for students’ and teachers’ development:

• In attempting to allow students more autonomy in the devising process, I bypassed
  moments of social justice which may have led to discussions on racial, cultural, and
social issues.

- The project did not include exercises with team building or collaborative work as I assumed that students had had enough prior training with drama and in other academic classes during their scholastic years.

- The participants and I did not examine the internal relationships within the drama class and I did not explore the perceptions of drama as being a bastion of creativity and educational freedom.

- The participants may have needed modeling and encouragement to share their personal experiences with other members of the class and begin deeper dialogues of self, school, and society.

- I could have engaged students more actively in self-reflective practices and questioning stances of status quo demographics.

- I needed to understand and further investigate my influences as a White, female, middle class educator in the classroom and how these influences affected the work processes and relationship dynamics of my students.

- In an effort to complete the devised project, the participants and I overlooked the smaller, but ultimately more important social intricacies of collaborative study.

- The devised project required a more concrete and visible framework than I provided for the success of the student participants.

- Given the students' frustrations with open-ended problems and processes, I could have engaged them in additional conversations regarding standardization and its effects on creativity and imagination.
• My roles as teacher, researcher, and project facilitator required some solidification and reflection to more effectively engage students in the multiple levels of questioning and discovery within the study.

• I could have engaged students in Discussion of racial and cultural issues within personal writings and have them explain creative perspectives and choices.

• I might have conducted more reflection and research during the participant phase of the project to further explore and understand student disconnection with imagination and textual material.

• Class conversations could have been held as to my role in the project and how I could function within it most effectively.

• I might have encouraged class discussions of disliked elements of team writings and explanations.

• I needed to create stronger scaffolding and instructional strategies to build imaginative processes self-confidence in developing dramatic works.

Concerning limitations on conducting arts-based research of this genre, many facets of involvement must be thoroughly investigated. Devised theatre and ethnodramatic writings function best in place-specific circumstances (Ackroyd & O’Toole, 2010; Gonzalez, 2006) and attempting to reorient exact situations and predict group interactions can prove difficult. Participants craft pieces based upon experiences apart from or related to their high school environment. Every high school will house a unique audience, therefore presentations of collaborative works could vary greatly. Because project outcomes may be extremely interconnected with the intensity of commitment and creativity generated by the student devisers,
some researchers may avoid such involved study strategies. Eliot Eisner and Tom Barone (2012) repeatedly emphasize that for proper arts-based research to be undertaken effectively, it engages directly with the lives of the participants and speak to their personal experiences. This engagement is contingent upon the relationship between the teacher/facilitator and students. Most of the individuals had been in the drama program at least three years, and I was able to build rapport with them that an unknown researcher from an outside venue may find challenging and time-consuming. Nevertheless, my position as the drama instructor at Greenview did not ease development of the project over the span of a semester, despite working in the correct period allotments and learning objectives.

Although not a necessity for fine and performing arts investigations, researchers who are themselves artists or familiar with aesthetic work will prove valuable to the entire project. As a performer and director personally, I could better understand and partially anticipate my students’ struggles and attempt to move them indirectly into process, plot, and character questioning. Teachers or researcher unaccustomed to these practices may be intimidated by the breadth and depth of knowledge required to engage students in play analysis, scripting, or dramatic production. Goldstein’s (2012) example of enrolling in playwriting courses may appear extreme to those considering devised theatre work; however, financial strictures often dictate that the researcher plays multiple roles.

Time constraints of the school day and the academic year factored heavily into the project. Devisers may need longer daily work sessions, with accurate research demanding a longitudinal approach. I discovered that while the story scaffolding from The Tempest collision assisted the students’ efforts, a single semester was not time enough to fully develop their
process and conjoined scripts collectively. Nor did it allow the single researcher much time to observe and gather data within the context of the school day. Gallagher (2008) conducted dramatic studies with high schools in New York and Toronto and incorporated several graduate students as research assistants. This seems an ideal, though albeit slightly unrealistic, scenario for the theatre education practitioner undertaking action research in her classroom spaces.

Future Research

Studies concerning fine and performing arts and arts-based approaches might continue to interrogate their surroundings and community impact, especially within the field of high school dramatics. Many of the articles I reviewed reflected only the visual arts or music in secondary school settings (Beveridge, 2010; Graham & Sims-Gunzenhauser, 2009). Others that referenced theatre projects involved a college or adult participant base with very few nods to high school aesthetic work. In short, more critical and scholarly studies are needed for dramatic practice research to evolve positively. Most high school buildings include a band, choral, and visual arts programs, but theatre inclusion is not guaranteed.

Continuing my journey with devised theatre, my Drama II and Drama III & IV classes will participate in a formal Collision theatre (Elman, 2007) project later this academic year. The master teacher from the Alliance Theater who pointed me on the path to devising expressed great interest in working with local students as she recently retired from teaching high school. She and an additional playwright facilitator from Atlanta will be in residence at Greenview High for two months during the spring semester. The students will work directly with the Alliance instructors for two class periods weekly, and I will assist in facilitating and revising the remaining three class periods. Our textual explorations of a literary piece and our incorporation of original
writings will culminate in two class-devised productions that we will showcase for the student body in the spring. This collaboration with professional artists and writers provides expansion for our dramatic community and creates connections beyond the high school environment.

Explorations with devised productions and processes involving teen contributors require further discussion. Collaborative endeavors in which students act as playwrights, designers, publicists, and performers activate creative problem-solving skills beyond paper and pencil assessment or the delivery of memorized lines. Such interrogations also require studies specific to teen group work, diverse individuals in teams, and conflict resolution strategies (Roberson, 2011). Additional findings could be uncovered regarding advanced theatre work and the presumably soft skills and interpersonal abilities that allow students to function successfully in a changing global marketplace. Adolph Appiah (2006) emphasizes the importance of America’s transforming ethnocentric mentalities into cosmopolitan perspectives, which will broaden young sensibilities towards understanding and empathy of other cultures and societies. Under current educational trends concerning cutbacks in non-essential aesthetic programs, dramatic research must illustrate the necessity for innovative and collective curricula.

Additional studies are warranted in the area of teacher and/or researcher involvement with dramatic engagement as well. Hmelo-Silver (2004) states that teachers employing student collaboration and problem-based learning are expert learners and facilitators themselves, using a combination of modeling, coaching, and questioning strategies to encourage student dialogue and motivation. Their organizational scaffolding disintegrates as teens begin to assume more ownership of the problem-solving process. However, this work only addresses regular academic classes, which does not touch upon the notion of teacher as artist, director, or project leader. As
the teaching force in the U.S. is a White, middle class, female majority, educators in the performing arts are obligated to assess their own biases and social perspectives. Gonzalez (2006) admits the inequitable power of her White privilege in the classroom, and that misconceptions of diverse student cultures can create disengagement and animosity with students. However, this piece is only one of a select few available to educators interested in a culturally conscious dramatic classroom setting.

The works of Freire (1997, 2000) as a cornerstone of many social justice positionings requires critical examination with respect to partnerships with the fine and performing arts. While Freire inspired the emancipatory inclinations of Boal (1979) and dramatic technique as an anti-oppression strategy, his freedom-based tenets are reviewed by some as a bastion for male-dominated dialogue and intellectualism. Kathryn Weiler (2005) emphasizes Freire’s use of male pronouns in his writings, which have been re-translated to reflect a less prejudicial bent. She also examines the somewhat simplistic explanations he purported regarding equity in that gender issues and sexist policies were never discussed within Freire’s liberatory pedagogies. Weiler’s questions directly link to ownership and agency insomuch as students must feel that their struggles are noticed and their voices are heard—not relegated to secondary positions behind more seemingly important political and educational issues.

Greene’s (1995) writing also require interrogation because of its influence on my study. She is heavily influenced by Western European traditions and tends to espouse those conventions. While Greene does mention Black writers and female writers in her work, no other markers of diversity appear, however, she admits her cultural bias concerning her dominant discourse positioning. Greene shares a story of a young Black student being disconnected in
class discussions of White European audiences, and her initial affront to his reaction. William Pinar (2005) notes Greene’s proclivity for and apparent favoring of Western art is problematic for the multicultural education paradigm, especially concerning aesthetic arts studies. Again, such seminal epistemologies might be re-visited and questioned for social and contextual accuracies or they run the risk of becoming rigid dominant discourses themselves.

Conclusion

The finale of the project has actually produced many more questions than answers. The findings discovered in the work of the Drama III & IV students has illuminated challenging, yet significant issues for future research in arts education and in high school curricula in general. Hmelo-Silver (2004) maintains that initial errors, incorrect knowledge, and constant ambiguity are integral for realistic and meaningful engagement in student learning experiences. Though no direct pathways to success were created, the study uncovered important themes of standardization, student collaborations and process, ownership and agency, and the interrogation of dramatic spaces, which pressure the equity of current educational values.

The devised performance piece did not embody the successful outcome originally anticipated by the participants—or by the researcher. However, this study was a work of social justice specifically because of its complicated conclusion. Greene (1995) states that learners experience emancipatory notions through aesthetic situations that require wider perspectives and imaginative constructs. Participants’ learning and question in such creative spaces is never completed or finished; the final objective may not an ever-stable and harmonious environment, but one in which individuals question themselves and their social and educational realities. Likewise, the students reacted to the production based upon their affinity for each other and the
overall work, speaking on their personal understandings and suggestions for more engaging collaborative projects in the future. Shaniqua comments encapsulates the purpose of an aesthetic arts project:

SHANIQUA: In a way, I am sort of grateful that our version of the Tempest fell flat. If all went smooth and well during the performance, I wouldn't have learned important knowledge that I would soon have to face in the real world. Lesson 1: You must make your vision as clear as possible. Lesson 2: To be confident in your voice. (Shaniqua, personal communication, May 24, 2011)

Maxine Greene (1995) writes extensively on the importance of imagination and the aesthetic, academic, and social dangers of allowing creativity to atrophy within the environments of students and teachers. Innovation and ingenuity are fast becoming the property of status quo conventions, which dictate a narrow, ethnocentric view of educational quality and success. As seen in the research study, even highly expressive and student-driven spaces, such as drama courses, are not immune from the effects of unrealistic and outdated learning goals. Despite the evolutions of a digitally dynamic, global society, America follows an agrarian school calendar, and educates its students for nineteenth century assembly line industrialization. Such an education does not aggressively include the arts as a significant portion of its schema. However, to prepare students for citizenship in a global society with skills such as intercultural communication and inter-relational leadership, connections with fine and performing classes are crucial. Thomas Friedman (2005) states explicitly on the necessity of aesthetic learning in American schools. “More than ever our secret sauce comes from our ability to integrate arts, music, and literature with the hard sciences” (p. 151). Interacting with dramatic sensibilities is
sometimes messy, ambiguous, and often uncomfortable, but these ties have the potential to
invigorate student engagement and ownership. Adult and teen learners must work closely and
with intended purpose to develop socially conscious processes and dramatic productions that
open aesthetic spaces and personal perspectives to constant questioning, meaningful
collaboration, and incredible creative possibilities.

“How beauteous mankind is! O brave new world, that has such people in it!”
— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*

“Be not afeard; the isle is full of noises,
Sounds, and sweet airs, that give delight and hurt not.
Sometimes a thousand twangling instruments
Will hum about mine ears; and sometime voices,
That, if I then had waked after long sleep,
Will make me sleep again: and then, in dreaming,
The clouds methought would open, and show riches
Ready to drop upon me; that, when I waked,
I cried to dream again.”
— William Shakespeare, *The Tempest*
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Appendix A

COLLIDED PERSPECTIVE SCRIPT

The Tempest, Act 1

Cast:

Master- Mitchell (hipster)
Boatswain- Bo (hipster)
Alanso- Tabitha (hipster)
Antonio- Toni w/ an “i” (Prospero’s brother)
Gonzalo- Gonzo (hipster)
Miranda- Miranda (confused hipster)
Prospero- Prospero (hipster, Starbucks Manager)
King of Naples- Mr. Pline (King of Hipsters)
Ariel- Ariel (Starbucks employee)
Caliban- Caliban (Distressed Starbucks employee)
Ferdinand- Ferdinand (Mr. Pline’s son, hipster)

Tempest crew

Connections: Masto and Mira are having an affair;
Ariel and Ferro have a baby. Ferro and Mira are together.
Ferro and Antwone are brothers.
Ariel: Ariel
Cali: Caliban
Ferdo: Ferdinand

Scene 1: *(Outside there is loud car noises as headlights flash in and out)*

*(Unseen)* Mitchell- Oh my God! My electric battery is dead!

Gonzo- I told you we should’ve got the mini cooper!
Ferdinand- No! Too many people already own that car

*(Outside of Starbucks, Bo is sitting at a table w/ a laptop and cigarette in one hand)*

*(Runs toward Bo from S.L)* Mitchell- Hey! The prius broke down in the street, but everyone is on their way. *(Exits to S.R)*

*(Bo reaches for phone to contact others)*

*(Enters from S.L)* Tabitha- Hey!

*(Quickly puts down his phone)* Bo - Hey! Are you guys okay?

Tabitha - Yeah, but we just heard Animal Collective on the radio! Now we can’t listen to them anymore.

*(Enters from S.L)* Gonzo- Don’t get so wound up man.
*(Begins to exit S.R)* Bo- Come on, let’s go grab some tea.
Gonzo- Alright, besides coffee is too typical to order at Starbucks.

*(All Exit)*

Scene 1:
*(They’re on the cruise and Ferro and Mira are stranded in the hood with no car, Pastor Nappy calms everybody down because the boat is about to sink, and Ferro is arguing with Mira about her and Masto’s affair.)*

Masto: Hurry up! And do work scrubs.
Sway: Don’t tell me to hurry up, you got us in this crap in the first place.

(Fonso enters)

Fonso: Shut up all that arguing and help me pull these ropes.

Antwone: We gone die. Lord help us please

Sway: Kill that noise man, stop worrying the people.

Fonso: We need help, can’t you see sway.

Sway: Of course I can see I ain’t blind ...I know you see those ropes over there.

Antwone: We still gone die, I don’t know why y’all trying.

Masto: might as well, we live in the ghetto.

(Pastor Nappy enters)

Pastor nappy: What’s all the fuss about, there’s a crack down in the pipe. We must move the boats off the ship to get everyone off safely.

Antwone: I say we all just jump off. You know what ima jump.

All say: NOOO!!!

Masto: Stop the foolishness Antwone , before you catch ah beat down.

Scene 2: (Miranda and Prospero begin to chat outside the Starbucks, sitting at the coffee table on the far right side of stage)

Miranda - Prospero, if you caused the mishap with the prius please put an end to it.

Prospero - Calm down. There’s nothing to get upset about. No harm was done. Everything I’ve done has been for you, Miranda. You don’t know what you are, since you don’t know who I am or where I come from or that I’m better than merely Prospero, your hipster friend who enjoys making people feel inferior because of my false taste in music and art.
Miranda - It never occurred to me to imagine there was anything more to know, I mean, I’m still trying to learn how to use Photoshop so I can take pictures of random items such as a bike and believe that it look like a piece of art.

Prospero - It’s time for you to know the whole story. Now give me a hand and help me with this beanie.

(Miranda removes beanie as Prospero begins to scratch his head)

Prospero - No so much hair on anyone’s beard was destroyed in the prius, you saw stopping. Sit down. It’s time for you to know more.

Miranda - You’ve often begin to tell me who I am, but then suddenly stopped, leaving me asking questions that never get answered.

Prospero - Can you remember a time before you became a hipster? I doubt it since you weren’t even here last year.

Miranda - Sure I can.

Prospero - Tell me anything you remember.

Miranda - My memory is hazy, more like a dream than a recollection.

Prospero - A year ago, Miranda, a year ago, I was an insecure nerd.

Miranda - Oh, it breaks my heart to think how painful it must be for you to recall this, things I can’t remember. However, please tell me more.

Prospero - My brother, Toni with an “i”, I trusted him at the time I was famous for my
education. Since I was so drawn into studying things like logic, physics, geometry and astronomy. I let control of my ego slide a bit. Are you paying attention?!

Miranda - *(On her cell phone)* Hang on, I’m updating my Tumblr.

Prospero - He won over the people that used to be mine, or changed them, remade them, you might say. Since he had control over the whole group and everyone in it, he soon made everyone sing his own song - which happened to be “Little Lion Man” - you’re not paying attention.

Miranda - *(excited)* Wait! Someone liked my comment on how overrated Lady Gaga is.

Prospero - Please listen. As I neglected practical matters, being totally dedicated to solitude and to improving my mind that I unwittingly stirred up evil wishes to my disloyal brother, my deep trust in him made him deeply untrustworthy, arousing within him a treachery as big as my trust was. With Toni possessing such hipster looks, he started to believe that he was the most individual hipster, like some liar who begins to believe in his own lie. To make his political performance perfect, he simply had to become the biggest fanatic in Indie culture. He’s so power hungry that he allies himself with the king of all hipsters, Mr. Pline

Miranda - Who?

Prospero - Mr. Pline, my archenemy, listens to my brother’s request, which was that the king, in exchange for respect and a Vampire Weekend Vinyl would get rid of me and make my brother a hipster instead. Toni then disowned us.

Miranda - Well then, how did we manage to become hipsters.

Prospero - With God’s help. We had a little knowledge about the counter culture that a guy from the hipsters, Gonzo, had given us out of the kindness of his heart. He also gave us clothes, nutella, and other necessities that have been of great help.
Knowing how much I loved my books, he gave me some philosophy books from Barnes and Noble that I value more than anything.

(He stands and puts on his beanie)

Miranda - But please, why did you conjure up this incident?

Prospero- You should know this my enemies have happened to wreck pruises in this Starbucks parking lot. Now no more questions. You look sleepy. It’s a nice, hazy feeling, so give into it. I know you have no choice.

(Miranda exits S.R)

Narrator: With the Battle of the Bands only two days away, many bands travel to Los Angeles in hope to with the half million-dollar prize. One band, The Blah Blah Blahs consisting of five members, excitedly packed up and started their adventure. Al, Sebastian, Toni, and Gonzalo take their van with the gear and Freddy has to drive another car. While Freddy get to Los Angeles with no trouble, we find the other four stuck in the middle of nowhere. Wanting to get to The Battle of the Bands, they just pick up their gear and keep walking.

Miranda: Father, look up there. There are people walking with instruments. They must be going to The Battle of the Bands. We should pick them up.

Prospero: I’m sorry sweetie, but there’s not enough room.

Miranda: There’s plenty of room. They can fit in the back and we can put there equipment on top of the roof.

Prospero: Sweetie, to tell you the truth. I sabotaged their van.

Miranda: (shocked face) Sabotaged, but why? Why do something so mean!

Prospero: Remember the year when my band, The Blind Panther, played at the Battle of the Bands?
Miranda: *(Nods)*

Prospero: Well, we did great! We won for three years running. It seemed we were unstoppable, until The Blah Blah Blahs showed up. They were young and stupid. With Ozzy and Alice Cooper as their idols, they rocked the stage! And needless to say beat my band, by one point on the score sheet. Afterwards, my band mates were so upset, they blamed it on me and kick me out. So I left with only with my guitar, and what was left of my pride.

Miranda: Oh Father! How awful it must have been for you! After all those years of hard work and loyalty, they just kick you out. I feel so horrible for you. I bet it's very painful to be my manager and take me to the Battle.

Prospero: *(smiles)* Hearing you sing makes it all worth it.

Miranda: I understand why to sabotaged them, but how did you do it?

Prospero: I had Ariel put sugar in their gas tank. *(Laughs)*

*(Ariel enters S.L.)*

Prospero - Come here, Ariel

Ariel - What do you want?

Prospero - Did you unplug the battery, just as I ordered?

Ariel - Down to the last detail. I made everyone astonished and terrified, as if they had just heard their favorite band being played on the radio.

Prospero - Good! Who could ever be so steady and strong that a disturbance like that wouldn’t make him crazy?

Ariel - Everyone there got a little crazy. Everyone except some hipsters leaving behind the car. Pline’s son, Ferdinand, was the first person to jump, shouting “Oh no! Independent bands are becoming mass media hits!”

Prospero - Good job! However, are they all safe, Ariel?
Ariel - Nobody was hurt in the slightest. I’ve separated them into groups around the coffee shop. I sent Ferdinand off by himself to a faraway bench, where he’s sitting now sighing, with his arms crossed. *(folds arms)*

Prospero - Tell me what you did with the prius, the hipsters …

Ariel - The prius is safely in the parking lot, hidden next to that old vehicle that has “Shaggin Wagon” painted on the back window. The hipsters are all inside, ordering overpriced beverages. Is there more work to do? Since you’re giving me new assignments, let me remind you what you promised me, but haven’t come through with yet.

Prospero – What? You’re in a bad mood? What could you possibly ask for?

Ariel – My raise.

Prospero – Before your shift has been completed? Don’t say anything else.

Ariel – I beg you, remember the good work I’ve done for you and how I’ve never lied to you, never make mistake and never grumbled in my work. You promised to pay at least $7.80 an hour.

Prospero – Have you forgotten the torture I freed you from?

Ariel – No.

Prospero – You have forgotten.

Ariel – No.

Prospero – You lie, you nasty, ungrateful thing! Have you forgotten you horrid supervisor, Sycorax, stooped over with old age and ill will.

Ariel – No sir.

Prospero – But for one reason they refused to fire her. Isn’t that true?

Ariel – Yes sir.

Prospero – At that time, there were no people here. This Starbucks was not honored with a human being – except the son that Sycorax gave birth to, a freckled ginger baby born of an old hag.

Ariel – Yes, Caliban, her son. But he grew out of his ginger looks.
Prospero – That’s right you stupid thing. It was my management that saved you when I arrived here and heard you, making lattes and let you out.

Ariel – Thank you!

Prospero – if you complain anymore, I’ll put you in overtime and lock you up in it until 12:00.

Ariel – Please forgive me.

Prospero – Do that and I’ll give you a raise in two days.

Ariel – That’s noble of you, Mitchell. What shall I do for you?

Prospero – Go disguise yourself as a hipster. Be invisible to everyone except yourself and me. Hurry! Go!

(Ariel Exits.) (Miranda enters.)

Prospero – Hey…

Miranda – Your strange story made me groggy.

Prospero – Come on. We’ll go visit Caliban.

Miranda – I don’t like him.

Prospero – But even so, we can’t do without him. He makes our coffee, gets our laptops and does all kinds of useful things for us.

Caliban (offstage) – You’ve got enough coffee already.

Prospero- There’s other work for you to do. Come on, you turtle!

(Ariel enters disguised as a hipster)

Prospero- My clever Ariel, listen carefully (whispering).

Ariel – I’ll do it right away.
(Meanwhile back at the car where Ferro and Mira are. They crash the car and Mira calls Ariel, and then Ferro and Mira begin arguing over the affair. “Love “monologue enters.)

Ferro: I can’t believe this, you a dirty slut.

Mira: Is you serious, the things you’ve done to me, ohhhh hell naw!

Ferro: So tell me why you creeping with him.

Mira: Well, what have you showed me?

Ferro: (yelling at the top of lungs) We out here stranded! I’m tired of this, living here. Look where we at Mira, look!! I’m hungry, I can’t eat half the time. So as soon as you make another mistake like this - You know what? I’m done.

(Ferro walks off to a pay phone and calls his baby momma, Ariel.)

Mira: (sadly) Ferro, why you doing this to me. (“Love” monologue)

(Light dims on Mira’s side.)

Is it too much to ask for you to show me that you care?

Seeing other people in love,

& it’s just not fair.

At the end of the day baby actions speak louder than words.

Your lips steady moving,

but you’ve mute, it’s absurd.

Show these other guys, that you’re girl is your everything.
All I’m asking is for you to show me,

I don’t want a wedding ring.

Love Never shatters, it’s extremely
durable, my heart’s a burning
flame for Love, it’s extremely flammable.

So feel the same way that I do for you,

if you can’t then I know this

Love isn’t true.

Ferro: Hello, hello, Ariel. Where you at?

Ariel: Why does it matter?

Ferro: Cuz, I need you right now, I’m hurt, we just got into a car accident.

Ariel: You and who? Don’t tell me you trying to get me to help you and that hood-rat you got
over there.

Ferro: The cops are on their way, and you’re the only ride we have.

Ariel: Where antwone at?

Ferro: he on vacation, please just come.

Ariel: I will come if you put in on your child support.

Ferro: Okay, ima try to keep it low-key, and hurry.

(They hang up, and Mira walks to Ferro.)

Mira: Look, I know we not seeing each other eye to eye, but you know how I felt when you told
me Ariel had your baby.
Ferro: Go talk to the cops with Cali and Ferdo.

(Mira exits to talk to the cops.)

(Ariel exits)

Prospero – (to Caliban) You horrible employee with a wicked hag for a mother and the devil himself for a father, come out!

(Caliban enters)

Caliban – You’ll both get drenched with a decaf vanilla frap.

Prospero – I’ll give you overtime for saying that.

Caliban – I have my lunch break now. This Starbucks belongs to me because Sycorax, my mother, left it to me. But you’ve taken it from me. When you first got here, you petted me and took care of me. I loved you back then, I curse myself for doing that.

Prospero – I took good care of you – the piece of filth that you are - and let you stay til you tried to rape Miranda!

Caliban – I wish I had! You stopped me!

Prospero – Go!

(Caliban exits angrily SR)

(Ferdinand and Ariel enter from SL, talking casually)

Miranda – (looks towards Ferdinand) Who is that? Is that Michael Cera?

Prospero – No girl! It eats and sleep and has the same five senses as we do.

Miranda – I never saw anything so hipster looking on earth before.
Ferdinand – Oh, you marvelous creature! Are you a hipster or Charlene Yi?

Miranda – I’m not marvelous, but I’m certainly a hipster.

Ferdinand – She speaks my language!

Prospero – (to Ferdinand) Could I have a word with you, sir? I’m afraid you’ve made a mistake.

Miranda – Prospero, this is the third hipster I’ve ever seen in my life and the first one I’ve felt romantic feelings for.

Ferdinand – Oh, If you haven’t give your heart to another man, maybe you can accompany me to The Band of Horses concert next weekend.

Prospero – Just a moment sir. I need a word with you/ You’ve come to this Starbucks as a secret certified health inspector!

Ferdinand – No! I swear that’s not true!

Prospero – (to Ferdinand) Follow me. (To Miranda) Don’t defend him. (To Ferdinand) Come on!

Narrator: At this part of our journey Freddy has already made it to the Battle and is walking frantically trying to find his band members, pulls out his phones and tries to call them.

Freddy: Damn! I can’t get any service.

(Enter Miranda and bumps into him)

Miranda: Oh! I’m so sorry!

Prospero: It’s ok.

(Both bend down and hands touch)

Miranda: Wow! You’re very handsome.

Freddy: And you’re very beautiful. I’m Freddy, Freddy Jupiter.
Miranda: I’m Miranda Crosby.

Prospero: *(talking to self)* Ah! It seems young Freddy Jupiter has fallen for my daughter and she him. This could work to my advantage. I can get them to marry and have a family band. With their voices together and his guitar talent, they would win the Battle and as their manger, my glory would be restored. I must make them want each other.

*(Whispers to Caliban)* Remove him from the building and keep him away from my daughter.

Caliban: Yes sir.

Narrator: For now we will leave Freddy, with Caliban and turn to see how his band mates are holding up.

Toni: I feel like we’ve been walking for like ever.

Gonzalo: I agree

Al: They that sign back there said we had only .5 miles til we get to the Motel 6.

Sebastian: We’d better hurry, they don’t leave the lights on all night.

Gonzalo: You think Freddy’s made it there yet?

Al: Yea, he’s probably the one who messed up the van.

Toni: What a douche. I say we find a new lead singer.

Gonzalo: I agree.

Sebastian: But who can take his place? He’s amazing.

Toni: I could.

Al: Yea, right. I’ve heard cats sing better than you.

Gonzalo: I agree. I could do it.

Toni: Haha. You would be horrible.

Gonzalo: No I wouldn’t listen. *(“All you need is love”…)*
Sebastian: Dude, you’re horrible. All of us are horrible. Only Freddy could do it and you know it. So, everyone shut up, untwist your jellicals, and just keep walking.

_All Exit._

_(Tabatha, Sebastian, Toni w/ an “i”, Gonzo, Adrian, Francisco, and others enter S.L)_

Gonzo - (To Tabatha) Please cheer up, sir. Like all of us, you have a good reason to be happy. The fact that we’re alive outweighs our losses.

Sebastian - (To Toni) Now I have to go on the internet and search for another experimental band that has no lyrical meanings.

Gonzo - If we let every sad thing that happens to us get us down, then we would find ourselves---

Sebastian - with a pain

Gonzo - Pain, yes indeed. We would find ourselves in pain. You thought you were being funny, but you said the truth.

Sebastian - You’re taking it more seriously than I meant it.

Gonzo - (To Tabatha) Therefore, sir—

Toni - God, does he ever shut up? (To Sebastian)

Tabatha - Please, no more. (To Gonzo)

Sebastian - It’s a deal!

Adrian - Though this Starbucks may appear desolate …

Sebastian - Now he’s going to say “but”-

Adrian - but—

Gonzo - This Starbucks contains everything beneficial in life.
Toni - True. Everything except Nutella

Gonzo - Look how lush and healthy the tea is! How green! *(pulls out cup of tea)*

Toni - It’s brown.

Sebastian - With a touch of green in it.

Toni - He doesn’t miss a thing.

Sebastian - No, he just gets reality completely wrong.

Gonzo - But the really unbelievable thing is – and this is incredible -

Sebastian - As most unbelievable things are.

Toni - Listen to him. If his clothes could talk they’d call him a liar

Gonzo - Seriously, I think our clothes are as fresh now as they were the day we put them on in Urban Outfitters.

Sebastian - Gonzo is a miracle worker.

Toni - What miracle will he work next?

Gonzo - If I could colonize this world, my God—

Toni - He’d cultivate weeds on it -

Sebastian - Or thorn bushes -

Gonzo - And if I were king of it, you know what I’d do? In my world I’d do everything differently from the way it’s usually done. There’d be no MTV. Men would have to entertain themselves with artworks by Andy Warhol. Women have to only purchase clothing from Goodwill. Everything would be produced without labor and be shared by all. There’d be no treason, crimes, or weapons. Nature would produce its harvest in abundance, to feed my innocent people.

*(“All you need is love” begins playing)*

Sebastian - There’d be no marriage?

Toni - No. Everyone would have nothing to do. They’d all be whores and slackers.

Gonzo - I would rule so perfectly that my world would outshine the counter culture they had in the ‘70’s …
(Alonso and others begin to laugh.)

Gonzo - (to Alonso) Are you listening to me, sir?

Tabatha - Oh, please be quiet. You are spouting out empty words.

Gonzo - You’re absolutely right.

Toni – It’s you we were laughing at.

Gonzo - But from your perspective, I don’t matter, so I am just an empty nobody for you!

Toni - Ouch, what a comeback!

Sebastian - He sure did. Too bad it fell flat.

Toni - (looking around) Hey …where’s Ferdinand?

Sebastian - I think he said he was going to order some tea.

Toni - Alright, well …I need to pee. *(Exits stage right)*

Gonzo - Right behind you!

*(Back at the ship, Sway and the crew know they’re going to die, but Pastor Nappy has hope that they will all make it through. Sway says he wants to be like Wayne and create a mix-tape, he begins to rap, they are trying to be humorous.)*

Fonso: I know y’all seen “Titanic”!

Sway: You making it worse!!

Masto: *(He cries.)*

Antwone: Damn Masto, I ain’t know you was soft.

*(They all laugh)*

Pastor nappy: Think on the bright side, God says we will live.

*(6 foot, 7 foot instrumental comes on)*
Sway raps (Boat monologue.)
We are on a boat.

It’s storming,
It’s cold, we need a coat.
I’m getting warm.
Bought a bag from coach.
It’s called a tote.
This is the poem I wrote.
Stupid goat ate my tote.
I fell of the boat and got super soaked.

(The boat rumbles.)

Antwone: I wish my bro was here with us.
Sway: Why, he only cares about his self.
Antwone: But at a time like this, I just really miss him.
Fonso: I feel you cuzzz!
Antwone: I love my main bro (sadly)

(All exit stage right)

Act 2

(Caliban enters with a load of coffee cups.)

Caliban - (to himself, as he unloads the cups) I hope all the tea in the world gets thrown on Prospero, inch by inch, until he's nothing but a walking beverage.
Trinculo - Great. That huge black coffee over there looks like a filthy liquor jug that's about to pour out its contents.

(Trinculo exits SR with coffee jug.)

Prospero - (offstage) Caliban, clean-up in Stall Two! It looks like you missed a pile of number two!

Caliban - Ugh! I just cleaned it!

(Caliban exits.)

(Tabatha, Sebastian, Toni, Gonzo, Adrian, Francisco, and others enter.)

Gonzo - I swear, I can't go any further, sir. If you don't mind, I need to rest a bit. (sits on chair)

Tabatha - I can't blame you. I'm so tired myself that it's bringing me down.

(All find a seat.)

(Ariel enters in the form of a hipster.)

Ariel - (to all) Listen, you fools, it's my job to remind you of this—that, last year, the three of you stole Prospero's status, because of which, he has now planned to take revenge on you all.

(Ariel exits SR.)

Sebastian - I'll fight every one of these hipsters if I have to, one at a time.

Toni - I'll back you up.

(They all exit, looking defensive.)

(Miranda, Ferdinand, Ariel, and Prospero enter from SL.)
Prospero - If I've punished you enough, I'm ready to make it up to you now. I put Miranda in your hands. So have a seat and talk to her.

(Miranda and Ferdinand sit together in center stage.)

Prospero - Ariel...

Ariel - What do you wish?

Prospero - Where is Caliban?

Ariel: Last time I checked, he was in...

(Caliban and all other characters enter from SR, holding cups of coffee.)

Prospero - What are you doing, Caliban? Didn't I tell you to finish the number two in stall two?!

Caliban - Nope. I was too busy planning to wipe the pile you have on your face.

Prospero - What did you say?

Mr. Pline - You heard him! (to Prospero) Ferdinand, come here.

Ferdinand - (to Miranda) Come on. (heads to SR)

Prospero - No, Miranda! Come here!

Ferdinand - (to Miranda) Come on!

Prospero - Really?! Do you really want to side with those who believe that wearing their grandparents' glasses and inanimate objects on their chains can qualify them to be considered nonconformists?!

Sebastian - (pointing to Prospero) This guy?!

Prospero - Miranda, if you choose to associate with them, I'll disown you.

Ferdinand - You don't own anybody!

Prospero - Shut up or I will ruin that flannel of yours with this coffee!

Ferdinand: Come at me, bro!
*Optional: (Prospero and Ferdinand begin to throw cups of coffee (water) at each other.)

Miranda - Stop! Just wait, I don't know who...

Prospero - Pick a side. You can follow me—or become one of them.

Toni - Come to the hipster side; we have Nutella!

(Miranda, CS, looks L to R before she makes her final decision as to whether she should become a hipster or not. Right before she begins to talk, she is interrupted by another group.)

Narrator: Going back to Freddy. Prospero starts his plan to restore his glory.

Prospero: Hello, Freddy. I have a deal to make with you?

Freddy: I’m listening.

Prospero: How about if you help with moving my instruments. I’ll let you stay for the show.

Freddy: Don’t have much choice, do I?

Miranda: I’ll go help him.

Freddy: Hey, how are you?

Miranda: Good. I love your hair by the way.

Freddy: I love your ascot.

Miranda: I’m in love with you.

Freddy: I love you too.

Miranda: Will you marry me?

Freddy: Yes, I will.

Prospero: What’s this I hear of marriage?

Freddy: I’m marrying your daughter.
Prospero: Well then, you have my blessing.

Miranda: Really, oh daddy, thank you.

Prospero: As a wedding present, I'll send Ariel to get your band mates here.

Freddy: Thank you…Father. (They shake hands.)

Narrator: Ariel gets the band and they all play together, even Prospero. Who gets his own solo.

(Ferro and Ariel are still arguing and she walks off and cries. She goes to the Krispy Kreme.

Ferro raps like Drake and does David’s monologue.)

Is it true…..that I’m gonna be with you. That night grabbing your love handles making us feel brand new… Nobody knows our struggle, us together likes a juggle, up and down round and round, lets take it to the next level… (DEEP AUTOTUNE VOICE)“(ELEVATOR)”. And all these late night secrets, why you do this every weekend, (RAPING FAST PACE)➔ I feel defeated my heart is cheated you always cheating got me heated……..I’m starving for ya luv , Its time for yo feedin……Cause can’t nobody do it better, the way you change my moods, maybe it the weather. uhhh!! I never thought you’d be this way , my body’s felling over rated , I’ll just krump it away !!….uhhh!!!... or should I jus call it uh day , summer time is here that’s why the call it the month of may………I hope you leave this town and never come another day. (chorus) Baby just walk away , I never
wanna leave this place, my heart is turning stray, but you never knew this, I guess

its just love influence….

Masto: Ohh no! We gone die.
Sway: Ima miss y’all
Antwone: I told y’all we should’ve jumped

The cruise sinks they all die, and Ferro and Ariel get the message, and they make up and have babies and live happily together.

THE END
Appendix B

FOCUS GROUP QUESTIONS

1. What social topics concerning your piece did you feel were necessary to discuss?

2. What personal topics did the group want to discuss in your piece?

3. Were there any additional subjects that you thought were important to discuss in your collaboration?

4. Talk about how the group makes production decisions.

5. Talk about the role that the school environment plays in the process.

6. How does that audience affect what you write about or create?

7. Has the experience of writing your own work challenged your creative thinking process? If so, how?
Appendix C

INTERVIEW QUESTIONS

1. Talk about some of your thoughts and experiences concerning this school year.

2. Why did you decide to take Drama III & IV?

3. Tell me about some of your experiences in studying drama.

4. Talk about your participation with the group process.

5. Talk about the experience of writing your own personal and original pieces for performance?

6. Tell me about your goals for this play. Can those goals be reached? How?

7. What questions do you want your performance piece to raise for the class or the audience?
Appendix D

OPEN CODING ANALYSIS

Code-Filter: All

HU: Tempest Analysis
File: [C:\Users\Jennifer Grazer\Documents\Tempest Analysis.hpr6]
Edited by: Super
Date/Time: 07/05/2011 05:23:41 PM

Actors Becoming Characters
Actors Enjoying Performance
Admin Involved with Drama
Ambivalent About Content
Ambivalent About Leadership
Artistically Creative
Arts Develop Creativity
Arts Working with Academics
Attempting Devised Again
Attempting Writing Connection to Text
Audience Connects with Character
Being Creative Early
Being True to Self
Biological Family in Limbo
Boyfriend as Psuedo-Savior
Can't Relate to Shakespeare
Candace Writing Piece
Casting Not Accurate
Class Placement Disregarded
Collaborative as Crap
Collaborative Piece Not Cohesive
College Major Goal
College Preparation Complicated
College Preparation with Parents
Colliding Sections Together
Compares Drama to Other Classes
Complete Learning Goals
Confident of Performance Success
Constant Comedy in Performance
Continuing Drama Sequence
Cooperation Breaking Down
Dad as Role Model
Debating Going to College
Develops Eating Disorder
Dialogue Needed for Change
Disconnect with Student Performance
Discouraged by Original Tempest Length
Discrimination as Writing Topic
Dislikes Group Work
Dislikes Hypocrisy
Dislikes Readers’ Theatre
Dissecting Process
Distant with Mom
Diverse Perspectives in Life
Don't Want Crap
Drama as Enjoyable Class
Drama as Safe Space
Drama as Social Niche
Drama as Social Pressure
Drama Being Overlooked
Drama Better Class Alternative
Drama Build Communication
Drama Building Confidence
Drama Building Leadership
Drama Building Maturity
Drama Building Responsibility
Drama Builds Connections
Drama Career Path
Drama Class Backstabbing
Drama Class Exclusive
Drama Class Inclusive
Drama Inclusive Class
Drama Keeps Students in School
Drama Kids Cool
Drama Opens Individuals
Drama Positive for Audience
Drama Positive for Performers
Drama Speaks on School Issues
Drama Teaches Memorization
Drama Viable Program
Dramatic Studies Challenging
Dresscode as Theme
Early Childhood Disease
Early Childhood Injury
Early Life Rough
Edit for Practicality
Education as Opportunity
Enjoyed Collaborative Piece
Enjoying Satire
Enjoys Idea of Ownership
Enjoys Live Performance
Enjoys Monologues
Entertainment High Priority
Establishing Rapport
Establishing Trust
Family Relationships Unstable
Feeling Unprepared for College
Finding Self in Basketball
Finding Strength in Self
Fine Arts Seal
Friends Growing Apart
Friends Important Factors
Ghetto Perspective
Go with Flow Process
Group Denied Agency
Group Distracted
Group Distracted by Other Production
Group Needs Motivation
Groups Form Socially
Guidelines Inhibit Creativity
Happy Home Life
Having Fun with Piece
Having Inferiority Complex
Having Physical Issues
Having Teen Mother
Home Responsibilities
Identifies as Actor
Identifies as Atheist
Identifies as Comic Writer
Identifies as Creative Writer
Identifies as Daydreamer
Identifies as Editor
Identifies as Gay/Bisexual
Identifies as Lifelong Learner
Identifies as Practical
Identifies as Spoiled
Identifies Teacher as Insider
Identity Pressures in School
Ignoring Student Needs
Improv in Performance
Increasing Drama Membership
Individual Denied Agency
Individual Distracted
Individual Edits of Collaborative Piece
Individual Ideas Not Working
Individual Messages in Play
Initially Interested in Play
Inside Joke
Interview Interruption
Intuitive Feeling in Drama
Involvement Needed for Success
Judge of Character
Known in Small Town
Lacking Ownership with Participation
Lacking Ownership with Writing
Leadership Positions Tricky
Learned Stage Managing
Learned Vocal Skills
Learning About Collaboration
Learning School Social Groups
Life as Inspiration
Likes Being in Charge
Likes Tempest Framework
Liking Readers' Theatre
Listening Skills in Drama
Little Drama Experience
Long Term Short Term
Love of Simplicity
Making Choices in Education
Many Career Options
Meeting Diverse People
Missing Many Students
More Emphasis on Fine Arts
More Participation Sooner
Movies/TV as Inspiration
Moving Big Change
Moving Separates Friends
Music as Social Signifier
Music as Writing Topic
Nadine Writing Piece
Narrators Reinforcing Performance
Need Known Piece
Need Motivation for Success
Need Relatable Teachers
Needed More Preparation
Needed More Time
Needs Inter-group Cooperation
Negative Drama Experience
Negative Teacher Experience
No Emotional Connection
No Set Process
Not Confident in Play Goals
Not Connected to Group
Not Liking Tempest
Not Skilled at Improv
Not Treated as Mature Learners
Not Wanting to Look Foolish
Obsessed with Death/Suicide
Open Minded Perspective
Opinion Matters in Drama
Other Perspectives Helpful
Outside Comfort Zone
Overly Confident of Abilities
Parent Illness
Parent Personalities Changing
Parents Overreacting
Pass Around Method
Paulding County Native
Personal Writing Connects Text
Personalities Clashing
Perspective Unknown
Placed in Drama Accidentally
Play Format Worked
Play Teaching Moral
Play Theme Survival of Fittest
Poor Quality Students Fault
Positive Opinion of Abilities
Practical Dramatic Learning
Prioritize Learning
Process Develops Creativity
Project as Learning Process
Project Needs More Participation
Project Requires More Focus
Project Strengthens Acting
Project Very Challenging
Question Education
Race Absent in Dialogue
Race Absent in Discrimination
Race Absent in Teacher/Student
Race Appears as Writing Topic
Race/Class Divide
Racial Divide in Material
Recognizing Fringe Groups
Recognizing School Stereotypes
Regretting Lack of Involvement
Relationships as Writing Topic
Remaining Large Collective
Researcher Appreciates Effort
Researcher as Guidance Counselor
Researcher Being Direct
Researcher Encouraging Agency
Researcher Encouraging More Involvement
Researcher Social Justice
Researcher Staying Removed
Researcher Wanting Honesty
Respect Issues
Scheduling Over Drama
School Social Ladder
Sections Complement Others
Self Discovery in Writing
Self Expression Necessary
Self Expression through Acting
Senior Year Complicated
Senior Year Negative
Senior Year Positive
Senior Year Tolerable
Senioritis Affecting Work
Senioritis Not Factor
Shakespeare Redundant
Sharing Learning with Teachers
Sheltered by Parents
Shy in Drama Class
Social Stigmas of School
Speaking Mind in Drama
Stereotypes Not Useful
Strong Moral Compass
Student as Machine Cog
Student as Visual Learner
Student Collaboration
Student Disconnected with Personal Writing
Student Disconnected with Process
Student Hesitant in Career Path
Student Highly Transient
Student Identifies as Lazy
Student in Danger of Failing
Student Personal Experiences Together
Student Project Needs Finishing
Student Remaining Closed
Student Team Collaboration
Student Voice in Project
Students Apprehensive on Project
Students Doing Own Thing
Students Faking Engagement
Students Need Practical Learning
Students Tired of Project
Students Tired of Shakespeare
Supernatural as Theme
Taking Ownership of Project
Taking Ownership of Education
Teacher Student Respect
Teacher/Student as Writing Topic
Test Taking Inauthentic
Testing as Writing Topic
Theme Non-Judgmental
Think Before Acting
Time Not Factor
Traditional Classes a Waste
Trouble with Dialogue
Trying Out Drama
Uncertain of Play Outcome
Underdog Perspective
Unexpected Student Topic
University Unrealistic
 Unsure of Play Direction
Valuing Student Opinion
Voting Process Inequitable
Waiting on Other Groups
Want Process Enjoyable
Wanted Performance Cancelled
Wanting Actors Happy
Wanting Audience Approval
Wanting Major Involvement in Play
Wanting Original Piece
Wanting Teacher Control
Wants Audience Understanding
Wants Good Production
Wants Recognition for Drama
Wants Shakespearean English
Wants to Write Individually
Work Delayed by Researcher
Work Delayed by Sub
Working in Comfort Zone
Write for Social Perspectives
Writing Influences Negative
Writing Needs Clarity
Writing/Cutting Eats Time
Appendix E

AXIAL CODING ANALYSIS

Code Families

HU: Tempest Analysis
File: [C:\Users\Jennifer Grazer\Documents\Tempest Analysis.hpr6]
Edited by: Super
Date/Time: 03/08/2012 05:29:56 PM

Code Family: Agency Denied if Not Contributing
Created: 08/06/2011 06:22:17 PM (Super)
Codes (11): [Candace Writing Piece] [Group Denied Agency] [Missing Many Students] [Regretting Lack of Involvement] [Senioritis Affecting Work] [Senioritis Not Factor] [Students Faking Engagement] [Taking Ownership of Project] [Taking Ownership of Education] [Valuing Student Opinion] [Voting Process Unequitable]
Quotation(s): 86

Code Family: Challenges to Success within School Structures
Created: 08/07/2011 08:47:41 PM (Super)
Codes (4): [Ambivalent About Content] [Ambivalent About Leadership] [Group Needs Motivation] [Need Motivation for Success]
Quotation(s): 13

Code Family: Collaboration and Contradiction - Releasing Imagination
Created: 08/07/2011 08:49:38 PM (Super)
Codes (8): [Casting Not Accurate] [Individual Ideas Not Working] [Project Very Challenging] [Shakespeare Redundant] [Stereotypes Not Useful] [Student Disconnected with Personal Writing] [Uncertain of Play Outcome] [Wanting Original Piece]
Quotation(s): 41

Code Family: Contradictions in Process; Disconnect
Created: 08/06/2011 06:31:55 PM (Super)
Codes (32): [Don't Want Crap] [Enjoys Idea of Ownership] [Entertainment High Priority] [Leadership Positions Tricky] [Likes Being in Charge] [Likes Tempest Framework] [More Participation Sooner] [Narrators Reinforcing Performance] [No Set Process] [Not Confident in Play Goals] [Not Connected to Shakespeare] [Not Skilled at Improv] [Play Format Worked] [Project Needs More Participation] [Project Requires More Focus] [Senioritis Affecting Work] [Student Disconnected with Process] [Students Apprehensive on Project] [Students Tired of High School] [Students Tired of Project] [Students Tired of Shakespeare] [Uncertain of Play Outcome] [ Unsure of Play Direction] [Want Process Enjoyable] [Wanting Actors Happy] [Wanting Audience Approval] [Wanting Major Involvement in Play] [Wants Audience Understanding] [Wants Good Production] [Wants Shakespearean English] [Writing Needs Clarity] [Writing/Cutting Eats Time]
Quotation(s): 184

Code Family: Dialogue with Influences of Education and Drama
Created: 08/07/2011 08:46:01 PM (Super)
A Tempest in the Halls

Codes (49): [Actors Becoming Characters] [Actors Enjoying Performance] [Arts Develop Creativity] [Arts Working with Academics] [Attempting Devised Again] [Compares Drama to Other Classes] [Continuing Drama Sequence] [Drama as Enjoyable Class] [Drama as Safe Space] [Drama as Social Niche] [Drama Better Class Alternative] [Drama Build Communication] [Drama Building Confidence] [Drama Building Leadership] [Drama Building Maturity] [Drama Building Responsibility] [Drama Builds Connections] [Drama Career Path] [Drama Class Backstabling] [Drama Class Exclusive] [Drama Class Inclusive] [Drama Inclusive Class] [Drama Keeps Students in School] [Drama Kids Cool] [Drama Kids Egotistical] [Drama Opens Individuals] [Drama Positive for Audience] [Drama Positive for Performers] [Drama Speaks on School Issues] [Drama Teaches Memorization] [Enjoyed Collaborative Piece] [Enjoying Satire] [Enjoys Live Performance] [Enjoys Monologues] [Fine Arts Seal] [Having Fun with Piece] [Learned Stage Managing] [Learned Vocal Skills] [Listening Skills in Drama] [Meeting Diverse People] [More Emphasis on Fine Arts] [Open Minded Perspective] [Opinion Matters in Drama] [Practical Dramatic Learning] [Project Strengthens Acting] [Self Expression Necessary] [Self Expression through Acting] [Speaking Mind in Drama] [Trying Out Drama]

Quotation(s): 144

Code Family: Difficulty with Creative Thinking, Imagination
Created: 08/06/2011 06:04:22 PM (Super)
Codes (15): [Can't Relate to Shakespeare] [Edit for Practicality] [Go with Flow Process] [Improv in Performance] [No Emotional Connection] [Not Liking Tempest] [Outside Comfort Zone] [Pass Around Method] [Process Develops Creativity] [Project as Learning Process] [Project Very Challenging] [Student Voice in Project] [Students Need Practical Learning] [Trouble with Dialogue] [Uncertain of Play Outcome]
Quotation(s): 70

Code Family: Direct Path to Success; Structured Guidelines
Created: 08/06/2011 05:51:29 PM (Super)
Codes (7): [Discouraged by Original Tempest Length] [Need Known Piece] [Senioritis Affecting Work] [Student Hesitant in Career Path] [Wanting Teacher Control] [Working in Comfort Zone] [Writing Influences Negative]
Quotation(s): 23

Code Family: Drama's Positive Long Term Effects
Created: 07/30/2011 09:02:54 PM (Super)
Codes (49): [Actors Becoming Characters] [Actors Enjoying Performance] [Arts Develop Creativity] [Arts Working with Academics] [Attempting Devised Again] [Compares Drama to Other Classes] [Continuing Drama Sequence] [Drama as Enjoyable Class] [Drama as Safe Space] [Drama as Social Niche] [Drama Better Class Alternative] [Drama Build Communication] [Drama Building Confidence] [Drama Building Leadership] [Drama Building Maturity] [Drama Building Responsibility] [Drama Builds Connections] [Drama Career Path] [Drama Class Backstabling] [Drama Class Exclusive] [Drama Class Inclusive] [Drama Inclusive Class] [Drama Keeps Students in School] [Drama Kids Cool] [Drama Kids Egotistical] [Drama Opens Individuals] [Drama Positive for Audience] [Drama Positive for Performers] [Drama Speaks on School Issues] [Drama Teaches Memorization] [Enjoyed Collaborative Piece] [Enjoying Satire] [Enjoys Live Performance] [Enjoys Monologues] [Fine Arts Seal] [Having Fun with Piece] [Learned Stage Managing] [Learned Vocal Skills] [Listening Skills in Drama] [Meeting Diverse People] [More Emphasis on Fine Arts] [Open Minded Perspective] [Opinion Matters in Drama] [Practical Dramatic Learning] [Project Strengthens Acting] [Self Expression Necessary] [Self Expression through Acting] [Speaking Mind in Drama] [Trying Out Drama]
Quotation(s): 144

Code Family: Lacking Ownership, Agency; Easily Discouraged
Created: 08/06/2011 06:09:29 PM (Super)
Codes (10):  [Candace Writing Piece] [Group Denied Agency] [Individual Denied Agency] [Lacking Ownership with Participation] [Lacking Ownership with Writing] [Making Choices in Education] [Nadine Writing Piece] [Perspective Unknown] [Student Remaining Closed] [Voting Process Inequitable]
Quotation(s): 105

Code Family: No Intrinsic Motivation
Created: 08/06/2011 06:02:13 PM (Super)
Codes (4):  [Ambivalent About Content] [Ambivalent About Leadership] [Group Needs Motivation] [Need Motivation for Success]
Quotation(s): 13

Code Family: Open Cooperation, Dedication, Focused Intentions
Created: 08/06/2011 06:26:07 PM (Super)
Codes (19):  [Attempting Writing Connection to Text] [Group Denied Agency] [Group Distracted] [Group Distracted by Other Production] [Group Needs Motivation] [Individual Distracted] [Individual Edits of Collaborative Piece] [Involvement Needed for Success] [Need Motivation for Success] [Needed More Preparation] [Needed More Time] [Needs Inter-group Cooperation] [Other Perspectives Helpful] [Overly Confident of Abilities] [Project Needs More Participation] [Project Requires More Focus] [Time Not Factor] [Voting Process Inequitable] [Waiting on Other Groups]
Quotation(s): 153

Code Family: Outside Influences and Social Justice
Created: 07/30/2011 08:56:56 PM (Super)
Codes (28):  [Admin Involved with Drama] [Class Placement Disregarded] [Dialogue Needed for Change] [Drama as Social Pressure] [Drama Being Overlooked] [Drama Viable Program] [Education as Opportunity] [Ignoring Student Needs] [Increasing Drama Membership] [Interview Interruption] [Need Relatable Teachers] [Negative Drama Experience] [Negative Teacher Experience] [Not Treated as Mature Learners] [Placed in Drama Accidentally] [Prioritize Learning] [Question Education] [Researcher Social Justice] [Scheduling Over Drama] [Sharing Learning with Teachers] [Social Stigmas of School] [Student as Machine Cog] [Test Taking Inauthentic] [Traditional Classes a Waste] [University Unrealistic] [Wants Recognition for Drama] [Work Delayed by Researcher] [Work Delayed by Sub]
Quotation(s): 84

Code Family: Race, Class, Cultural Divides Present
Created: 07/30/2011 07:41:55 PM (Super)
Codes (11):  [Discrimination as Writing Topic] [Groups Form Socially] [Race Absent in Dialogue] [Race Absent in Discrimination] [Race Absent in Teacher/Student] [Race Absent in Testing] [Race Appears as Writing Topic] [Race/Class Divide] [Racial Divide in Material] [Recognizing Fringe Groups] [Recognizing School Stereotypes]
Quotation(s): 43

Code Family: Real Connections Involve Personal Truth
Created: 07/30/2011 08:48:09 PM (Super)
Codes (76):  [Artistically Creative] [Audience Connects with Character] [Being Creative Early] [Being True to Self] [College Major Goal] [College Preparation Complicated] [College Preparation with Parents] [Complete Learning Goals] [Constant Comedy in Performance] [Dad as Role Model] [Debating Going to College] [Dislikes Hypocrisy] [Diverse Perspectives in Life] [Dresscode as Theme] [Early Childhood Disease] [Early Childhood Injury] [Early Life Rough] [Feeling Unprepared for College] [Finding Self in Basketball] [Finding Strength in Self]
[Friends Growing Apart] [Friends Important Factors] [Ghetto Perspective] [Happy Home Life] [Having Inferiority Complex] [Having Physical Issues] [Having Teen Mother] [Home Responsibilities] [Identifies as Actor] [Identifies as Atheist] [Identifies as Comic Writer] [Identifies as Creative Writer] [Identifies as Daydreamer] [Identifies as Editor] [Identifies as Gay/Bisexual] [Identifies as Lifelong Learner] [Identifies as Practical] [Identifies as Spoiled] [Identifies as Writer] [Identity Pressures in School] [Individual Messages in Play] [Known in Small Town] [Life as Inspiration] [Love of Simplicity] [Movies/TV as Inspiration] [Moving Big Change] [Moving Separates Friends] [Music as Social Signifier] [Music as Writing Topic] [Paulding County Native] [Personal Writing Connects Friends] [Play Teaching Moral] [Play Theme Survival of Fittest] [Relationships as Writing Topic] [Respect Issues] [School Social Ladder] [Self Discovery in Writing] [Senior Year Complicated] [Senior Year Negative] [Senior Year Positive] [Senior Year Tolerable] [Sheltered by Parents] [Strong Moral Compass] [Student as Visual Learner] [Student Hesitant in Career Path] [Student Highly Transient] [Student Identifies as Lazy] [Student Personal Experiences Together] [Supernatural as Theme] [Teacher Student Respect] [Teacher/Student as Writing Topic] [Testing as Writing Topic] [Theme Non-Judgmental] [Underdog Perspective] [Unexpected Student Topic] [Writing Influences Negative]
Quotation(s): 183

Code Family: Remnants of Teacher Control; Researcher Questioning
Created: 08/06/2011 05:55:58 PM (Super)
Codes (9): [Identifies Teacher as Insider] [Researcher Appreciates Effort] [Researcher as Guidance Counselor] [Researcher Being Direct] [Researcher Encouraging Agency] [Researcher Encouraging More Involvement] [Researcher Social Justice] [Researcher Staying Removed] [Researcher Wanting Honesty]
Quotation(s): 84

Code Family: Student Performance Occurs, Lack of Prep
Created: 08/06/2011 05:59:48 PM (Super)
Codes (5): [Collaborative as Crap] [Disconnect with Student Performance] [Dislikes Readers' Theatre] [Not Wanting to Look Foolish] [ Wanted Performance Cancelled]
Quotation(s): 32

Code Family: Students "Normal" Despite Trauma
Created: 07/30/2011 07:44:54 PM (Super)
Codes (9): [Biological Family in Limbo] [Boyfriend as Psuedo-Savior] [Develops Eating Disorder] [Distant with Mom] [Family Relationships Unstable] [Obsessed with Death/Suicide] [Parent Illness] [Parent Personalities Changing] [Parents Overreacting]
Quotation(s): 16

Code Family: Students Can't See Selves in Project
Created: 08/06/2011 06:40:34 PM (Super)
Codes (8): [Casting Not Accurate] [Individual Ideas Not Working] [Project Very Challenging] [Shakespeare Redundant] [Stereotypes Not Useful] [Student Disconnected with Personal Writing] [Uncertain of Play Outcome] [Wanting Original Piece]
Quotation(s): 41
Appendix F

TRENDS IN AXIAL CODING

*Student collaboration and group dynamics within arts spaces require further investigation for effective dramatic classroom use.*

Code Family: Open Cooperation, Dedication, Focused Intentions
Created: 08/06/2011 06:26:07 PM (Super)

Code Family: Direct Path to Success; Structured Guidelines
Created: 08/06/2011 05:51:29 PM (Super)

Code Family: Contradictions in Process; Disconnect
Created: 08/06/2011 06:31:55 PM (Super)

Code Family: Collaboration and Contradiction - Releasing Imagination
Created: 08/07/2011 08:49:38 PM (Super)

...Intuitive leaps between learning concepts and creating connections across diverse perspectives are problematic for even AP and honors drama students as educational expectations have become rigidly standardized and extrinsically motivated.

Code Family: Students Can't See Selves in Project
Created: 08/06/2011 06:40:34 PM (Super)

Code Family: Real Connections Involve Personal Truth
Created: 07/30/2011 08:48:09 PM (Super)

Code Family: No Intrinsic Motivation
Created: 08/06/2011 06:02:13 PM (Super)

...When drama students were challenged in the areas of creativity and imagination, they at times revealed a lack of ownership, a forfeit of agency, and an easily discouraged learning mindset.

Code Family: Agency Denied if Not Contributing
Created: 08/06/2011 06:22:17 PM (Super)

Code Family: Student Performance Occurs, Lack of Prep
Created: 08/06/2011 05:59:48 PM (Super)

Code Family: Remnants of Teacher Control; Researcher Questioning
Created: 08/06/2011 05:55:58 PM (Super)

Code Family: Lacking Ownership, Agency; Easily Discouraged
Created: 08/06/2011 06:09:29 PM (Super)

Code Family: Difficulty with Creative Thinking, Imagination
Created: 08/06/2011 06:04:22 PM (Super)
Drama spaces should be continually questioned and interrogated for social justice and aesthetic practices as cultural, racial, class-based (SES), self-reflective divisions exist, but often they are not openly discussed.

Code Family: Students "Normal" Despite Trauma
Created: 07/30/2011 07:44:54 PM (Super)

Code Family: Race, Class, Cultural Divides Present
Created: 07/30/2011 07:41:55 PM (Super)

Code Family: Outside Influences and Social Justice
Created: 07/30/2011 08:56:56 PM (Super)

Code Family: Drama's Positive Long Term Effects
Created: 07/30/2011 09:02:54 PM (Super)

Code Family: Dialogue with Influences of Education and Drama
Created: 08/07/2011 08:46:01 PM (Super)

Code Family: Challenges to Success within School Structures
Created: 08/07/2011 08:47:41 PM (Super)
Appendix G

DATA POINT CHART LISTED BY MONTH

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Month</th>
<th>Type of Data (and number of data points)</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>
| January | • Researcher readings on devised theatre (10+)  
          • Researcher Memos (4) |
| February| • Classroom conversations (4)  
            • Full-class discussions (4)  
            • Classroom observations (3)  
            • Researcher memos (9) |
| March   | • Interviews with participants (8)  
            • Full-class discussions (6)  
            • Classroom observations (15)  
            • Original student writings: Creative student pieces based on The Tempest (20)  
            • Researcher memos (16) |
| April   | • Interviews with participants (11)  
            • Full-class discussions (6)  
            • Classroom observations (8)  
            • Original student writings: Group re-inventions of The Tempest (3)  
            • Focus group discussions (3)  
            • Researcher memos (10) |
| May     | • Full-class discussions (4)  
            • Interviews with participants (9)  
            • Classroom observations (4)  
            • Original student writings: Group re-inventions of The Tempest (3)  
            • Final interviews: Students volunteering as available (6)  
            • Final focus group discussions (3)  
            • Student biographies (17)  
            • Student reflections of project involvement and success (20)  
            • Researcher memos (12) |
Appendix H

CHART OF STUDENT GROUP EVOLUTIONS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Approximate Date(s)</th>
<th>Name/Writing Perspective of Group</th>
<th>Purpose of Group</th>
<th>Students Involved</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 23, 2011</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Framework text edits</td>
<td>Ray-Ray, Tammara, Alisa, Desiree, Zona, Jaime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 23, 2011</td>
<td>JAMEHN, MEJHAN (acronyms based on first letters of participants’ names)</td>
<td>Framework text edits</td>
<td>Nikolas, Isabelle, Natalie, Antonio, Mackenzee, Ruth</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 23, 2011</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Framework text edits</td>
<td>Kate, Stephen, Joanne, Kennedy, Cassie*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Feb. 23, 2011</td>
<td>None</td>
<td>Framework text edits</td>
<td>Shaniqua, Hunter, Ava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13, 2011</td>
<td>The Mix</td>
<td>Script devising</td>
<td>Nikolas, Isabelle, Natalie, Antonio, Mackenzee, Ruth, Shaniqua, Hunter, Ava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13, 2011</td>
<td>Black ppl</td>
<td>Script devising</td>
<td>Ray-Ray, Tammara, Alisa, Desiree, Zona,* Jaime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 13, 2011</td>
<td>Duct Tape Bandits</td>
<td>Script devising</td>
<td>Kate, Stephen, Joanne, Kennedy, Cassie*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Date</td>
<td>Group</td>
<td>Activity</td>
<td>Participants</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>---------------</td>
<td>--------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------</td>
<td>---------------------------------------------------</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 20, 2011</td>
<td>Underdogs (Duct Tape Bandits)</td>
<td>Script Devising—thematic perspective</td>
<td>Kate, Stephen, Joanne, Kennedy, Cassie*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 20, 2011</td>
<td>Ghetto (Black ppl)</td>
<td>Script Devising—thematic perspective</td>
<td>Ray-Ray, Tammara, Alisa, Desiree, Zona,* Jaime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 22, 2011</td>
<td>Hipsters (The Mix)</td>
<td>Script Devising—thematic perspective</td>
<td>Nikolas, Isabelle, Natalie, Antonio, Mackenzee, Ruth, Shaniqua, Hunter, Ava</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>April 23, 2011</td>
<td>The Mix</td>
<td>Script Devising</td>
<td>Nikolas, Isabelle, Natalie, Antonio, Mackenzee, Ruth, Shaniqua, Hunter, Ava, Jaime</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 12, 2011</td>
<td>Rockers (Duct Tape Bandits)</td>
<td>Script Devising</td>
<td>Kate, Stephen, Joanne, Kennedy, Cassie*</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>May 13, 2011</td>
<td>Groups unofficially disband</td>
<td>Casting and Script read-through, and project production</td>
<td>All participants</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

*Denotes participant with frequent absences.
### Appendix I

#### STUDENT WRITING INVOLVEMENT WITH COLLABORATIVE PROJECT

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Group Name, Writing Perspective</th>
<th>Primary Writer(s)</th>
<th>Secondary Writer(s)</th>
<th>Incorporated Original Writings?</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>The Mix, Hipsters</td>
<td>Shaniqua</td>
<td>None, editing suggestions only</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Duct Tape Bandits, Rockers</td>
<td>Cassie</td>
<td>Kate, Joanne</td>
<td>no</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Black Ppl, Ghetto</td>
<td>Desiree, Ray-Ray, Tammara, Alisa</td>
<td>Zona</td>
<td>yes</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>