



MONASH University

Towards a Liberated Classroom:

Teacher perceptions on Drama as a Tool of Social Justice

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Abstract

The aim of this study was to gather the perspectives of Drama educators to explore the ways in which they understood their practice as a tool of social justice. The study was conducted as a series of audio-recorded, semi-structured interviews with seven Drama educators at their places of work in New York and New Jersey.

The literature informing this study considered social justice from its conceptual origin as a form of moral teaching founded in theology, to its role in the defence of social order, before it evolved to align with charitable and socialist conceptions. These earlier understandings were then used to demonstrate that current interpretations of social justice are a force for personal, social and political transformation, underpinned by the philosophies of radical humanist, Paulo Freire.

Freire's pedagogy of liberation aligns with the notion that Drama is a force for transformation, based on the two key findings which were, according to the Drama educators, that Drama empowers student voice and is community-building. The participant's perceptions of Drama learning as inquiry-based and collaborative, invoke Freire's philosophy of dialogic and dialectical practice as a means to exposing and addressing injustice in education through communication which aims to humanise people in each other's eyes. Findings also suggest that Drama raises awareness of self and others in ways which echo a Freirean philosophy of critical literacy as a pathway to critical consciousness, which focusses on empowering students to engage in meaning-making practices in ways which foster a sense of ownership over their learning, as well as an awareness of how dynamics of power influence their understandings.

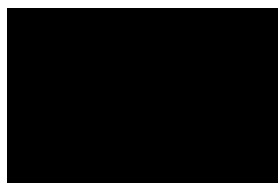
The results provided some support for the idea that participants engaged in a critical dramatic multiliteracies approach, which has evolved from the Freirean concept of critical literacy and acknowledges the role of culture in education and places students at the centre of their learning.

The thesis concludes that there are a range of possibilities for Dramatic practice to be used to advance social justice criteria in education, and in this way, serves as a launching pad for further studies to examine Drama as a critical and creative pedagogy.

Declaration

This thesis contains no material which has been accepted for the award of any other degree or diploma at any university or equivalent institution and that, to the best of my knowledge and belief, this thesis contains no material previously published or written by another person, except where due reference is made in the text of the thesis.

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Table of Contents

Chapter 1. Introduction.....	3
1.1 Background	3
1.2 Research Questions	5
1.3 Significance of this Research.....	5
Chapter 2. Literature Review	8
2.1 An Historical Perspective	8
2.1.1 Social justice as social order.....	8
2.1.2 Social Justice as a moral pedagogy.....	10
2.1.3 Social Justice as transformative practice.....	11
2.1.5 The development of Drama as a critical pedagogy.	19
2.1.6 A critical dramatic multiliteracies approach.....	21
2.1.7 Drama as a tool of social justice.....	23
Chapter 3. Methodology	25
3. 1 Methodological framework	25
3.1.1 A Qualitative research orientation.	25
3.1.2 Constructivist approach.	26
3.1.3 A critical constructivist epistemology.....	28
3.2 Selection of Research Participants	30
3.3 Data Generation through Semi-Structured Interviews	33
3.3.1 Methodological framework informing the interviews.	33
3.4 Data Analysis.....	35
3.4.1 Thematic analysis.....	35
3.5 Ethical Issues	37
3.5.1 The issue of trustworthiness and validity.....	38
3.5.2 The issue of generalizability and transferability.	42
3.6 Overview of Methodological Approach	42
Chapter 4. Findings: Valuing Student Voice.....	44
4.1 Developing Student Voice through experimentation and discovery	44

4.1.1 Self-agency as an outcome of creative experimentation.	49
4.2 Empowering Student Voice through embodied learning	50
4.2.1 Embodied practice as humanised learning.	53
4.3 Student Voice and Pleasure in learning	56
4.4 Building Critical Voice through a raised awareness of Dynamics of Power	57
Chapter 5. Findings: Drama as Community-Building	63
5.1 Building Community through Collaborative Ensembles	63
5.2 Drama builds Community through Exposure to Diversity	64
5.3 Drama Develops Community through Dialogic and Dialectic practice	66
5.4 Drama as a Safe Space.....	70
5.5 Drama as a Pathway to Community Access	74
5.5.1 Cultural participation.....	75
5.5.2 Access through differentiation.....	77
Chapter 6. Discussion	79
6.1 Dramatic Practice as a Transformative Process	79
6.2 Active Participation as a path to Conscientized Voice in Drama	80
6.3 Collaboration as a Key Critical Pedagogical concept.....	82
6.3.1 Trust as a platform for social justice teaching.	84
Chapter 7. Conclusion: Towards a Liberated classroom	87
7.1 Overview of the Study	87
7.2 Scope and limitations.....	87
7.3 Key Findings.....	88
7.4 Implications	89
References.....	91
Appendix A: Ethics Approval.....	101
Appendix B: Interview Questions.....	102

Chapter 1. Introduction

1.1 Background

Drama has the potential to empower students to express themselves in ways they may not usually get an opportunity to do, either in or outside of the classroom. This thesis explores teachers' perspectives on how Drama empowers, changes and builds student ability to construct meaning through a critical multiliteracies approach. I am an English and Drama teacher who has worked in a variety of educational settings. This has included integrating Drama with other subjects such as English and Social studies as part of a school syllabus, as well as working in an extra-curricular capacity with youth theatres and running a Drama school. My experience teaching students ranges from preschool age to their early twenties, in Melbourne, Australia, New York, U.S, and Auckland, New Zealand, and has given me the opportunity to see many incarnations of Drama as an educative tool. These experiences have highlighted for me the opportunities Drama offers for transformative learning.

My aim in this study is to pinpoint more clearly some of the unique strengths of Drama, with the hope that gathering teachers' viewpoints will help to clarify the ways Dramatic practice enhances students' learning experiences, and in so doing, enriches students' lives. My own ontology aligns with the idea that Drama instruction provides a space for freedom of self-expression and opportunities for human connection and transformation. It is, perhaps, unsurprising that I was deeply affected by the philosophies of radical humanist, Paulo Freire (1970, 1973, 1987, 1994, 1997) when I encountered them in my Masters Coursework studies. Freire's (1970) critical pedagogy gave me a way to frame my lived experience of Drama as a transformational and liberatory practice through which students are given opportunities to construct their own meanings, and in so doing, become empowered learners. The way I

understand Drama, as an experiential, experimental, and discourse-based approach to the study of the human condition, invokes Freire's (1970) own philosophy of dialogic and dialectical praxis which aims to develop what Freire (1970) terms critical consciousness, in students. This view draws on praxis, which represents an iterative cycle of action and reflection, as a transformative process, which raises awareness of the experience of self and others, nurtures deeper understanding between people and encourages them to creatively seek answers to life's questions together. This is much how I envision the purpose of Dramatic practice.

My understanding of the potential for Drama to be used as a tool for social justice was further enriched through the literature and ideas informing a critical dramatic multiliteracies approach (Giampapa, 2010; Kellner, 2003; Medina, C., Weltsek-Medina, G. & Twomey, S. 2007; Mills, 2006; Mills, 2010; Ntelioglou, 2011; Sandretto and Tillson, 2013; Shenfield, 2015). A critical dramatic multiliteracies approach provides opportunities for students to interact from a central and engaged position rather than as outsiders to their own educational experience. Built on a critical philosophy of literacy as a form of empowerment (Crafton, Silvers & Brennan, 2007; Mills, 2006; Morrell, 2002), critical multiliteracies theory draws heavily on the work of founding theorist of critical pedagogy, Henry Giroux (1988, 2004), through practices which raise socio-cultural awareness, by championing learning that is culturally relevant and inclusive. In my experience, students engage in Dramatic practice in precisely these ways. Whether through improvisational Drama, analyzing pre-existing texts, or a variety of other acting exercises, students' learning experiences are deepened through an examination of the contexts within which the human narrative develops. This includes processes which allow students to connect with and personally contribute to their own learning. From a critical standpoint, such efforts empower and

liberate by providing avenues through which students are permitted to bring their own voice and viewpoint to their learning, in ways that differ from other school and class learning experiences.

This study was driven by a desire to research whether and how other educators practice Drama education as a socially-situated practice with the potential to support critical pedagogies. In doing so, I hoped to contribute to understandings about the potential of Drama as a tool of social justice by exploring ways in which creative and experiential practice deepens human connection.

1.2 Research Questions

This study is guided by the central research question:

In what ways can Drama education be understood as a form of critical pedagogy?

To engage with this question, a series of sub-questions are addressed:

- In what ways do teachers use Drama-based pedagogies to explore issues of social justice?
- In what ways are teachers' perspectives a reflection of Freirean (1970) critical pedagogy and a critical dramatic multiliteracies approach?
- How do teachers understand, implement and enact the principles of critical consciousness within Drama education?

The study does not assume that teachers have any formal education in the concepts of critical multiliteracies, social justice or critical consciousness. Instead, the focus is on recognising these elements through the analysis of teacher narratives, which, in turn, reflect teacher's perspectives on the effect of Drama education, on themselves and their students.

1.3 Significance of this Research

This research is focussed on gathering teacher perspectives and experiences in order to better understand the ways Drama advocates for and advances social justice in the classroom. As such, it focusses on a pedagogy of liberation (Freire, 1970) drawing on creative expression as a tool of learning and transformation. While there is extensive research relating to Freire's (1970) ideologies, and there are a number of studies that seek to investigate the benefits of Dramatic practice, there remains a largely untapped research area that examines how the Drama classroom may be used to advance a Freirean (1970) approach to education.

This study makes a case for Drama through democratic practice and a case for democracy through Drama, by drawing on the notion that Drama education provides opportunities for students to be active participants in their own meaning-making processes. This posits Dramatic practice as a form of social justice by raising the notion that students' active participation in their own learning is an element of democratic engagement in the classroom. I believe that Drama faces challenges wherever there is an infatuation with standardisation as a measure of worth for students, and that research linking democracy and the arts counters such thinking by highlighting how Drama offers opportunities for inquiry-based, creative and collaborative approaches that make it a relevant, powerful and a valuable asset to schools and learning (Robinson, 2007). This centres on the idea that Drama has the potential to provide opportunities for students to experience personal transformation by developing an independent voice as part of their learning, while also engaging in socially transformative processes through creative connection with others.

The following chapter traces the roots of social justice conceptually, as a cornerstone idea imperative to critical pedagogy. This has allowed me to develop an understanding of the ways in which theories underpinning Process Drama (Bolton, 1979; Courtney, 1993; Heathcote, 1984)

have significantly influenced the ways we approach Drama education today, and to pinpoint the ways in which Drama historically intersects with critical pedagogies. A critical dramatic multiliteracies approach stems from just such a merger. This approach represents a relatively new field of inquiry (Sandretto & Tillson, 2013) and one in which there is still much to explore in terms of the potential of culturally accessible learning that takes students' experiences and voices into account. Through the study, I anticipate developing a foundation for further research and exploration into this engaging and thought-provoking area of study in which equal opportunity seems to be a primary focus, as part of an examination into the ways we may enrich Drama's potential to as a tool of democratisation and humanisation in education.

Chapter 2. Literature Review

2.1 An Historical Perspective

In a modern world, what constitutes social justice is so broadly debated amongst scholars and politicians alike (Burke, 2010; Hemphill, 2015), that the complexity of its scope is well beyond the means of this study. A brief overview of the conceptual evolution of social justice to its current state, however, reveals a conundrum in locating a cohesive definition.

Singularly defining social justice in an educational context seems equally difficult. Hytten and Bettez (2011) note that “the phrase social justice is used in school mission statements, job announcements and educational reform proposals, though sometimes widely disparate ones, from creating a vision of culturally responsive schools to leaving no child behind” (pp. 7-8). This raises the questions, who does social justice serve? What is meant by justice in ‘social justice’? And, under what social circumstances does this apply?

In the following section, I will present a brief timeline of social justice, as an introduction to Freirean (1970) critical pedagogy. In order to frame an understanding of social justice in the context of the Drama classroom specifically, I will then cross-reference critical pedagogy with Drama pedagogies in order to illustrate the ways in which Drama can be drawn on as a form of democratic participation in education through the pursuit of freedom of inquiry and expression.

2.1.1 Social justice as social order.

Originating in Ancient Judean literature, the Hebrew root of the words, tzedakah (charity or obligation) relating to a sense of community, and sedeq, meaning justice (righteousness) (Hemphill, p. 1) established a conception of social justice as a moral obligation which continued into the Christian tradition. These ideas have made up a core foundation in the concept’s

evolution, so that despite competing understandings and interpretations throughout the development of social justice thinking, notions pertaining to community and righteousness have endured.

For example, early interpretations in the West, favoured the notion of social justice as a form of social control in order to maintain and secure a social order that would advance the moral norms of the time. These were heavily rooted in Christianity and did not advocate nor believe in the virtues of equality, embracing instead, a spirit of charity as its philanthropic calling. And interestingly, the concept of social justice emerged in response, and as a resistance to the social disorder of the French Revolution, with Jesuit Priest, Luigi Taparelli, coining the term in the 1840's. At around the same time, Catholic Priest, Antonio Rosmini (1797-1855), published "The Constitution under Social Justice", a work widely recognised today as an important step in the development of social justice thinking (Burke, 2010). Against a backdrop of rampant poverty in Europe of the 1830's and 1840's, social justice emerged from a Judeo-Christian religiosity which retained a belief in social justice as social order, but developed conceptually and practically to embrace notions of fairness and more equal participatory practice.

Burke (2010) explains that it is only in the twentieth century after the Second World War, that social justice became a primarily more secular and socialist concept in which the role of government is "to protect weakness against force" (p. 97). It is in this light, that Jackson (2005) explains that "an important feature of the concept of social justice is an attempt to alleviate poverty and human need" and that "Hegelian and Marxist thought had an important role to play in developing this insight" (p. 368). In this vein, Jackson (2005) cites Fleischacker in suggesting that social justice is "the defining ideal of the twentieth century (at least in Britain and North

America)” (p. 368). Jackson supports this view as represented by a “social democracy” which “proposed a language of social citizenship that focused on granting every social class the material means to access political and social life and to exercise the rights and obligations of a full citizen (p. 370). In this regard, current understandings of social justice hinge upon practices of fair participation, which redress imbalances of power.

2.1.2 Social Justice as a moral pedagogy.

Hemphill (2015) emphasises that “the concept of social justice has been addressed by some of the greatest minds in Western civilization, including... Hobbes, Locke, Hume, Rousseau, Kant, Hegel, Marx, Mill, and Rawls” (p. 1). Whether it be Marx’s “realization of the moral goals of humankind through “collective effort” (Rueben, 1999, p. 76) or Rawls’ Theory of Justice as fairness (Rawls, 1999), social justice appears to be a practical response to moral conscience, and the nature of its enactment very much dependent on how morality is thus perceived.

Spring (1994) tells us that in Plato’s Republic “a key part of the concept of justice is the concept of virtue” (p. 9) and that in Socratic thought “only the rulers know the good” (p. 6), while it is virtuous to know and keep one’s social place. We can use these contemplations on social order as a form of morality in Platonic philosophy, to justify examinations into the ways authorities of power decide what is good and virtuous in education today, and draw on this as part of an investigation into a Freirean (1970) critical pedagogy, which is also focused on addressing issues of power in education through a moral lens. Interestingly, Elias (1976) points out that Freire, as a practicing Catholic, embraced a “social philosophy” that is “clearly based on religious principles” (p. 44). In this way, Elias (1976) maintains that for Freire, “Marxist elements are integrated with the principles that underlie his Christian inspired vision of society”

(p. 45). Social justice is always at once a pious and political ideal, both theoretically, and practically in action.

2.1.3 Social Justice as transformative practice.

Over time, the idea of social order as a moral imperative of society, has been developed and challenged by theories on social justice in education, which hinge on notions of critical pedagogies. Lamons (2016) credits Henry Giroux with being the first scholar to recognise and use the terminology, “critical pedagogy” (p. 2). Recognised as a movement for which Paulo Freire (1970) is widely accepted as being “the leading figure and founding father”, critical pedagogy is predominantly “the study of oppression in education” (Lamons, 2016, p. 2).

Freire (1970) adhered to the tenet of the free school movement of the late 19th century “that all education should be consciously political” (Spring, 1994, p. 153). Giroux (2004) builds on Freire’s argument, highlighting the “interrelationship of power, politics, and culture” (p. 59) and how social relationships must be understood within these contexts. For both Freire (1973) and Giroux (2004), students must “understand the social construction of knowledge in the framework of power” in order to become empowered (Spring, 1994, p. 27). This suggests that a critical pedagogy informed by these ideas can be looked at as a founding practice of the liberated classroom. It achieves this through a deconstruction of the dominant narratives of the powerful, and replaces these with a diversity of narratives which support the empowerment of students as individuals with specific viewpoints that do not necessarily have to reflect the dominant or ruling perspective.

Importantly, Lamons (2016) explains, that “within Critical Pedagogy, both teacher and students are key agents in social change” (p. 2). This points to an important focus in Freirean (1970) educational theory in which an “accent on liberation and freedom of inquiry” emphasises

the importance of “questioning why certain knowledge is being learned and taught” and the belief that “no education is value free” (Lamons, 2016, p. 2). The more expanded our awareness of these factors, the greater our potential to effect progress through our actions, because as Freire (1970) explains, “the more the people unveil this challenging reality which is to be the object of their transforming action, the more critically they enter that reality” (p. 53). Freire (1970) therefore embraces an ideology of transformation which insists that social justice exists not only as an intellectual concept but must have practical considerations. Central to Freire’s pedagogy of freedom is the idea that we transform the world “by means of conscious, practical work” (Freire & Macedo, 1987, p. 69). This work comprises a series of pedagogical approaches, shaped by what Freire (1973) referred to as critical literacy, which supports the development of a raised socio-political awareness he terms critical consciousness.

A Freirean (1970) critical literacy draws on the following four main elements:

- I. Dialogical and dialectical practice
- II. Awareness of oppression
- III. Humanization
- IV. Reflexivity: a cycle of action and reflection.

- I. Dialogical and dialectical practice

Goulet, in his Introduction to Freire’s “Education for Critical Consciousness” tells us that “the mark of a successful educator is not skill in persuasion... but the ability to dialogue with educatees in a mode of reciprocity” (Freire, 1973, p. xiii). According to Freire (1970), a “revolutionary leadership must practice co-intentional education. Teachers and students... co-intent on reality, are both Subjects, not only in the task of unveiling that reality, and thereby

coming to know it critically, but in the task of re-creating that knowledge” (p. 69). This, he explains, is the panacea to education as “an act of depositing” which refers to his widely recognised “banking concept of education” (p. 72-73).

A Freirean view of critical pedagogy as a democratisation of education in the classroom (Czank, 2012; Freire, 1973) positions the teacher as guide and liberator. According to this approach, the teacher may still be recognised as the ‘authority’ on a particular subject but is not an authoritarian presence in the classroom (Freire, 1996). Spring (1994) cites from Giroux in emphasizing that “rather than acting as technicians carrying out a preplanned curriculum...teachers should be transformative intellectuals who engage their students in critical dialogues” (p. 29).

Critical dialogue is part of a resistance against what Freire (1970) terms a transmission-based approach, in which the teacher imposes a singular narrative on students. According to Freire (1970), dictating to students rather than encouraging them to discover for themselves, works to obstruct growth and transformation by limiting opportunities for students to widen their perspectives. This is why Freire (1998) asserts that “to teach is not to transfer knowledge but to create the possibilities for the production or construction of knowledge” (p. 30). This is accomplished through what Freire (1970) terms “a problem-posing education” (p. 80), which relies on dialogic and dialectical practice. To this end, a process of collaborative communication as a form of learning, gives students an opportunity to participate in their own meaning-making experiences while raising student awareness of the experience of others. Dialectical engagement encourages students to look for dichotomies within their previous understandings, and to question the ways in which they are asked to learn, which includes taking into account the social contexts within which learning itself takes place.

When students engage in dialogic and dialectical processes which raise their awareness of the factors that shape their own perspective, this new understanding of what Luke (2000) refers to as “context and standpoint” (p. 450), exposes students to how subjective perspective can be. In this way, individuals must be aware of their positionality in order to be empowered to re-position themselves. As such, Freire (1970) explains that as part of an inalienable aspect of developing self-worth, the “oppressed must participate” (p. 124) in dialogical processes in such a way that they themselves author the blueprint to their own freedom. This sets the stage for the emergence of the critically literate student, who, through a process of conscientization, is empowered to become an active voice for change.

II. Awareness of oppression

Freire’s (1970) view is that for liberated learning to take place and so as to “surmount the situation of oppression, people must first critically recognise its causes, so that through transforming action they can create a new situation, one which makes possible the pursuit of a fuller humanity” (p. 47). This striving for “the right to be human” (Freire, 1970, p. 56) calls for a revelation of the socio-political realities that lurk behind the curtains of oppression. Within a critical framework, the repositioning of power needed to confront and end oppressive practice depends on a raised awareness of context in our learning. As Luke (2000) explains, critical literacy “is about setting the conditions for students to engage in textual relationships of power” (p. 449). In this regard, Freire believes that “reading the world always precedes reading the word, and reading the word implies continually reading the world” (Freire & Macedo, 1973, p. 43). In other words, literacy as a critical concept requires a reading of context.

These ideas suggest that we empower students when they are made aware of the dynamics of power in education (Comber, 2015; Kincheloe et al, 2011; Medina, et al, 2007;

Mills, 2006; Morrell, 2002). This heightened awareness, allows students in “naming the world”, to “transform it” (Freire, 1970, p. 88); to become aware of discrimination and inequality so they may respond to it. In other words, conscientization, as awareness of oppression, allows students to develop a position in relation to the world, and it is this consciousness which empowers them to change it.

III. Humanization

Freire’s (1970) “radical democratic humanism” (Aaronowitz, 2015, p. 112) demands that student empowerment starts with the act of humanising learning. Poore (2009) draws from Freire’s theories in stating that education itself “is a moral endeavor that is humane and humanising” (p. 2). In this regard, Poore (2009) emphasises that “teaching, as an educative act, must rely on practical and wise reflection on the moral character of education and its goal of human flourishing if it is to avoid anti-humanist practice” (p. 3). This invokes Gussin Paley (1999) for whom teaching is ultimately “a moral act”. (p. xii). Bahruth (2005) advances this idea, asserting that “if we are not teaching toward social justice, we are perpetuating social injustice” (p. 510). In other words, learning approaches which neglect humanising elements, can be seen to be unjust and in this regard, oppressive.

Teachers work in a social environment where the dynamics of both the personal and the political converge to shape classroom practice. I look at Shaul’s assertion in his foreword to Freire’s “Pedagogy of the Oppressed”, that “there is “no such thing as a neutral education process” (Freire, 1970, p. 34). To this end, the way social justice themes play out in individual classrooms is dependent on the ideas which hold most power and influence over teachers. These are ultimately sourced from the teachers’ own sense of right and wrong behavior, and represented by a moral disposition derived from their personal, professional and broader cultural

contexts. From a critical Freirean (1970) perspective, if we are to extoll the values of democracy as teachers, then we must model democratic values in our teaching, which includes humanising students by giving them a voice to be heard, seen and understood (Crafton et al, 2007; Ntelioglou 2011; Ntelioglou and Gallagher, 2011).

A central notion in Freirean (1970) humanistic philosophy, is the call for the oppressed to “liberate themselves and their oppressors as well” (Freire, 1970, p. 44). In this regard, Freire (1970) warns that “the oppressed, instead of striving for liberation, tend themselves to become oppressors, or “sub-oppressors”” due to the conditioning of oppression in their psyche, explaining that “this is their model of humanity” (p. 45). Social justice from this perspective, characterises empowerment as a way of liberating both the oppressed and oppressor from the cycle of inequality and the injustices that give rise to it, through the awakening of a greater awareness in relation to the socio-political and socio-economic realities that shape their lives. In this way, Freirean (1970) humanism invokes Rosmini and Tapparelli’s conceptions of social justice, formed as they were, in response to the ideological absolutism that raged through the early years of the French Revolution (Burke, 2010). Throughout the Reign of Terror, we see an exchange of power, rather than an examination of it (Burke, 2010). Ollis (2012) explains this as a phenomenon in which “the urgency of activism and the desire for significant social change often prevents a critical space for reflection to occur” (p. 1). But it is exactly this kind of reflection, through a cycle of inquiry and response, which is so important to Freire (1970) for whom human empowerment and humanization must go hand in hand. He argues that “the moment the new regime hardens into a dominating “bureaucracy” the humanist dimension of the struggle is lost and it is no longer possible to speak of liberation” (p. 57). He insists that “the authentic solution of the oppressor-oppressed contradiction does not lie in a mere reversal of position, in moving

from one pole to the other. Nor does it lie in the replacement of the former oppressors with new ones who continue to subjugate the oppressed - all in the name of their liberation” (p. 57). Freire (1970) yearns not for revenge on the oppressor, but for the absence of oppression. In this sense, social justice is a tool of transformation through collaboration and understanding, and an escape from a cycle where oppressed and oppressor must continually wrestle for domination.

IV. Reflexivity: a cycle of action and reflection

Cunliff (2004) points to Freire as “instrumental in drawing attention to the need for critically reflexive practice in education” (p. 409) which is underpinned by the belief that “action is not dichotomised from reflection” (p. 53). This leads to a cyclical process of learning which Freire (1970) terms a praxis: “the action and reflection of men and women upon their world in order to transform it” (p. 79). Therefore, according to Door (2014), “one aspect of Freire’s concept of conscientization is that individuals develop a deepening awareness of both the socio-cultural world and their own potential for transforming that world” (p. 89). In this sense, Door (2014) explains that “the nature of schooling should be such that it gives individuals the capacity to construct a better world, and at the same time to reconstruct themselves” because “both Freire and Dewey make clear that without the change of the individual, there can be no real social change” (p. 90). Critical reflexivity, in this regard, encompasses social change as both as a form of raised personal awareness, and collective critical consciousness.

Stevens and Bean (2006) describe praxis as “that blend of theory and practice that mutually interrogate each other” and state that “the place of praxis is crucial in critical literacy as a means of social justice” (p. 62). Birden (2008) summarises this when she says: “Learners should be allowed to develop praxis, an inventive and interventive way of life that encourages free, creative reflection and thoughtful action in order to change the world, even as the learners

are transformed in the process” (p. 508). Freire (1970) insists that this process of “discovery cannot be purely intellectual but must involve action; nor can it be limited to mere activism, but must include serious reflection; only then will it be a praxis” (p. 65). Cunliff (2004) characterises critical praxis as a moral imperative by citing Jun who describes it as “the need for self-conscious and ethical action based on a critical questioning of past actions and of future possibilities” (p. 409).

From this, we can suggest that engaging in praxis develops critical consciousness, by challenging previously held ‘truths’, through a constant, critical testing of the status quo. Driven by an examination of power, critical praxis has imbedded in its makeup, a system of checks and balances that work to protect against authoritarian control, with freedom of inquiry and expression positioned to protect against the forces of repression. In this sense, praxis is the art of ascent through dissent in what Freire (1970) labels “the process of permanent liberation” (p. 54); a dialectical framework of inquiry in which we examine, take apart, and then build up again, in the endeavour to achieve social justice in the world. Based on what Micheletti (2010) calls a “genuine dialectic, meaning the teacher poses a question with no intention of steering the dialogue towards a single answer” (p. 1), Freire (1970) recognises the eternally “unfinished” nature of our lives so that we are always in a process of “becoming” (p. 84). When we view learning in this way, as a cyclical process that effects change, we can also see that transformation is literally the enactment of revolution.

Ultimately, Freire’s (1970) philosophies are intended to bring people together to understand each other in a way which challenges the idea that the oppressed must comply with the dominant voice of the oppressor in order for peace to prevail. As such, critical pedagogies are in large part concerned with the way social values inform learning, and it is within this

framework that Freire (1970) engages in an examination of power in order to effect social change. The thinking here suggests that we do not simply rise up and resist oppression through any means, but ask, ‘what are the means of liberation available to us that embody humanizing qualities?’ This study looks at Dramatic practice as one of these means.

2.1.4 The development of Drama as a critical pedagogy.

From Forum theatre which confronts bullying (Gourd & Gourd, 2011) to “action theatre” as “social activism” (Stroud Strasel, 2010), to the collaborative process of “collective creation” in the form of self-devised theatre (Lang, 2002, p. 48); from Heathcote’s “Mantle of the Expert” which allows learning to take place on “conceptual, personal and social levels” (p. 173) to Boal’s (1995, 2002) “Theatre of the Oppressed”, influenced by Freire, and focused on transformation through physical, interactive and activist interpretations of theatre, to various forms of role play, script deconstruction and drama games and activities, there appear to be myriad ways to unpack themes of social justice in the Drama classroom. In this section, I look at a few of the key ways in which critical theory has influenced theatre and Drama, and how it has, in some ways, catapulted Drama beyond a characterisation of a handmaiden to theatrical practice, and into a space where it is valued as an educational subject that stands on its own.

Both a Brechtian approach (Kruger, 2006) to theatrical practice and Boalian (1979, 1995, 2001, 2002) approach to theatre and Drama, can be understood to have contributed to the ways critical pedagogy has developed in Drama classrooms. Courtney (1993) points to Theatre in Education (TIE) as it developed in the 20th century as having been powerfully influenced “by the German Communist/playwright, Brecht, to use both drama and theatre for left-wing political aims” (p. 513). In this regard, Bai (1988) explains that Brecht’s work was geared towards “a more politically conscious audience” (p. 392). Zavarzadeh (1992) extends this idea, painting a

picture of Brecht's drama as emancipatory, for the way "his own theory of drama is based on the notion that the dramatic should not conceal itself but, on the contrary, mark itself as such – as a constructed act, a social use of codes and language, a textual entity – and never allow the audience to forget that it too, is playing a cultural role" (p. 27). Zavarzadeh (1992) explains that for Brecht, "the goal of the drama is to give the spectator a chance to criticise what it encounters from a social point of view" (p. 27).

Like Brecht, Boal (1979, 1995) dissolves the fourth wall in theatre in order to interrogate social constructs, and in so doing, emphasises the reciprocal relationship between actor and audience. Boal (2002) whose work evolved from Freire's pedagogy of liberation, developed the term, "spect-actors" (p. 19) to refer to the dual role of actor and audience member in forum theatre. A Boalian approach gives students the opportunity to play both observer and engaged participant, which draws on Freire's (1970) critical praxis of action and reflection. Boal's (1979, 1995) approach as an examination of the socio-cultural dynamics of power draws explicitly on Freire's pedagogy of liberation, and there are a few small studies which examine how teachers use Boal's (2002) Image Theatre in precisely this way to develop critical literacy in students (Rozansky & Aagesen, 2010; Rozansky & Santos, 2009).

The ideas here invoke Freire's (1970) practice of critical reflexivity, which relies on an ongoing process of discussion and discovery, rather than seeking a single solution as an end goal or product. This approach resonates with Process Drama, a methodology that has had a strong influence, and in many ways, provided a foundation for current Drama educational practice (Bowell & Heape, 2013; Dillon & Way, 1981). Process Drama is a methodology that can be understood to be a creative and collaborative, experiential and inquiry-based, problem-solving approach to learning (Haseman, 1991; Heathcote, & Herbert, 1985; Wagner, 1976; Weltsek-

Medina, 2007). In this regard, Wagner (1976) suggests that Heathcote “allows students to make as many of the decisions about what the drama is going to be about as possible” (p. 20).

Allowing students control in this way, speaks to a Freirean (1970) focus on self-empowered learning and re-iterates the Freirean (1970) view of teacher and student as “co-investigators” (p. 81). The principles that inform Process Drama also speak to a Freirean (1970) approach which relies on raising awareness through inquiry and expression, in order to engage students in problem-solving approaches to learning.

In this regard, Process Drama, as a key contributor to Drama methodology today, presents a platform for opportunities to merge critical pedagogy with Drama. This poses the potential to empower students to engage in learning as a form of raised socio-cultural awareness, which merges play and imagination with praxis, that is, a process of action and reflection.

2.1.5 A critical dramatic multiliteracies approach.

A critical dramatic multiliteracies approach (Giampapa, 2010; Kellner, 2003; Mills, 2006; Mills, 2010; Ntelioglou, 2011; Sandretto & Tillson, 2013; Shenfield, 2015) has drawn from critical literacy and multiliteracies theory (Cope & Kalantzis, 2000; Sandretto and Tilson, 2013) to become one of the more recent methodologies to approach Drama as a tool of social justice. A critical multiliteracies approach advances Freire’s (1970) philosophy of literacy as the construction of meaning through the critical examination of context, as an act of empowerment.

The term ‘multiliteracies’ was developed through the work, in 1996, of the New London Group, in what Sandretto and Tilson (2013) characterise as a call “for young people to develop a range of social, creative, ethical and cultural practices to make meaning in a technology rich and culturally diverse world” (p. 4). A multiliteracies approach challenges the idea of literacy as a form of proficiency in the mechanics of reading and writing, and extends opportunities for

meaning-making through mediums, or what Cope and Kalantzis (2000) call “texts which are linguistic as well as from those which are visual, audio, gestural and spatial” (p. 211).

Multiliteracies was seen in this way, as “a reconceptualisation of literacy... that takes account of an increasing cultural and linguistic diversity and rapid changes in communication technologies” (Sandretto & Tilson, 2013, p. 3). In fact, the very nature of multiliteracies is such that as new modes of communication become available, so too do these become viable avenues for expression in learning.

A multiliteracies approach takes on a critical element when it incorporates socio-cultural awareness in such a way that it becomes a springboard for critical conscientization. Spring (1994) explains, “Freire’s revolution is primarily a cultural one” (p. 162), which marks out, as Luke (2000) contends, “a shift in educational focus from the “self” to how texts work in contexts” (p. 453). Ntelioglou and Gallagher (2011) claim that performative and dialogic literacies “play a prominent role in our emerging definition of new literacies” (p. 322) and assert that drama practices can provoke creative and critical forms of literacy that suggest new modes of theorizing the multiple acts of literacy that take place in schools” (p. 322). A dramatic critical multiliteracies approach aims to shape the classroom environment towards supporting equality, social justice and the principles of democracy, beyond the limits of a content-driven curriculum, and into an experiential and lived practice of these values (Sandretto & Tillson, 2013).

Contemplation on the value of personal engagement in learning, raises questions in regard to the ways we privilege certain cultures and exclude others from the learning process. Bringing a critical focus to a multiliteracies approach, acknowledges that how culturally accessible a text is to a student, has the potential to have a significant impact on his or her learning progress (Kellner, 2003). Ntegliou and Gallagher (2011) suggest that Drama is a

medium well-suited to support this type of raised socio-cultural awareness through “dialogue, reflection, and ultimately, performance as enabling factors” (p. 328). In this regard, Medina et al (2007) suggest that these practices promote diversity, by enabling us to engage in self-expression while also hearing the “voice of the other” (p. 115). Ntelioglou and Gallagher (2011) marvel at the fact that drama can draw a diverse group of adolescents together to make meaning, and propose that drama is an effective tool in breaking down barriers and building bridges towards understanding among students. The authors speak of students being able to authentically engage with each other’s ideas, through for example, devising collective performances. This example forms part of a vision in which Dramatic practice gives students an opportunity to pursue learning as part of a community of learners, while independently constructing meaning for themselves. When this is framed as part of an aim to raise socio-cultural awareness, including students’ sense of their own positionality (Luke, 2000), this can be understood to set the conditions for the development of critical consciousness.

2.1.6 Drama as a tool of social justice.

The way in which this study has been framed, assumes that in order to perceive of Drama as a tool of social justice, we must ask, ‘In what ways does Dramatic practice offer opportunities to read the world within a critical pedagogical framework?’ According to Kenny (2008), “evolving one’s consciousness is one of the most creative acts possible and... as consciousness develops, creativity increases” (p. 591). This study extends this understanding to include the notion of critical consciousness as having the potential to enrich Dramatic practice.

The literature in this chapter suggests that Dramatic practice from its inception seems to carry in its DNA, a blueprint for connection with social conscience. This is based on the idea that Drama is a medium advanced by narrative, that from narrative springs meaning, and that the

ways in which we construct meaning are informed by our own morals and values, which are in turn, influenced by the morality of the time. Gleaning meaning from context as a form of Dramatic literacy existed centuries before Freire's (1970) philosophy of critical literacy and a critical dramatic multiliteracies approach. These critical approaches, however, allow for a reinvention of Drama education as a tool of social justice, bringing together critical and creative practices with the aim of empowering students through a raised awareness of the world and their place in it.

Chapter 3. Methodology

3.1 Methodological Framework

This study draws on the perceptions and experiences of drama teachers in New York and New Jersey in order to piece together a picture of drama as a tool of social justice. More particularly, this study questions how Freirean critical consciousness and a critical dramatic multiliteracies teaching approach, raise awareness of social justice in presenting a pathway towards a liberated classroom. In the following paragraphs, I delve into the methodology that led to the critical constructivist framework that has driven my methodological approach.

3.1.1 A Qualitative research orientation.

This study draws upon Cresswell's (2007) definition of qualitative research as "the study of research problems inquiring into the meaning individuals or groups ascribe to a social or human problem" (p. 4). Cresswell (2007) suggests this includes data collection in a "natural setting" (p. 14) and analysis which is inductive and focusses on gleaning "individual meaning" (p. 4). As such, Creswell (2007) emphasises that the final analysis "includes the voices of the participants, the reflexivity of the researcher, and a complex description and interpretation of the problem" that "extends the literature or signals a call for action" (p. 37). A focus on action as a response to reflection is a key element in transformational practice in critical theory, and it is in this regard, that Cresswell (2007) points out that a transformative paradigm has swept into definitions of qualitative research over time. This is reiterated by Denzin and Lincoln (2005) who describe qualitative research as a set of practices that "transform the world" (p. 3). In this way, Denzin and Lincoln (2005) refer to qualitative research as "a situated activity that locates the observer in the world" and which "consists of a set of interpretive, material practices that make the world visible" (p. 3). This notion of the acquisition of knowledge as a way of widening perspectives in order to reveal a clearer picture of the world is further expressed by Vasilachis de

Gialdino (2009) who emphasises participant perspective, social interaction and the importance of personal narratives as key elements in the construction of meaning. It is in this vein that this study approaches data collection and analysis as a series of narratives which represent a conversation (Rubin and Rubin, 2012) throughout which participants are given the opportunity to reflect on and thus develop on their views and experiences. It is from this perspective that Cresswell (2007) describes “talking directly to people and seeing how they behave and act in their context” as an important element of qualitative research (p. 37). Conducting face to face interviews enriches opportunities to read and respond to participants’ body language, and to nuance in their facial and vocal expressions. This grants the interviewer greater access to the contexts which inform interviewees’ responses, and this has the potential to significantly influence interpretation. This kind of acknowledgment of the significance of what may be passed over in more quantitative research contexts, as small or insignificant details, are in this qualitative study seen as part of painting a holistic, and therefore more developed picture of the ontological and methodological forces which drive participants’ views.

3.1.2 Constructivist approach.

A qualitative examination that examines the processes and practices which inform how participants construct meaning, can be seen to invite a constructivist worldview. Moran (2013) explains that “intentionality is currently understood as the manner in which embodied human agents ... act in a meaningful world ... as disclosers and creators of meaning”. In this way, Hershberg (2014) suggests that a constructivist worldview draws on Piaget and Vygotsky in understanding knowledge as a socio-culturally constructed process of discovery which uses “assimilation and accommodation” as a way of making meaning (p. 183). Hershberg (2014) cites Von Glaserfeld’s work as advancing the constructivist notion that “knowledge does not

necessarily become more accurate through an organism's interaction with the environment but rather more viable" (p. 183). To this end, this methodology does not seek to pinpoint a positivistic truth from participant narratives, but to find meaning in their perceptions of their experiences; or in other words, to make understanding and insight more viable. Lee (2012) describes this as radical constructivism, which "focuses exclusively on the meaning-making activity of the individual mind" (p. 410).

Yet, Bentley (2003) asserts that "in the social constructivist view, community has priority over the individual and individual rationality is considered a by-product of communication and social life" (p. 5). In a similar regard, this study takes into account the unique understanding of individual participants while at the same time, analysing these to find patterns and themes that speak to a collective viewpoint. This draws from Martin-Smith's (2005) assertion that "the multiplicity of approaches to Drama and theatre education, each with its own aesthetic pattern, often obscures the common ground they all share" (p. 3). My aim in this study was to capture a kind of zeitgeist in relation to current Drama practice, and the way social justice interplays with this.

Bentley et al (2007) discuss how the "constructivist view of meaning and knowledge creation" (p. 9) holds that interpretation is inherent in all meaning making, and that one's values, background, understandings and experiences are reflected in the way we make sense of phenomena. Steinberg (2014) describes this as working to understand "the forces that construct knowledge" (p. 205), so that "personal experience intersects with academic or lived knowledges" (p. 205). Polkinghorne (2005) extends this idea to suggest that the "primary purpose of qualitative research is to describe and clarify experience as it is lived and constituted in awareness" (p. 138). Yet Polkinghore (2005) also points to challenges in the study of the area of

human experience based on it being inherently “multilayered and complex” (p. 138). This study too, examines the notion of raised awareness as central to meaning-making, and I have looked, in this regard, to a constructivist research approach as a solution in grappling with the multifaceted and nuanced elements to which Polkinghorne (2005) refers. In this study, the notion of raised awareness is examined in the context of a critical pedagogical approach grounded in theories of a Freirean (1970) critical literacy. In the following section, I explore how it is from this critical perspective that my research lays down its epistemological roots.

3.1.3 A critical constructivist epistemology.

While I embrace a constructivist paradigm, this work is overtly grounded in a critical epistemology, based on research concerned with the examination of dynamics of power in education. Steinberg (2014) explains that “critical constructivists are concerned with the role power plays in research construction and validation processes”, and that “critical constructivist researchers are particularly interested in the ways these processes privilege some people and marginalise others” (p. 205). In this regard, Steinberg (2014) suggests that “critical constructivists understand that the social, cognitive and educational theories we hold must be consciously addressed” (p. 205). I draw on these ideas to reflect on my own assumptions and underlying biases and how these have worked to influence data generation and analysis within this study. As such, I adopt a critical constructivist approach which invokes Mimick (2011), who states that in “any qualitative inquiry rooted within interpretive methodology, the researcher is inherently implicated in the construction of meaning” (p. 70). This sense of self-reflection has allowed me, as researcher, to be more open to fresh ideas and concepts, so that I may look towards new channels of understanding as I pursue my own meaning-making. In so doing, I

acknowledge that my interpretations are not neutral, but embroiled in my previous knowledge and experience. This includes my acknowledgment that as researcher, I am also an active participant in the process of investigation and recognise that my own views in regard to the benefits of Drama have influenced the lines of inquiry I have pursued, including the cues I gave participants at interview. Therefore, as a constructivist researcher, I recognise my subjectivity, bias and influence on the outcomes of this study, and have been transparent with participants about my own advocacy for Dramatic practice.

Bentley (2003) explains that critical-constructivism advocates for “an understanding and disposition about knowledge that furthers democratic living” and aims “to bring about a greater personal and social consciousness” (pp. 1-2). In this sense, “critical-constructivists acknowledge the social nature of all knowledge construction and therefore value the cultivation of critical communities of inquiry and the achievement of a democratic social order” (p. 5). The values inherent in that statement coincide with the framework within which this project is set and which advocate for a socialised, democratised and humanised classroom that is not held hostage to a standardised or “technocratized” (Bentley et al, 2007, p. 9) approach to education. In this regard, this study adheres to a critical-constructivist epistemology with the view that “education is a socio-political endeavor and teaching is an ethical act” (Bentley, 2003, p. 4).

Kincheloe and McLaren maintain that “Qualitative research that frames its purpose in the context of critical theoretical concerns ...produces... undeniably dangerous knowledge, the kind of information and insight that upsets institutions and threatens to overturn sovereign regimes of truth” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2000, p. 279). These ideas suggest that a powerful dynamic exists where a qualitative orientation and critical ideology intersect. A critical-constructivist epistemology, in this sense, provides a strong framework in the search for insight into Drama as

a tool of social justice through questioning dynamics of power and instigating social transformation.

3.2 Selection of Research Participants

The choice to conduct this study in the United States, was influenced by the fact I was a resident of New York at the time it was conducted. My own experience teaching in Middle and High schools in New York, added to my interest in conducting research within a geographical area in which I had accumulated personal and professional experience as a Drama and English teacher. I felt that as a dual Australian-American citizen, this research gave me a unique opportunity to access Drama teacher perspectives within an American context while also drawing from my own background in Drama and theatre in Australia. In this way, I felt that my own experience as a teacher in America could lend weight and depth to the study, while my sense of being an outsider could contribute to developing new insights with a fresh eye.

I undertook recruitment with approval from the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee and received a Human Ethics Certificate of Approval # CF15/1445 – 2015000695. See approval letter attached as Appendix A.

To source participants, I initially used a network selection process as defined by de Marrais (2004, p. 60) when I reached out to the principals of schools with Drama programs in New York City, and also reached out to teacher contacts and theatre practitioner connections in social media. The latter proved more successful. Whilst I initially presumed that my experience as a New York City teacher would serve to open doors for me in procuring potential interview subjects through schools, this presumption proved to be untrue, and I experienced significant difficulty in lobbying schools to assist me recruit participants in the way I'd hoped. Instead, I reached out to connections in the schools I had taught in myself, as well as other arts education

practitioners whom I'd met through various professional development and networking avenues. While initially the criteria for potential participants was that they be drama teachers as well as general education teachers who had taught drama, those who did participate were either experienced Drama teachers, or experienced Drama practitioners who work in Drama education. Polkinghorne (2005) explains that participants for a qualitative study "are not selected because they fulfill the representative requirements of statistical inference but because they can provide substantial contributions to filling out the structure and character of the experience under investigation" (p. 139). A consequence of all of the participants having a background and training in Drama and theatre, has been the benefit of a wealth of perspectives from experienced practitioners to draw from in constructing an in depth understanding of the many incarnations that drama as a tool of social justice can embody.

The following is a brief introduction to and background of each (de-identified) participant:

Carolina: Carolina has been an ELA teacher at a middle school in the Bronx for the last five years. She has been performing as an actor since childhood, and holds a degree in theatre. Carolina lived in Peru and studied there with a small, political theatre group whom she describes as "giving voice to the disappeared", those victims of government brutality who were the "desperacito" – the disappeared. Carolina brings her passion for Latin American political theatre into her classroom, through her focus on the social justice themes that affect her students.

Dianne: Dianne is a sixth grade special education teacher at a middle and high school in the Bronx where she has taught for the last eight years. She is a team teacher in an inclusion classroom. Around 40% of the students in the class qualify for special education. Dianna's background is in musical theatre and acting. Dianna taught theatre in summer camps, and now works to infuse the arts into the curriculum. Dianna also teaches one high school acting class.

Barbara: Barbara is the Director of Professional Development at a multimillion dollar state, federal and donor funded arts organization in New York City, whose focus is to set up specialist residencies in schools in the four art forms: visual arts, dance, drama and music. A large proportion of their work is in theatre. Barbara's own Drama background spans around 40 years in theatre administration, Drama education, and as a trained performer working with Uta Hagen.

Kate: Kate has been involved in theatre education for almost 20 years. She is a teaching consultant who has extensive experience both as a trained actor and Drama teacher. Her Drama teaching background was launched through a Shakespearean theatre company with whom she worked, offering workshops to elementary and middle schools. Kate spent a number of years as a theatre artist-in-residence at a middle school in the Bronx, which began as a placement through a non-profit arts education organisation.

Jennifer: Jennifer is a New Jersey based theatre director, producer, choreographer and teacher, having taught musical theatre, dance and Drama for over 25 years. She has worked in classrooms as well as after school and summer camp programs, and her theatre work is based on original scripts which focus on teaching social justice and tolerance through theatre.

Joe: Joe is Jennifer's partner in their educational theatre company based in New Jersey, and has also been directing shows and running school Drama workshops for over 25 years. Joe is an actor, dancer and singer who grew up in the theatre with parents who were performers, and later became a rock musician, ultimately transitioning into both conventional musical theatre and experimental theatre, working on techniques developed by Jerzy Grotowski. Joe has also taught Drama within the juvenile detention system, and is a writer and composer.

Leanne: Leanne currently heads the props department at an established children's theatre company in New York City, and teaches set design, and, occasionally, puppetry at a renowned arts college in Westchester, New York. She has prior experience as a Drama teacher, specialising in mask and movement. Leanne grew up in the theatre as her family owns a theatre company in Texas which incorporates a lot of dance, pantomime, mime and puppetry into their work, and she has trained at the Le Coq School in Paris.

3.3 Data Generation through Semi-Structured Interviews

Interviews were conducted at participants' workplaces in private offices, classrooms and workspaces, each spanning around one hour. See interview questions attached as Appendix B.

The interview consisted of six questions which were formulated based on concepts in the Literature Review which point to five key elements of critical Dramatic pedagogy which I labelled the 5 C's. These are Context, Connection, Collaboration, Community, and Creativity. I elaborate on these as follows:

1. Awareness of context
2. A sense of connection to the work, self and others
3. The use of collaboration as a learning tool
4. An understanding of the classroom as a learning community
5. Creativity as a form of self-motivation and developing vision of the world

These ideas acted as a compass in pointing me towards the ways participants understood and enacted concepts of social justice in their Drama classrooms.

3.3.1 Methodological framework informing the interviews.

Robson (1993/2000) talks about the interview as a “conversation with a purpose” (p. 228) thus illuminating the social nature of the encounter, as well as the fact that it is inherently goal oriented. Similarly, Rubin and Rubin (2012) introduce the idea of a responsive interview as a reflective conversation, which works to elicit depth, detail, vivid descriptions, richness, and nuance so that evidence is discovered by “examining layers of meaning” (pp. 103). This was a key goal of my data generation approach.

Semi-structured interviews offer both structure and the opportunity to deviate from core questions. This helped me as researcher to maintain a strong focus, while also gathering rich detail. Robson (1993/2000) cites Cohen and Manion in describing how “open-ended situations can also result in unexpected or unanticipated answers, which may suggest hitherto unthought-of relationships or hypotheses” (p. 233). In this regard, Rubin and Rubin (2012) explain that the interview should have a “flexible design” and there needs to be awareness that “both interviewer and interviewee impact and influence the questioning” (p. 38). I drew on philosophies pertaining to interview methodology (Gillham, 2000; Robson, 1993/2000; Rubin and Rubin, 2012) which served to emphasise that due to the flexible nature of the semi-structured interview, it was important for me to pre-plan interviews so as to sequence questions and anticipate probes in such a way as to customise interview questions and to look into expanding on relevant but unexpected answers. I have included these anticipated probes and prompts as part of the interview questions, attached as Appendix B.

I followed Robson’s (1993/2000) suggestion to keep cards with prompts on them and also jotted down small notes during the interviews. I found this technique useful in helping me to keep track of particular points of interest raised by participants, which I then used to steer the

conversation forward so as to further examine these. I also found these notes helpful later, in analysis.

3.4 Data Analysis

Gibbs (2007) describes analysis as a transformative practice in that “our analyses are themselves interpretations and thus constructions of the world” (p. 11). He suggests that in qualitative research, analysis can, and often should, run concurrently with data collection. In my own data analysis process, this practice allowed for a free flow of ideas from the start, and a freedom in the process of data collection which enabled me to follow lines of questioning that enriched the data, rather than being bound by more rigid structures.

Polkinghorne (2005) identifies analysis in qualitative research as an “iterative one, moving from collection of data to analysis and back until the description is comprehensive” (p. 140). Gibbs (2007) points to the notion that qualitative analysis expands rather than reduces the data with the aim of “creating more texts in the form of things like summaries, précis, memos, notes and drafts” (p. 6-7). He identifies the process of coding as a “way of organizing or managing the data” with the aim of setting up a system of interpreting it (p. 7). According to Gibbs (2007) densely coded text will often “have more than one code” attached to it (p. 7). I used an inductive approach to locate themes that came out of an interpretation of these codes, and therefore drew on a process of thematic analysis (Braun & Clarke, 2006; Clarke & Braun, 2014; Guest et al, 2011).

3.4.1 Thematic analysis.

Clarke and Braun (2014) point out the flexibility of thematic analysis as a method of analysis, and refer to its ability to support both a critical and constructivist viewpoint due its accessibility as an analytic tool (p. 4).

Guest et al (2011) tell us that “thematic analyses move beyond counting explicit words or phrases and focus on identifying and describing both implicit and explicit ideas within the data...[which leads]... to a more categorical, analytic and theoretical level of coding” (pp. 10-11). They explain that “codes are then typically developed to represent the identified themes and applied or linked to raw data as summary markers for later analysis” (pp. 10-11). Clarke and Braun (2014) define thematic analysis as “a method for identifying and interpreting patterns of meaning across qualitative data” (p. 1). This involves analysing transcripts in order to identify themes across interviews, and then referring back to the literature to compare with these ideas. For this inquiry, I followed Braun and Clarke’s (2012) approach which they explain involves a (recursive) six-phase process:

- 1) Familiarising yourself with the data and identifying items of potential interest
- 2) Generating initial codes
- 3) Searching for themes
- 4) Reviewing potential themes
- 5) Defining and naming themes
- 6) Writing up and producing the report

(Retrieved from Braun and Clarke, 2012, pp. 57-71).

In summary, transcriptions were analysed in depth to pinpoint recurring expressions, thoughts, beliefs, ideas and concepts. This analysis included my own reflections through stream of consciousness writing, as well as notes and marks on the transcription pages themselves. I mapped these ideas out and organised them into coherent themes, using table diagrams in a word

document. I then advanced these ideas into thematic headings under which I began the process of writing up my findings, which included linking back to the literature review and furthering my research based on themes that arose through these processes. According to Braun and Clarke (2014), “thematic analysis is flexible in how it can be used to analyse and theorise data... as it is not tied to a particular theoretical or epistemological framework” (p. 4). However, as Guest et al point out, this does not mean this “exploratory approach” is “atheoretical”, but just that it may be used to generate hypotheses for further study.” (p. 8). This mirrors my own aim in this study, which is to build a platform of understanding upon which to develop further research into the connections between Drama and social justice.

3.5 Ethical Issues

Kvale and Brinkmann (2009) refer to ethics as a “pervasive aspect” of interview practice (p. xv). They suggest that “the knowledge produced by such research depends on the social relationship between interviewer and interviewee, which depends on the interviewer’s ability to create a stage where the subject is free and safe to talk of private events recorded for later public use” (p. 20). From an ethical standpoint, this mirrors the phenomenon I am looking to investigate within the research in relation to creating safe spaces in which to freely explore knowledge. Safety as freedom, is therefore an ethical concept in which issues of power are acknowledged as affecting personal expression and academic inquiry. These sentiments reflect the values framing my own research project and serve to inform my approach to the interviews in which my intention is to honour participants’ perspectives, without seeking to steer them towards a particular point of view.

One key consideration was that participants would experience concern about being recorded and exhibit apprehension in relation to how this may compromise them. Issues of trust

were addressed by following a strict protocol in terms of the Explanatory Statement and Consent Form. These made clear to participants that they would be completely de-identified in the findings of the research, would receive a pseudonym during the analysis process and would remain anonymous throughout except to the researcher. Participants were given an option to opt out at any time.

3.5.1 The issue of trustworthiness and validity.

Braun and Clarke (2006) offer a table of criteria for ensuring credibility in thematic analysis. Being able to measure these criteria against specific processes, has allowed me to demonstrate that I have followed a particular protocol in order to provide detailed and distinct findings through a coherent narrative, that is congruent with the epistemological and methodological framework within which the research is set. As I shall demonstrate in the following section, these actions satisfy requirements in relation to the credibility of the research, by adhering to both a constructive approach to ensuring validity as described by Morse, Barrett, Mayan, Olson & Spiers (2002), whilst striving to fulfil Lincoln and Guba's (1989) criteria for trustworthiness.

3.5.1.1 Criteria for credibility in qualitative research.

In this section, I have examined Braun and Clarke's (2006) guidelines against the outlook of other researchers, particularly that of Shenton (2004), who offers a solid explication of criteria for credibility in qualitative research. Based on these examinations, I have organized the criteria that I believe has governed credibility in this research into four main categories:

- I. Accuracy
- II. Researcher as Self-Aware and Reflexive

III. Immersion

IV. Congruency and Coherence.

I. Accuracy

As part of the process of analysis suggested by Braun and Clarke (2006), I have worked to ensure accuracy by checking the transcripts against the recorded audio tapes of the interviews. I have also followed Shenton's (2004) advice by giving participants opportunities to read through transcripts of the dialogue, so they may correct any inaccuracies or inconsistencies against their intended meaning. It is upon this latter, corrective mechanism which Shenton (2004) suggests the credibility of such research largely rests.

II. Researcher as self-aware and reflexive

A constructive approach has meant that I have worked to fulfil the role of a reflective and responsive researcher, invoking Freirean (1970) reflexive practice which I refer to in the Literature Review (Section 2.1.3) as a cycle of action and reflection. This matches with the iterative approach I employed through the reflective writing processes I used to plan and develop each phase of the research rather than following a prescribed idea of exactly how the research would be approached and documented. Reflective writing allowed me to question and monitor my own developing ideas by comparing and contrasting them against the main questions of the research, whilst being open and flexible to taking on new directions in response to this. This has allowed me to fulfil the role of researcher as an active (as opposed to passive) and engaged participant (Braun and Clarke, 2006), and corresponds with Morse et al (2002) who place the role of investigator as central to the achievement of rigour in research.

Engagement in reflective processes has helped to establish my positionality, which has allowed me to question and examine my own assumptions, particularly in relation to my advocacy for, and positive beliefs about the benefits of Drama.- I do come to the research with a solid foundation in theories, principles and methods of Drama work. This is in keeping with Shenton's (2004) suggestion that credibility is enhanced through the "background, qualifications and experience of the investigator" (p. 68). This allowed me, in many ways, to speak the participants' language, and so glean from their perspectives, complexity of detail or nuance of meaning that may have not been as apparent to a researcher who has less experience in the Drama classroom specifically. In this regard, trustworthiness is established through the trust participants have developed in me based on my own standing as a peer, and through the divulging of my positionality in relation to Dramatic practice.

However, I have also, as Shenton (2004) suggests, taken "steps to demonstrate that findings emerge from the data" and not merely "my own predispositions" (p. 63). This is in keeping with Shenton's (2004) suggestion that, the notion of confirmability replace that of objectivity, as a criterion for credibility in qualitative research.

III. Immersion

Glaser and Strauss (1967) emphasise the importance of wallowing in the data as integral to credibility of the research. Braun and Clarke (2006) explain this as the need for rich description through "detailed and nuanced accounts" (p. 83) in thematic analysis, which calls for "immersion" in the data, involving "'repeated reading' of the data, and reading the data in an active way" (p. 87). This approach works to produce a clear and detailed interpretive account rather than observations which are simply "paraphrased or described" (p. 96) As evidenced by my own approach to thematic analysis, in Section 3.4.1 and Findings chapters 4 and 5, I have

worked to ensure that my own coding process is “thorough, inclusive and comprehensive” rather than simply “anecdotal” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 96). In this regard, in depth analysis and rich description are important indicators of evidence, and therefore, credibility.

IV. Congruency and coherence

Shenton (2004) invokes Meriam who describes credibility in qualitative research as looking for a congruency between findings and reality. Morse et al (2002) refers to such congruency as a form of coherence, and apply these ideas to thematic analysis in calling for the generation of themes which are “internally coherent, consistent, and distinctive” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 96).

To this end, Shenton (2004) explores the criteria that can lead to such congruence, including the adoption of research methods which are “well established” (p. 64). My choice to conduct semi-structured interviews as explained in Section 3.3, aligns with these criteria inasmuch as this has allowed me to utilize a data collection approach that is a well-established method for eliciting and analysing rich data based on individual perspectives (Rubin and Rubin, 2012).

As part of an undertaking in depth and detailed analysis, I have worked to match analysis and data so that extracts clearly “illustrate the analytic claims” (Braun and Clarke, 2006, p. 96), and I have devoted both the time and effort Braun and Clarke (2006) call for, to be able to organize analysis in a way that offers “a good balance between analytic narrative and illustrative extracts” (p. 96). I have supplemented these efforts to produce coherence in the research through efforts to ensure what Braun and Clarke (2006) describe as “a good fit between what you claim you do, and what you show you have done” (p. 96), which speaks to the notion of credibility through congruency (Morse et al, 2002; Shenton, 2004).

3.5.2 The issue of generalizability and transferability.

Shenton (2004) suggests that the notion of transferability in qualitative research may replace that of generalizability as it applies to positivist or quantitative studies. Shenton (2004) explains that in this regard, the contextual elements of the study, work to provide the necessary detail “for a reader to be able to decide whether the prevailing environment is similar to another situation with which he or she is familiar and whether the findings can justifiably be applied to the other setting” (p. 69). The criteria described in Section 3.5.1.1, point to a strong focus on details which work to flesh out the contexts within which participant statements were made, as well as the contextual backdrop against which data has been analysed. However I do not deem it realistic to claim transferability from this single study. Rather, detail and context operate, in this instance, to offer a snapshot understanding, which may serve as a platform upon which to develop further research.

3.6 Overview of Methodological Approach

My approach is to honour, not only a multiplicity of perspectives, but also to recognise the multiple elements contained in a single person’s perspective. In keeping with the qualitative research tradition which acknowledges that there are no neat solutions but rather strands of understanding, this study recognises that a holistic, subjectivist approach to data gathering has the potential to lead to a deeper understanding of people and how they interact with others in the world, rather than offer clear cut objectivist answers.

This research seeks evidence of critical consciousness in teachers as well as in ways they seek to raise it in others. I have conducted the interviews in such a way as to construct my own understanding while enabling teachers the flexibility to make their own discoveries and construct their own meanings throughout the process. In this way, I am working to remain loyal to the

reflexive, dialectical and dialogical processes of meaning making within a critical-constructivist epistemology (Bentley, 2003, Freire, 1973). In this study, this includes an examination into the ways in which intentionality plays a part in critical teaching. As Moran (2013) explains, “understanding intentionality is vital for understanding the philosophical issues at the heart of consciousness” (p. 318).

Moran (2013) envisions an exploration of intentionality as questioning “how it is that humans... live, act and understand meaningful matters in a meaningful world” (p. 319). I suggest that research which seeks to measure consciousness in this way, calls for a methodology which honours the reflexive, intuitive and subjective in being able to construct meaning from participants’ perspectives. This includes working to understand the ontology behind the way participants have come to construct meaning in their own work. These ideas have guided my approach in the following Findings Chapters, and supported me in directly drawing a connection between teacher practices and intentions, in order to more deeply examine how these are drawn upon in ways which may raises student’s critical awareness and so impact their learning.

Chapter 4. Findings: Valuing Student Voice

Voice, as represented by participants in the current study, refers to the way students build unique interpretations of the world, while also discovering their own place in the world, through Drama. This works to advance the notion of voice in Drama as the development of self-awareness that empowers students with a sense of their own ability and potential to be active participants in their own learning and therefore, lives. In this section, I look at how participants encourage the development of student voice through pedagogies of independence and inquiry. This includes an examination into the ways in which building student self-confidence and self-knowledge supports students to draw on their own backgrounds and tap into their inner resources as part of the process of building their own Drama aesthetic.

4.1 Developing Student Voice through Experimentation and Discovery

A dominant theme that emerges from the interviews, is the notion that an important element of Drama is about giving students the opportunity to approach learning through an attitude of playfulness and curiosity, free from the fear of making mistakes based on the idea that there is one correct answer, and focussed instead, on unveiling a diversity of perspectives as part of the learning process. This appears to rest on participants empowering students to find their own voice through their learning, as part of a wider approach to a student-centred and student-led focus in the Drama classroom.

Barbara describes her motivation to empower students to trust in their own abilities by emphasising the importance of “nurturing [and] verifying student voice.” Speaking of her early experiences in theatre, Barbara describes feeling a sense of injustice in the way she learned to be dependent on a director for her creative process. She now supports Drama educators in

developing teaching processes designed to give students ownership over their work. She explains:

I have a passion. I have a mission, I would say, that I don't want students who don't know what their aesthetic is about; or at least start to develop it. It's about empowering kids. It's about you as the teaching artist or teacher don't own the process. Those kids are having the opportunity to move on a stage and find their purpose: why they're moving that way, what are the questions? So they have a process. What we're about is having children who learn to work and think like artists. That's really the heart of our pedagogy.

Barbara expresses a sense of fulfillment in seeing students develop their own artistic processes in these ways. As examples, she recounts her experience seeing a young Haitian student with limited English, exerting her own artistic vision on a project with clarity and assuredness. Similarly, she describes watching another young student rehearsing a Shakespearean role for a school play. She explains how the student was so in touch with his character and the elements of the narrative that he was able to eloquently question and disagree with a director's instruction about where he should stand on stage. She says, "I think it's great, you know, that a kid gets to articulate. Find their voice, and articulate it."

Giving students an opportunity to express themselves is a social justice issue for Barbara because it enables students to develop the confidence and skill to be self-directed learners. This echoes Freire's (1970) own philosophy of critical pedagogy whereby the oppressed are liberated when their perspective is no longer dominated by that of the oppressor and they are free to pursue and construct their own meaning in the world.

Leanne also recalls the influence of a formative learning experience on her views as an educator. When she herself was a student and moved to a new high school, she recalls realizing that she could have a voice in her learning when she was encouraged for the first time to enter discussions and “not get a bad grade” by putting forward her own opinion. Like Barbara, whose sensitivity to injustice came from her experiences as a student, Leanne also developed her teaching practice committed to offering students a voice through drama. Her own experiences taught her the importance of offering students opportunities to explore new ideas and experiences when they are free from being deemed right or wrong according to the teacher’s measure of expertise, and instead, are allowed to follow a path of inquisitive learning. In this same regard, she says, “it’s okay that I don’t have all the answers.”

Barbara and Leanne’s views raise the idea that part of the process of embracing empowered learning from the position that students take part in a process of discovery and make choices for themselves, requires teachers to share, and at times, relinquish, control on some level. This is reflected in the way participants view their role in the classroom as guides and mentors, rather than seeing their own voice as the only one which should dominate the learning environment. This view works to problematise the teacher-student relationship in regard to dynamics of power work in the Drama classroom.

For Leanne, a culture of experimentation and discovery through Drama is supported by an open-ended approach that allows the curriculum to develop organically, in that it grows naturally from the particular interest of student and teacher. She explains:

I don’t want to be fixed in my curriculum, I don't want to be fixed in my ideas. I want to be evolving. I want to be evolving for my own interest, from their interest, from just

transitioning, changing as we all should and teachers should. And not saying, "well, this is what I do and it's only this."

Involving students in decision-making in ways that actively encourage them to bring in their own thoughts and experiences can also be understood as a form of dialogic practice that works to include students in the conversation of their own learning. Leanne's flexible approach to curriculum development speaks to both a Freirean (1970) philosophy and a critical multiliteracies approach whereby dialogic interaction is a necessary part of giving students a voice in their own learning. This also suggests that rather than force students to comply with a curriculum that is prescribed, teachers allow them a say in the narratives they construct around their learning, which starts with giving them the freedom to interpret for themselves. In this regard, Leanne speaks about avoiding overly specific prompting with the kinds of assignments she hands out, citing the importance of students finding their way into the work as a form of learning. She explains, "I enjoy it being a little bit more of a what-comes-up, take it as it comes, enjoy that moment, teaching that moment, have experiences happen." Because Leanne values input from her students, she allows the curriculum to be somewhat shaped by their interests and investigations. Leanne's approach appears to value a more equal relationship with her students based on the belief that it is guidance rather than dictates, which will best support their learning. Allowing students a voice in their own learning, casts both student and teacher in the roles of "co-investigators" (Freire, 1970. p. 81).

Jennifer prioritises a process of exploration and discovery for her students, describing her "style of teaching [as] definitely based in finding a creative outlet for students." She says of her approach, that "sometimes, there's a lot of open improvisation and taking an idea and improvising on that idea." Jennifer explains that she often works with non-traditional casting in

her Drama workshops and shows, using as an example, that “there can be a black boy with a blonde wig and a white girl playing sisters.” She explains that “allowing them to explore and giving them the freedom” helps her students to perceive beyond “binary roles” whereby “society is forcing us to think, and forcing young children to think,” and instead, encourages students to experiment so students may raise their awareness in ways that frees them from restrictive views which widens their opportunities for inquiry and self-expression.

She explains how she communicates this to her students:

This is theatre. You can play. You can do whatever you want. You can be a girl in this scene if you want. Go ahead. Try it. See what that feels like to you. No one's going to judge you here. You can explore these things about yourself.

Joe uses a visual arts analogy to describe how he draws on Drama to develop student voice, saying “Arts are not a cookie-cutter thing. You can learn a skill, how to paint a tulip, but what's your vision of a tulip? That's a different thing. That's what I want them to see. Everybody's tulip is different.” This is central to a pedagogical philosophy of student voice that seeks to empower students to construct their own unique vision of the world.

Joe describes a character development workshop he runs in which he encourages students to draw from their own experiences in order to give depth and authenticity to an assumed character.

Joe:

There are exercises that you do where you'll take two students and give them opposing points-of-view and objectives, and then have them try to convince the other of their position and see if you can sway them from their position. It forces them to draw on whatever they've got to be convincing, to make it real for the other person the same way you would

if you had to defend yourself in a debate and take a position that you didn't personally agree with but just as a debating skill. The students have to draw on whatever experiences they do have to try to flesh something out to make it credible. Then I'll take it and I say, "Reverse it. You take this position, and you take that position and see if you can see who's got the leverage to get the other to see it from their perspective."

Joe works to empower students by giving them opportunities to draw on their inner resources in imaginative ways. He does so not only by strengthening their ability to think for themselves, but also by offering them insight into what constitutes objective and subjective perspectives. As excavations of the subconscious and unconscious elements of character, Joe's character development workshops bring awareness to students of the driving forces behind human behaviour. In so doing, they can be said to strengthen student voice through the awareness of both their own capability to develop creative ideas, and a deeper understanding of the ways in which people's views are formed. This allows students to more thoroughly explore ideas, and to also understand perspective as a form of voice. Such understanding forms the basis for critical literacy as it promotes awareness of the ontological biases that make up our thoughts and belief systems.

4.1.1 Self-agency as an outcome of creative experimentation.

Participant perspectives suggest that self-agency is an element of empowered student voice when students are given opportunities to make their own choices as part of a process of creative experimentation in Drama. Kate encourages self-directed inquiry and a sense of ownership for students over their learning by encouraging them to make their "own choices as actors." She describes how in feeling "empowered to make choices for themselves ... a lot of times kids began advocating for themselves outside of drama" too. In this way, Kate's views raise the idea that being given the freedom to make creative choices in drama class can spill over

positively into other aspects of students' lives, liberating them to interact with more agency in the world at large. An emphasis on independence and autonomy in learning, speaks to a liberatory pedagogy in that it echoes Freire's (1970) belief that the oppressed can only escape from their oppression when they are actively engaged "in the struggle to free themselves" (p.49).

Carolina sums up, for her, the importance of self-agency in developing student voice:

It's not me empowering kids; it's just having the forum for kids to empower themselves and find their own voices. I can't give kids a voice. They have to discover their own. In theatre and through drama, that is the medium, the tool, for kids to be able to discover their own voice.

We can see that Kate and Carolina advocate for students to approach their learning in the drama class from active, rather than passive, positions, which gives students more control over their learning. Such a position characterises Drama as a critical pedagogy. In this way, when Drama enables students to explore and discover for themselves, they are given a greater opportunity to take responsibility for their own learning.

4.2 Empowering Student Voice through Embodied Learning

Participant perspectives point to Drama as an holistic, felt and multimodal practice, and so invoke theories of embodied learning which suggest that students' voice are empowered when they are given access to forms of learning that go beyond the cerebral, and into the realm of the physical and the intuitive. These ideas are representative of Spatz's (2013) philosophy of embodiment who describes how through a holistic approach to learning, meaning-making centres around knowledge acquisition that is both individualised and felt, and in this sense, highlights the relationship between "thought, mind, brain, intellect, rationality, speech and language" (p.11). Participants describe awareness of the mind-body connection as freeing students to explore and

express in spontaneous ways, unbound by dictates as to how they should be thinking, and tapping instead, into the wellsprings of self-knowledge and intuition which are often repressed in traditional forms of education. Participant views, in this regard, draw on Drama's experiential qualities, to highlight its value as an experimental medium. This is based on the idea that integral to a holistic pedagogical approach to Drama is the notion that learning is an eternal awakening of the interconnectedness of the human experience, and therefore represents a state of continual discovery.

Leanne describes establishing a laboratory style setting in her classroom, in an environment in which students are free to create through an ideology of play. In particular, she works with experimental physical theatre approaches drawn from mime, puppetry, clowning and the philosophies of the Le Coq theatre in France. Citing childlike curiosity as a foundation of her work, Leanne explains that, "sometimes it really comes from being not afraid to try something or not afraid to break that thing or touch that thing but to experience it." She sees Drama as an experiential medium through which the implications of unrepressed inquiry and expression is "a really beautiful place to make discoveries and to come to." In this regard, Leanne empowers students by instilling in them the confidence to explore without the fear of making mistakes, and to do so, in a way that allows them to draw on all their senses, rather than seeing learning as a process which engages only the intellect.

By encouraging students to develop narratives through techniques which incorporate physical exploration, Leanne advances the idea of voice as operating beyond verbal communication, and as a way of constructing meaning through the language of the body. Leanne's focus touches on the notion of embodied awareness which Frendo explains, "lies at the

centre of the act of theatre” (p.12) and which Spatz (2013) suggests draws on critical perspectives in order to examine the body’s potential.

Dianne echoes these ideas when she describes her past work with Anne Bogart’s Viewpoints Theatre, an approach which Dennis (2013) suggests highlights that “perception rather than cognitive understanding is central to making meaning (sense)” (p. 337). Dianne recounts her experience within a Viewpoints workshop in order to offer a backdrop for the ideas that inform her own ideas about the role of the physical in drama as part of a process of creative discovery and expression. In Viewpoints theatre, students/performers construct meaning from body-based texts in order to create stories through physical improvisation that leads to a kind of “a fluency in the language of the body” (Dennis, 2013, p. 337).

Dianne describes this as a practice which highlights for her, ways in which students may move beyond the vulnerability of self-consciousness in engaging with the physical in drama. Reflecting on her experiences as a young performer, she says, “I think it was seeing how much physicality was involved in acting and being that vulnerable with my body and my weight in front of that many other people especially in such a superficial industry.” Dianne draws on that experience now, describing the “serious connection” she felt with the other performers, in order to illustrate how that sense of “vulnerability and trust and communicating without words” inform what she values as a teacher of Drama now, in terms of getting students to experience a sense of connectedness between them. For Dianne, a raised awareness of our physical selves foments self-acceptance, which she believes leads to making students “stronger and more confident, socially, emotionally, and professionally”.

Dianne’s views support students to exercise physical intuition whereby they are transported beyond a physical self-centeredness mired in self-criticism and based on pre-existing

and superficial judgements, into a space where the body is freed to explore and express as a way of gaining new knowledge. This advances the idea that our physical self is not a static product to be judged on the virtue of its measurements, but instead, forms part of a dynamic process of meaning-making in which creative self-expression empowers students by giving them greater control over the narrative of their own bodies. In this way, the physical becomes a gauge for awareness and a tool of learning.

From a critical perspective, incorporating, acknowledging and drawing on the wisdom of the body, can be understood to give students a deeper and more grounded perspective of both the internal and internalised forces which drive their understanding and influence their learning. In this way, Leanne and Dianne raise the idea that embodied learning, which forges a sense of connection with one's whole self, can advance a sense of self-agency in students by raising their sense of awareness of the body as a personal tool of communication and discovery. These perspectives suggest that empowering student voice begins with fostering a sense of confidence in students so that they may empower their inner voice, by listening to and trusting their intuition. From a wider perspective, participants also suggest that developing a deeper understanding of self in this way, serves to also raise awareness of the experience of others due to an expanded sense of human connection.

4.2.1 Embodied practice as humanised learning.

Participant views in the last section, suggest that embodied learning as an element of Dramatic practice, opens up opportunities for students to develop new perspectives based on an understanding of the mind-body connection as a site of personal discovery, rather than a set of fixed data which teachers can transmit to students. In this section, I look at how participants further emphasise the importance of felt practice when they speak of open-mindedness and open-

heartedness as elements integral to their Drama teaching. This is in line with a Freirean (1970) objective to encourage students to think and feel for themselves as part of a humanised approach to learning.

In Drama, as Carolina puts it: “They’re learning, but they’re also feeling.” Speaking of her experiences teaching underprivileged students, Carolina proposes that emotional awareness and being able to express their feelings creatively “not only helps children develop a sense of voice, but it also allows them to navigate away from a world of violence” In this sense, Carolina explains that her students “become more vocal citizens that understand the way that they feel.” In this sense, she illustrates how students’ voices are empowered when they are given a creative outlet to express themselves, which also allows them to understand themselves better.

For Jennifer, drama is about being able to “open the heart and spirit.” She believes that “it’s the rare drama person who is close-minded” and observes that “drama already lends itself to opening oneself up to different experiences and different points of view.” In this regard, she describes her own role as being “a facilitator towards social justice with students” as she guides them to open “themselves up to the possibilities, and creativity and where it’s going to lead them.”

Kate tackles the challenge of teaching Shakespeare to sixth graders, by working to humanise the characters and make the language accessible to her students through a process she describes as recognising the link between “heart and body.” According to Kate, reflecting on the imaginative worlds Shakespeare constructs, calls for students’ raised physical and emotional awareness in order that they may embody the lives and experiences of fictional beings, and so better understand the perspectives or realities of others. Encouraging students to engage in this process of action and reflection allows them to find their own meaning in the narrative through

felt experience, rather than what she terms merely “turning it into an intellectual exercise”. In this regard, Kate describes dramatic practice as a “marriage” between emotion and technique, saying that emotions are “where the real art happens in a lot of ways. Because I can tell sometimes when I’m watching an actor if they’re really technically gifted but emotionally I don’t have any response to what they are doing.” Kate’s notion of audience “response” can be understood in terms of Martin-Smith’s (2005) commentary on Dramatic aesthetic as the visceral experience that elicits human understanding through feeling. In a similar vein, from the perspective of the student performer, Joe explains that you’ll “never really be able to connect to your character unless you’re in touch with your own emotions and your own feelings.”

These views suggest that when students open up emotionally, they benefit from it by becoming more aware of their own feelings and the felt experience of others, which elicits self-understanding, empathy and communication. In this way, participants empower student voice when they give students an opportunity to acknowledge their felt experience so as to engage them in a richer, more in depth understanding of their learning. This speaks to the idea that we empower student voice when we include and engage students in their learning from a perspective that acknowledges their felt experience as a relevant aspect of their development. This is reminiscent of Freire’s (1970) own call to humanise learning.

Leanne highlights the connection between creative exploration and felt practice in Drama when she points to her experience teaching clowning. She explains:

Some people believe that clown means being silly and goofy, but it’s really emotional. It’s a persona that has a lot of failure, that tries things and isn’t good at everything. And the vulnerability that comes out of that is very powerful, and is a wonderful way of building

stage presence, building character. I love clown as clown, but I also love it as an exercise, as a tool, as a way to provoke people.

These sentiments suggest that when students feel safe to make mistakes we are supporting them to experiment with new ideas and helping them develop emotional bravery so they may find strength in vulnerability. Participants as a whole appear to see the need to build students' confidence so they may step into the unknown and take the kind of risks we can associate with thinking outside the box and developing creative impulse. Where Drama gives students an opportunity to discover their own creative voice, it rejects the transmission-based, banking concept of learning that Freire (1970) railed against, and becomes instead, an exercise in self-acceptance. These perspectives point to the view that Drama as an embodied practice, fosters felt experience in learning, which speaks to an interrelatedness between people, based on a shared humanity.

4.3 Student Voice and Pleasure in learning

Participants point to the idea that Drama as a medium for imagination and play, is able to provide a setting for learning which is enjoyable and fulfilling. This view raises the idea that pleasure leads to a deeper, more personal engagement in learning, which from a critical multiliteracies perspective, empowers student voice. This is based on the idea that when students are free to pursue learning in ways that are gratifying for them, this can be understood as a liberatory philosophy. Therefore, from a critical perspective, a sense of pleasure in learning advances a student-centred pedagogy in speaking to a concern with the quality of students' experience of learning.

Leanne describes as “extremely important” to her, the job of helping students to relay their own experience through “imaginative playfulness” and “moments of joy,” pointing to this

as “fulfilling” and forming “the backbone” of her Drama classes. However, Leanne explains that beyond this, “it’s about saying something that’s important to them.” This suggests that in being able to make discoveries for themselves, the learning becomes more meaningful for students, and that this, in turn, make it more pleasurable for them. Similarly, Barbara reminds us that the drama classroom is a “fun environment”, saying, “if they’re not having fun, there’s something wrong.” But she adds to this an important caveat that the fun in Drama should most often be “serious” in its learning goals and that “there needs to be some sort of deconstruction that kids are a part of” so that the learning is “scaffolded” in such a way that the students gain a sense of ownership over it.

These views suggest that where our learning is not wholly bound to the interpretation of teachers/experts, our understanding is not subordinate to theirs, and it is therefore gratifying to be free to construct our own meaning. Leanne and Barbara present the idea of playfulness here, as a form of creativity in drama, which can be understood to motivate discovery and encourage self-expression by minimizing self-consciousness and reserve. In this sense, where drama promotes a sense of enjoyment and fulfilment, this can be interpreted as an element of social justice representing the students’ right to learn in ways which are stimulating, meaningful and rewarding for them.

4.4 Building Critical Voice through a Raised Awareness of Dynamics of Power

So far, the findings have pointed to various ways in which participants activate students’ personal voices, encouraging individual explorations and expressions through Drama. But it is also true that they develop the critical voices of their students. In one way or another, every participant in the current study teaches with an awareness of racial, gender and economic inequality in regard to the student populations with whom they work. Only some describe

themselves as deliberately engaging socio-political purposes in their teaching. Nevertheless, every participant exhibits empathy and compassion through their work, reinforced particularly by a consciousness of the challenges that underprivileged students face.

Joe actively writes, directs and teaches from a position of spreading social consciousness. He cites the Holocaust and the African American experiences of slavery and discrimination in the United States as two of the driving themes in the plays he writes and produces, and the teaching workshops he runs. From a performance perspective, Joe cites how important it is for students to examine and “flesh out their characters” so that in-depth inquiry brings greater meaning to the work. In this regard, he explains that he likes “working on material that's substantive”, particularly in the sense that it gives students a more humanised view of the world. Joe:

I want to get them to a point where I excite their curiosity. I want them to be seekers of some sort and to not settle for the status quo and realise that art, in itself, is a form of protest.

According to Joe, we must fight the status quo in order to protect and develop our own creative vision. And we must look beyond what we are simply told is truth, in order to seek our own answers. In developing our vision of the world, we develop our voice and in developing our voice, we further develop our vision. Joe poses here the idea that in order to develop an authentic relationship with the world, we must have the freedom to pursue our own understanding of it, and to participate in its construction. In order to do this, students must drive the voice of their own inquiry and work to discover their own answers. This invokes a Freirean (1970) view of liberatory education as essentially “problem-posing” in nature (pp. 79-80).

Joe hopes that through his work as a teaching artist, students gain “a world-view that's a little bit broader than they had before.” Joe:

Hopefully, little-by-little, things soften. I tell you, fear and hatred are powerful and they're very hard to unseat. But turning away from them and ignoring them are not going to do it. Confronting them is, hopefully, the best way.

Carolina works in the poorest congressional district of the United States. She explains that “kids of colour, specifically in impoverished areas” are “specifically misunderstood” and so “deserve a little more effort in learning what they want to say and what’s going on.” She understands that while it is important to empower all students with an understanding of the contexts of power in learning, it is especially so for those vulnerable to disadvantage because to be truly empowered, they will need to learn to advocate for themselves. As she explains:

It's really difficult, I will say as a white person, to come in and be like, “I'm going to empower you”. I hope that in the piece, it's not me empowering kids; it's just having the forum for kids to empower themselves and find their own voices. I can't give kids a voice. They have to discover their own. In theatre and through drama, that is the medium, the tool, for kids to be able to discover their own voice.

Carolina sees critical awareness as imperative in addressing socio-economic and racial disempowerment. In her own drama and general teaching practice, her commitment to liberating students from their “limit situation” (Freire, 1970, p. 99) means that she prioritises building student voice through giving them opportunities to understand and question the status quo, as well as dramatic and dialogic opportunities to speak out against injustice. In this regard, Carolina talks about an eighth grade social justice political theatre class she developed for “giving a voice

to people who have been voiceless or haven't had a chance to develop their voice yet.” Carolina describes the class as “a forum” for students to talk about their experiences” and a place to pose questions such as, “Why we are the people that we are today? What affects us in our community? What affects us physically? What affects us as human beings? What does it mean to be a human?” Carolina describes how this class plays an important role in encouraging students to share their experiences as victims of discrimination, “not as a means to feel bad or (elicit) sympathy”, but “just to tell their stories” and discuss the challenges they face. This process invokes Freire’s (1970) own techniques of dialogic and dialectical practice which are aimed at tackling oppression by bringing it out into the open, naming it, and in so doing, make it visible. Carolina’s focus is to encourage her students to reflect on injustice in such a way that they may take practical action that propels them towards change. She explains:

If I could have one goal, it would be to create agents of change, so that when they leave this school, they leave my classroom, they are aware, have a raised consciousness about the world around them, start to begin to develop, and understand their own sense of social positionality: what it means to be a person of colour in the United States, what it means to be a poor person in the United States.

Like Joe and Carolina, Jennifer takes a clearly political stance in her Drama teaching where she talks of actively pursuing social justice through her work, particularly in relation to racial and gender discrimination. Jennifer highlights the kind of opportunities performative expression can offer in terms of being able to raise our voices to spread awareness of oppression. In this way, she explains, “my voice can't be the voice of a black woman because I'm a white woman, but my voice can open the door for a person who is different than me to be able to speak.” In this sense, she acknowledges that drama enables her not only to develop her own

voice, but also allows her to speak up for the plight of others. Jennifer asserts that, to her, “theatre is social justice” because it empowers students with a voice to question, and to also reach across divides so as to connect with the experience of others and celebrate diversity.

While Leanne claims not to see herself as subscribing to a social justice agenda in her drama classes, she expresses that she “should.” She recounts, however, an instance of a student in her class designing a stage model set in America’s south. The design featured the porches of three houses set on different levels to symbolise racial and social hierarchy. Although Leanne does not specifically assign projects which demand social commentary, she gives students open reign to explore and express ideas in deep, personal and imaginative ways. As the set design example attests, this approach offers opportunities to develop social consciousness.

Overview

Participants demonstrate a belief in student-centred, student-led Drama learning as a process that frees students to engage in creative inquiry and expression, and empowers them to develop their own viewpoints in conjunction with building technical skills in Drama. In this regard, participants appear to see their own teaching roles as being to guide and support students towards constructing their own meanings through Dramatic practice.

Participant views raise the idea that an important element in the development of Dramatic aesthetic is the ability for students to gain the ability to build trust and confidence in the creative choices that they make. Student voice emerges from these ideas, as part of a belief that students need to have a say in their Drama learning, and that this enables them to apply a greater sense of self-agency to their lives in general. In the case of Joe, Carolina and Jennifer, self-agency includes the right for students to question the socio-political contexts within which they learn, in

order to uncover new knowledge, and to act on that new knowledge so as to address issues of inequality.

Participants also point to the development of self-knowledge and self-awareness as elements of embodied practice in Drama. In this regard participants suggest that embodied and experiential practice promotes in students a heightened sense of self-understanding, which gives them opportunities to communicate and connect with others and to reassess their own responses to social situations in ways which allow a deepened awareness of the world and their place in it.

Freire's (1970) call for learning as a humanising force can be understood to start, not with the idea of giving students a voice, but in enabling them to find and express their own; not speaking for them or to them, but with them, so they may develop a voice with which to liberate themselves. It is from this perspective of empowerment, that the nurturing and development of student voice can be understood to be an element of social justice in the Drama classroom.

Chapter 5. Findings: Drama as Community-Building

This chapter builds on the findings in the previous chapter on voice and student empowerment, to show how Drama teachers are involved in supporting students to build their social capacities. Specifically this chapter presents findings around community building in drama.

Two key elements emerge from the data in relation to the notion of community building through Drama: the role of collaborative practice in Drama, and Drama as a pathway of access to learning.

5.1 Building Community through Collaborative Ensembles

For Kate, community building in drama is manifested through a classroom culture focused on a “team building” approach. She explains that “when you're a teacher, you're really about creating this community of people who may or may not choose to go on to be actors, but they've had this experience of working together toward a common goal.” In Drama class, Kate explains, this is translated into the goal “to create something” together. In this regard, Kate suggests that “you're part of something larger than yourself. I think that's something that all adolescents are looking for. They want to be part of something.” As such, Kate’s work “is very much about ensemble building” and “developing a community in the classroom before anything else happens.” For Kate, “a good ensemble is made up of a group of people who have developed trust and respect for one another.” She explains that “acting requires others [which means] you have to learn how to communicate on stage and off with your fellow actors.” These ideas point to drama as a collaborative process, and characterise the building of interpersonal skills as part of that practice.

In this way, drama develops in students an awareness of others, which in turn gives them opportunities to cooperate, communicate and learn from one another. Kate describes taking her students to the Lincoln Centre in Manhattan to perform a short production as part of a school's performance initiative. Her values are revealed in her description that "what was really important was how they supported each other and really learnt a lot about themselves and about being human beings."

Kate's views are reflective of the general participant view that students thrive and, in Kate's words, that "the work is deepened," when they have a sense of community in the classroom. Participants create a sense of community in their classrooms in various ways. Dianne does "a lot of work on the environment of the classroom" and describes how she is striving to make her class "more like an ensemble where they support each other and they want to watch each other really work." Barbara's focus is on "how we treat each other." As such, she works on nurturing interpersonal relationships. Leanne also observes that collaborative learning develops interpersonal skills when students are engaged together in creative endeavor. She refers to the personal obstacles that need to be overcome in ensemble work as "wonderful challenges" that occur within a "group dynamic" as part of the process of making "collaborative art."

All of these examples reflect participants' commitment to a pro-social approach to learning which emphasises meaningful interaction through the development of interpersonal skills. What students learn about relating to others has the potential to reverberate beyond the classroom and to influence the relationships they foster beyond the school walls, enabling them to contribute in positive ways to the wider community, and to benefit from developing skills that help them navigate a world of social interactions.

5.2 Drama builds Community through Exposure to Diversity

For Jennifer, theatre is particularly powerful for community building since it is about “levelling the playing field” and embracing diversity. She explains:

You're playing this character. I'm playing that character. We have to communicate with each other. We have to learn how to be good together. We have to learn how to work together. When we don't, that's when we're having problems.

Jennifer describes setting up her classroom by establishing “ground rules about how we treat each other.” She describes “community” as literally “communing by opening ourselves up to people who might not look like us or sound like us.” Jennifer explains that “letting kids have relationships with people who are different than themselves, where they might not normally be able to experience people in an intimate setting like that, that is social justice to me.” She notes that “the acceptance of gay kids in theatre is huge” and that “the friendships that are formed in theatre are like no other. I have always found that the love and support that kids have for each other, it doesn't matter what their backgrounds are.”

Jennifer points to the mirror exercise in Drama, in which students face each other and literally mirror each other's movements, as a “simple” but important way of building trust between students through communication which raises awareness of another. Jennifer:

To me, so much of that communication with other people or the trust exercises, sound and movement, passing those things around in a circle... You're working with a group of kids that is nothing like you? Boom, you're creating social justice. You're working on the same level. There is no hierarchy there.

Jennifer's approach raises the point that when we are not given the opportunity to interact, or connect on a deeper level with others who are different to us, it is easier to see them as less

human. The idea is that offering students greater scope through greater exposure to the experience of others builds tolerance for diversity and taps into empathy. In this way, diversity in drama brings with it the kind of humanizing qualities which support critical consciousness.

5.3 Drama Develops Community through Dialogic and Dialectic practice

Participants raise the idea that Drama is a creative and communicative process which encourages students to connect more deeply with one another, and gives students insight into experiences of others as part of the process of learning. Bringing students together to create and discover, introduces the notion of Drama as community-building, particularly when, as participants suggest, Drama gives students opportunities to debate, discuss, and creatively respond to each other's thoughts and ideas in an atmosphere of collaboration. This invokes Freire's (1970) own dialogic and dialectic practice as a form of community-building, underpinned by the idea of a forum which affords the disempowered not only a voice to be heard, but participation in a reciprocal conversation, in which all members of a community given a place at the table where ideas and solutions are posed and found.

Participants' views suggest that reflective practice in Drama, that brings students together to exchange views and learn to offer constructive criticism, is as much an opportunity to develop students' social skills as their sense of Dramatic aesthetic. Previously, (Section 4.4) I have shown how Jennifer, Carolina, and Joe extend this idea further, using reflective practice to raise students' socio-political awareness through Drama activities that encourage discussion and debate. Yet, all of the participants demonstrate in one way or another, that reflective practice in their Drama classrooms, aims to encourage students to develop skills in expressing themselves and listening to others. It is in this regard, that the notions of feedback and assessment emerge as

opportunities to bring the members of the classroom together, in ways which enrich students' perspective of their work as well as build relationships of trust and cooperation among them.

Jennifer explains that in her Drama lessons, "the assessment piece would be assessing each other and themselves." Leanne describes as a "wonderful moment" when a teacher can say, "now, we are going to sit in a circle and talk about what we did today. So now everyone is going to say something that they enjoyed about someone else's work." Leanne suggests that this practice can even be applied when working with very young children, giving the example of a "little kid saying, "I liked it when Paul had the snake eat the princess." Everyone is like, "Ha, ha, I liked that part too."" In citing the benefits of building a sense of camaraderie among students, and how students gain deeper insight into the work through group communication, Leanne says she wishes "there was more of that".

A key characteristic of theatre and Drama teaching involves enabling both actor and audience to place themselves in the shoes of another. This can be understood to be a humanising practice, and to achieve aims similar to Freire's (1970) own when he calls for humanisation through education. Participants' views draw a link between dialectical and dialogic practice and empathy-building in Drama by demonstrating how creative inquiry and expression are forms of communication in Drama which connect students with their own humanity and that of others'.

Jennifer points to Drama as encouraging a spirit of openness which entails giving students opportunities to reflect on the feelings of others in situations outside of their own. She explains, "In Drama, I have to open myself up enough to allow myself to feel what it might feel like to be that other person." She actively encourages this kind of empathy-building in students while at the same time "encouraging people to see, explore their [own] range of emotions."

Joe suggests that we are put more in touch with our own self- knowledge through the process of identifying with others. He describes this as the link between thinking and feeling in Drama learning, emphasizing the importance of “being able to think outside your own reality.” He explains, “If I can do theatre that opens up dialogues, opens up doors, opens up hearts, then I feel fulfilled.” In this regard, Joe suggests that a spirit of openness promotes both self-understanding and leads to empathy for the experience of others. Joe explains that “anything that you could glean from somebody else's experiences, even indirectly, become part of your own frame of reference, so it enriches your pool of information.” This sets forth the idea that we learn not only from texts, but from the social contexts within which learning takes place. This is the basis upon which the theory of “context and standpoint rests” (Luke, 2000 p.450) in critical pedagogy.

Dianne illustrates how she uses social role play in order to elicit empathy and understanding between students as a way to resolve social issues that arise at school:

I think social role play situations can be really empowering for kids, especially students with disabilities, like practicing how they're going to answer questions when kids ask them why they have one adult following them or why does that teacher come in and pull you out every day? You know, how to deal with the private things about their disability that they might not want to share. Also there's a lot of bullying in middle school and we dedicate a day to just covering that and they go to different workshops and usually I lead a workshop where we act out scenes of how to deal with bullying and kids get to play the bully and they get to play the victim and the bystander. I see conversations happening that seem stronger after that day.

Dianne’s approach to role play with both her special needs students and the student population in general, gives them the opportunity to think through and practice their responses to others. This

allows them to not only anticipate how to interact with others in advance, but to essentially pre-experience the situation in an embodied manner. In this way, Dianne uses Drama to enable her students to use their imaginations, and the opportunity to rehearse their response to challenging situations, by giving them permission to experiment, take risks and be vulnerable as part of the process of finding solutions. As such, Dianne gives her students socio-emotional support through skill development in Drama by adopting a problem-posing approach. Central to a Freirean (1970) philosophy of critical literacy is the idea of dialogic and dialectical practice as part of a problem-solving approach to learning. When students seek solutions to social questions through collaborative and creative processes in Drama, this can be understood to mirror Freire's own critical approach to community building.

In Chapter 4, I examined various ways in which participants encourage students to develop their own thoughts and ideas through experimentation. Inquiry-based learning can be understood as a problem-posing approach which engages students in solution-seeking as they work to find their own answers, rather than parroting those prescribed by their teachers. This raises the point that participants' understandings of the nature of collaborative work are not limited to interactions between members of the student group, but are also a pertinent aspect of the teacher-student relationship. As Kate explains of her teaching, "I like to think it's not me bringing something to them, it's us creating something together." Carolina also works to create "real relationships with students. It's not just teacher-student. I don't really think that works. When you respect them, they respect you." For Leanne, this includes relinquishing the expectation that the teacher is always in possession of the right answer. Instead, she explains, "it's actually okay to not know." She finds it "very valuable... to...talk a little bit and figure it

out together.” Through this approach, she experiences “those little morsels of moments” in which she and her students “share and feel trust.”

These views shine a light on how dialogic and dialectical forms of teaching can shift the power dynamic in the teacher-student relationship, positioning teacher and student in a collaborative partnership, rather than the idea of the student working for the teacher. This requires a democratic approach whereby collaboration leads to the role of teachers as “co-investigators” (Freire, 1970, p. 81). In these cases, familiarity, rather than breeding contempt or complacency, appears to be the platform upon which both teacher and students forge deeper and more trusting relationships with each other. This establishes a classroom culture in which mutual support, and a Freirean (1970) approach to “co-intentional” practice (p. 69) brings members of the classroom together in a spirit of unity, belonging and shared aspiration. In this scenario, personal bonds are recognised as part of the humanising element of being part of a productive classroom community.

These ideas suggest that Drama empowers students to communicate more effectively and respond more empathically to the experience of others, by exposing them to a diverse range of perspectives, and giving them opportunities to question, wrestle with, unpack and expand on these as part of a collaborative process aimed at generating new ways of looking at the world through a more humanised lense. This invokes Freire’s (1970), dialogic and dialectic practice which is at the crux of conscientization specifically due to its humanizing elements, and its effectiveness in bringing communities together to fight injustice.

5.4 Drama as a Safe Space

The participants’ perspectives highlighted emotional bravery as a significant element of the processes of creative discovery through Drama. These views suggest that when students feel

safe to venture into the unknown, we are supporting them to experiment with new ideas.

Participant perspectives here imply that the drama classroom can provide a safe space for students to venture out of their physical and emotional comfort zones when teachers employ strategies that build environments of trust and support. In this sense, participants describe how they work to build a sense of community in the classroom in order to instill confidence in students through a sense of belonging and shared purpose.

Participants acknowledge that they cannot expect students to reveal raw emotions or give themselves to a sense of abandonment in physical experimentation, in an atmosphere where they are in some way in danger of mockery, derision, harsh judgment or even physical harm. This shows that in order to think and express for themselves, students require a space where they feel comfortable and safe to reveal more intimate aspects of themselves. An extreme example of this, is Freire's (1970, 1992) own experience with incarceration in Brazil whereby his liberatory ideology was judged a crime. These ideas pose the notion that liberatory education as a sanctuary from the politics of oppression, parallels the need to protect intellectual inquiry and creative expression from the forces of repression.

For Dianne, community-building in the classroom is very much dependent on creating a space where students feel safe to express themselves. Dianne:

I do a lot of work on the environment of the classroom and what it means to support each other when we're in a vulnerable position like getting up to sing or act. And I focus a lot on how to give feedback, how to be a good audience member, how to not judge people, and how to really support each other in feeling comfortable enough to take risks as performers and not to be embarrassed.

Jennifer expresses a similar view:

I do feel like it's my role as a facilitator and a teacher to get them to get in touch with themselves and their creativity in a safe place where they can allow those things to come out without feeling like they're going to be attacked, without feeling like they're going to be laughed at. It happens sometimes. You can't control everybody else. We do make ground rules at the beginning like, "It's not okay to laugh at someone."

Kate also emphasises the importance of "creating a sense of safety where people are really free to take creative risks, and not feel like they're not going to be welcomed in some way." For Kate, creating a safe space is what helps create a sense of belonging when establishing a classroom community. For her, what stands out about drama is "how personal the work is and how much acting is really about revealing yourself." Even when "you are playing this other character, [it's still] really about the truth of you in that moment." She explains that "you can't do that unless the environment is conducive, you know, you can't do that unless you feel safe." Because of this, Kate feels there is "fine line between acting and therapy." They are similar in the sense that both offer students opportunities to learn about themselves, and both require a safe space to support that personal growth. And, like therapy, drama is a lifeline for some students. Kate explains that "for a lot of the drama kids it's the last resort in some ways. Like they're not a sports person, they're not the 'this', they're not the 'that' so they like fall into the drama kid. And so it becomes are really safe place for kids to experiment with identity, and who they want to be and what they want to do."

Creating the safe space that drama learning requires is not a straightforward task for teachers. Reflecting on an early experience facilitating a drama workshop in a juvenile detention center, Joe explains that he refused armed guards because "they're not going to trust me if I don't

trust them. I have to take the first step.” Ultimately, though, Joe’s efforts were only partially successful. To really feel safe, his students needed not only to trust him; they also had to trust each other. For these students, confined to a system where mistrust of others was necessary for survival, this was a particular challenge. He explains:

They opened up to a point where it scared them. They were afraid of what was inside of themselves. They were afraid of what the other kids might see and get from it. Little-by-little, the last few weeks, the attendance dropped out. As a kid in my early 20s, I realised I had stepped into much more intense stuff than I was trained to either interpret or deal with. They knew that, and they retreated.

Joe’s experience of Drama in an environment where his students did not feel genuinely safe to let down their guard, highlights the importance of the ability for educators to be able to set up an environment which is able to support students in taking creative risks.

Carolina also shares an experience of participating in theatre work in a high risk environment. She describes how when she was younger, she came into an environment that was set up specifically as a form of resistance to the current regime in Peru. Carolina cites her experience with this “small political theatre company called Dio Chicani [which] ...performs theatre and gives voice to the desaparecito - the disappeared” as very influential on the way she views Drama as being able to give voice to the oppressed as a tool of dissent. Carolina describes “the bravery necessary to be able to speak out against the government of Alberto Fujimori, because people who spoke out against the government were killed.” In this regard, workshop participants “really bore witness to experiences that had never been witnessed before.”

Carolina's recollection hints at the fact that there was a level of closeness and trust between members of the theatre company that allowed them to band together in creative resistance despite the threat of retribution from the oppressive government. She directly connects her interest in Latin American political theatre to her current approach to teaching, particularly in relation to the themes of voice and voicelessness. Carolina shares her concern that "kids of colour, specifically in impoverished areas, sometimes are voiceless." She sets up her classes to combat this, encouraging students to share their experiences and thus drawing on a sense of community to remind the students that they are not alone. In this regard, she says, "They know I love when they talk about feeling empowered and they talk about feeling equal."

The concept of community as a bulwark to policies that divide and weaken our human rights can be seen as part of an endeavor which encourages students to speak out together. In this sense, community is emboldened through unity and what gives its members a sense of strength in combatting oppression. Through sharing their experiences, and in speaking their truth, students' voices are empowered. Participants' views raise the idea that collaborative learning, dialogic processes and activities that draw on embodied practice to more deeply forge connections between students are tools of social justice and liberated learning.

5.5 Drama as a Pathway to Community Access

If we understand Drama as a key to the opening up of educational possibilities, particularly for those who may otherwise not be afforded these, it begins to paint a picture of access as an important element of social justice. Drama emerges here as a solution to societal marginalization and therefore an important aspect in regard to the concept of community access. Participants in this study appear to feel strongly that where drama takes a back seat, or is even eliminated completely in the service of what districts may recognise as more worthy academic

subjects, students miss out in a variety of ways. One of these relates to access to a fuller participation in the community, through access to arts culture. The other, to the importance of differentiation, so that integrating Drama into the curriculum, gives students who have learning disabilities, or who learn differently, opportunities to thrive.

5.5.1 Cultural participation.

Both in the course of seeking interview participants, and through the interviews themselves the importance of arts organizations in being able to ensure students access to drama and theatre has become apparent. Five out of the seven participants interviewed have been brought to education through arts organizations, while four of them are still actively working for arts organizations focused on theatre in education.

Barbara explains how “one of the core values” of her organization “is to provide access to every child; access to the arts and access to our city.” She is direct in her view that this is “absolutely” about social justice. By bringing Drama and theatre into schools, as well as offering programs that make theatre accessible through planned excursions for teens from the wider New York area, Barbara’s organization works to expose young people, particularly those who are underprivileged, to the arts, including theatre shows. Barbara describes how “you have children, high school kids, who’ve never left a certain neighbourhood. They’ve never been midtown...so accessing those experiences is essential.” Barbara’s organization seeks to break down barriers not only associated with the material cost of attending theatre shows, but in tackling the underlying, self-limiting perceptions, that may be the by-product of poverty or other disempowering circumstances. As Barbara points out, when young people have a sense of “owning” their city, this works to diminish the idea that it is only the privileged few who get to attend cultural events or have a voice in contributing to the culture of the city, or even

determining how to identify arts culture. Transitioning students from silent, sidelined, outsiders, to active participants with access to the heart of civic cultural life, is for Barbara, a social justice exercise in community building which can be achieved through exposure to Drama. Kate talks in a similar vein, of the benefits that came from giving her students an opportunity to perform in public:

The other thing that occurs to me is a lot of those students had never even been to Manhattan. We performed in Manhattan more than once and that I remember those experiences being so profound for them. That not only were we leaving the Bronx, but we were performing, we performed at Juilliard once, so that's Lincoln Center, on a really beautiful stage with professional lights and this, that and the other, and an audience. That was a huge experience for them to see beyond what they knew and also seeing what they were capable of.

It's important to note that Manhattan is only around a 15 minute drive or 20 minute train ride from the area of the Bronx to which Kate refers.

Addressing the problem of access to arts culture as often reserved for the privileged in society, means looking towards educational processes that can introduce the arts into students' lives as a way of, as Jennifer describes, "levelling the playing field". A lack of participation in communities and in society, particularly where expression is a means of communication, can be associated with a lack of voice, especially when it is borne of a lack of privilege. As Joe's outreach work in a juvenile detention centre discussed earlier (Section 6.1.6), arts organizations work to make the benefits of Drama accessible in a variety of ways. In this regard, arts organizations become a tool of equality, for the opportunities they provide in developing in students both a creative voice, and a voice in and for their community. Ultimately, as Barbara

explains, “You could go through 12 years and not be exposed to theatre. It depends on how it’s valued by the school that you’re in, the school leaders within that building.” She explains that organizations like hers can fill that gap, saying “This is exactly where we come in.”

5.5.2 Access through differentiation.

For Dianne, who works with a special needs population within a mainstream setting, the theme of access to drama highlights the importance of giving students the opportunity to reach their potential regardless of learning disability or socio-economic barriers. Dianne speaks of her own experience of Drama as having been a gateway to learning for her, and how she hopes to achieve similar goals with her own students. Dianne explains that “meeting the needs of the diverse learner” is her “ultimate goal.” In this way, there is a lot of “differentiation” going on in her teaching. Dianne describes these goals as inspired by her personal experience. Dianne:

I was a struggling learner myself, and performance and theatre and music are what motivated me. And I had a lot of trouble concentrating. But when I was working with the arts, I could focus forever. I always surprised myself as a kid that I had this area of strength and then all these weak areas. And when my teachers would infuse the arts into the curriculum I was immediately more interested. So I know that's going to help my kids and it does.

In this way, Dianne works to integrate Drama and the other arts into the curriculum so as to allow struggling students greater access to learning opportunities, which allows them, in turn, to integrate more successfully into mainstream classes. Creative process, in this sense, can be understood as a pathway into belonging, and as a way of encouraging a more diverse and tolerant classroom culture.

The issue of access to Drama and theatre as a social service, raises the notion that when there is a lack of it, this implies that Drama is not recognised as a subject of value in our society. This invokes Eisner (1992) who talks of the impoverishment of school programs and education of the young when the arts are not valued as an integral part of learning. Kate describes this as a resistance to valuing Drama when it is seen as “not contributing to high test scores,” explaining that “we know that kids who do Drama or Music or Dance or Art actually do better in school and come to school because they want to participate in those classes.” Leanne too, emphasises that in order to gain access to the potential benefits of Drama, “the first thing is that you have to show up, you have to participate.”

The notion of participation speaks to the importance of access as an integral aspect of the liberated classroom because when we actively participate, we are included, we are given opportunities to contribute to and benefit from not only the learning, but the culture of the community within which the learning takes place.

Overview

Participants’ views suggest that Drama gives students opportunities to explore difference and encounter differences in ways that minimise defensive behavior, and open up new avenues through which students can participate as members of a classroom community, as well as in the wider community with an increased capacity for connection with others.

Participant perspectives invoke a critical dramatic multiliteracies approach which pivots on the notions of cultural identity, cultural awareness and cultural contribution as part of an ideology that seeks to expand the definition of what is seen as culturally valuable within communities, and culturally representative of a community. It is, at its core, focused on inclusivity, and therefore the idea that communities are made up of, and enriched by, diversity.

Chapter 6. Discussion

6.1 Dramatic Practice as a Transformative Process

This study suggests that in order for students to engage an active voice in their learning, we must work against making them victims of the limitations of their subjectivity, which speaks to the kind of short-sightedness and passivity that serves to mask the reality of oppressive situations; and instead support each student in becoming, as Shaul describes it, a “subject who acts upon and transforms his world” (Freire, 1970, p. 32). We can see this in the way Dianne’s students are actively encouraged through role play, to develop a wider perspective of others’ experiences so as to transform social dynamics; in how Joe’s students experiment with new perspectives by embodying the voices of characters they perform and, in this way, recognise their own unique interpretation as an act of empowerment; and when Jennifer’s students are given the opportunity to play roles they would normally not be given a chance to identify with, and are therefore freed from the boundaries of stereotype. It occurs when Leanne’s students create new worlds through puppetry, set design, and physical theatre which gives them a license to explore and discover new ways of connecting and communicating with others; in the way Barbara delights over students’ realisation that they have within them, the resources to make creative decisions and develop on their own artistic visions; and it happens when Carolina links her Drama curriculum with social justice themes so as to raise awareness and give her students a voice with which to challenge inequalities. All of these instances characterise Dramatic practice as a transformative process. As it does when Kate gives students an opportunity to perform as part of an ensemble in front of a live audience on the stage of a New York institution, the effects of which she describes, last far longer than after the curtain falls, and the lights go back up, and the students pile onto the bus on the way back to the Bronx. Not only does Kate emphasise the

sense of togetherness and connection that is built among students through these kinds of activities, but it is also notable that when Drama gives students a heightened sense of their own capacities and the opportunity to make an impression on others through creative expression, there develops a sense of visibility, of being able to stake one's claim in the world, and the sense, in a way, that their world has faith in them. These factors come together to represent some of the diverse ways in which Drama empowers student voice, and through doing so, has the power to transform lives.

6.2 Active Participation as a path to Conscientized Voice in Drama

In Chapter 4, participants offer various interpretations of how they encourage independent and inquiry-based approaches to learning, based on the importance of students being able to construct their own meanings. In this way, participants reveal how they position their students in the role of subjects who influence, rather than objects that must be influenced, so they become active participants in their own meaning-making activity. An approach which encourages them to experiment and discover for themselves can be understood to be enacting a Freirean (1970) approach to learning in which students are able to act and speak for themselves, through a “biophilic” or life-affirming attitude characterised by active voice, rather than a “necrophilic” approach or life-denying approach, which for Freire (1970) represents “mechanistic” learning which diminishes student voice, because it renders them passive (p. 77). For Freire (1970) of utmost importance in liberatory education, is “for the people to come to feel like masters of their thinking” (p. 124), sentiments which are echoed by Barbara and Leanne, who talk of Drama as allowing for students to trust in their own abilities, and for Kate and Carolina for whom Drama offers opportunities to take responsibility for the choices they make as part of their Drama learning.

The importance of the active participation of students in the classroom is a running theme throughout this study. Involving students in ways that actively encourage them to bring in their own thoughts and experiences, includes students in the conversation of their own learning. As evident throughout Chapter 4, participants overwhelmingly profess a commitment to developing student agency. This is an underlying principle of a critical multiliteracies approach (Giroux, 1988; Kellner, 2003; Kincheloe, 2008; Kincheloe; McLaren & Steinberg, 2011, Ollis, 2012; Sandretto. & Tilson, 2013). As such, this study suggests that Drama is a vehicle that allows students to explore, and express themselves from active, rather than passive, positions. A critical multiliteracies approach advances the perspective that when our personal voice and lived experience are not included in our learning, this leaves no room for us to grow, and we are stunted. In contrast, when students are given an opportunity to actively contribute to their own learning, a student-centred, student-driven approach assimilates student experience with student learning, and so enriches both. The current study suggests that Drama offers students precisely these kinds of learning opportunities.

In every aspect of this study, participants' discussion revolved around how they engage students in reflection and discussion of their own work as an integral element of Dramatic practice. This invokes Freire's (1970) own belief that in order to recognise the "right to their own humanity" (p. 56) as an inalienable aspect of their own self-worth, the "oppressed must participate" (p. 124) in the dialogical process in such a way that they themselves author the blueprint to their own freedom. This concept forms part of a bigger picture that calls for students to be better informed about the ways learning is presented to them, so that they are better equipped to make their own choices in interpreting and analysing ideas. This in turn sets the

stage for the emergence of the critically literate student, who, through this process of conscientization, is empowered to become an active voice for change.

6.3 Collaboration as a Key Critical Pedagogical concept

Participant approaches to collaborative and group work, suggest that building a sense of community with others is at the heart of social justice in terms of working to forge connections that humanise people in each other's eyes. In Chapter 5, participant focus on collaborative process in Drama as a tool of connection and communication invokes a Freirean (1970) pedagogy in which communities come together to engage in dialogical and dialectical practice with the aim of combatting socio-political injustice. The notion that Drama helps to provide equal access to learning opportunities, extends the idea of inclusivity as a pathway to equality. This suggests that Dramatic practice promotes a more diverse understanding of what and who comprises community, which in turn, better serves a broader spectrum of society.

Ultimately, participants assert that classroom communities are created when its members feel a sense of belonging. Spearheaded by Kate, but indicated by many participants in this study, is the idea that powerful Drama learning happens within collaborative ensembles, in a way which alerts students to the notion that they are, as Kate explains “part of something larger than themselves.” Drama as an embodied and collaborative practice, can be understood to encourage students to connect in ways which strengthen a sense of community among them. Participants suggest that a sense of belonging triggers empathy between students, and that the interactions that emerge from this, help students to develop a more personal investment in their learning, driven by relationships of trust and cooperation. In this regard, collaborative practice in Drama can be understood to bring together individuals, so that together they may work towards collective understanding.

Social integration, as an element of collaborative practice in Drama, can be understood as a process of forging personal connections in learning, which in turn, form part of a larger aim towards supporting social equality. This is supported by participant views in the current study which point to the idea that Dramatic practice has the power to bring people together to promote tolerance of diversity. A focus on the forging of connections and understanding between people, also speaks to a holistic approach that acknowledges the interrelationship between people and their world, as an integral aspect of the learning process. This study shows that through practices of inclusivity, Drama allows students to contribute to and participate in their own learning, both through empowering their voices as individuals, as well as through practices which allow them to connect with others.

This study also characterises collaboration as a key element of dialogic and dialectical practice in Drama. In this sense, creative expression and inquiry-based practice emerge as forms of collaborative communication in Drama in which students are brought together to discover solutions to social issues. Whether the situations posed are based on theatrical pieces of fiction, improvisations derived from students' imaginations, or based on real-life events, they can all be understood to involve students in communication as creative problem-solving. This is reminiscent of Freire's (1970) own problem-solving pedagogy, which works to bring communities together to collaborate in exposing and finding solutions for injustices. This study posits Dramatic practice as promoting engagement and interaction in the classroom as a way of affording all students opportunities to thrive, by promoting engagement and interaction between students in a way that encourages them to be aware of one another in such a way that encourages them to support one another, and to recognise the humanity in one another.

6.3.1 Trust as a platform for social justice teaching.

The importance of trust, emerges out of these ideas, as a major theme of this study. Participants' approaches to their work suggest that Drama facilitates community building in the classroom by providing a space for students to develop understanding and trust between them. This is supported by participant perspectives in regard to the importance of human connection and social integration as elements which impact the learning process, particularly where these pose that the Drama classroom can operate as a safe space for students to experiment with new ideas and ways of being in the world.

Kate and Jennifer specifically, offer perspectives which emphasise that collaborative process allows students to support one another, and pivots on the idea that students learn to trust one another. For Jennifer exposure to diversity builds trust of others. She points to trust exercises in Drama as the foundation for social justice in getting students to connect and communicate on equal footing. Leanne too, directly points to trust as an essential element in the dialogic practices needed to participate in collaborative learning. Importantly, the participants characterise Drama as a safe space primarily based on a sense of trust between members of the classroom community. Dianne's work in social role play and Joe's in character development classes reiterate the importance of trust in allowing students to experiment together with new ideas, inspired by a spirit of discovery and collaboration. These notions also speak to trust between student and teacher as an element of the liberated classroom, whereby teachers must trust students to embark on their own paths of discovery, and students must trust teachers to support them by creating a safe space within which students may try out new ideas.

Within a critical framework of understanding, trust as an element of collaborative practice in Drama, creates the foundation for the classroom as a sanctuary in which students are

given the freedom to exercise their own voices in learning, as well as engage in meaningful interaction with others which advance and improve human relationships. “Trusting the people,” explains Freire (1970), “is the indispensable precondition for revolutionary change. A real humanist can be identified more by his trust in the people, which engages him in their struggle, than by a thousand actions in their favour without that trust” (p. 60). Trust therefore emerges as an element of social justice in the Drama classroom, because it helps to create an environment which protects the rights of learners to take creative risks and experiment with new ideas as they construct their own perspectives and so discover their own pathways to understanding.

Overview

Participants’ views suggest that collaborative practice in Drama supports empathy-building because it encourages students to respond to their learning from a more informed, engaged and humanised position. This is supported by the idea that Dramatic practice has the power to bring people together to promote tolerance and diversity. A focus on the forging of connections and understanding between people, speaks to a holistic approach that acknowledges the interrelationships between people and their world, as an integral aspect of the learning process. This study shows that through this ideology of inclusivity, Drama gives students the opportunity to have a sense of belonging in the classroom, and access to cultural participation in communities. This also includes the ability to make cultural contributions to community. Where individuals are given opportunities to access and contribute to a group as equals, this involvement suggests that they are valued as individuals.

Participants, therefore, paint a picture of Dramatic practice as characterised by the idea that students may experience learning from the viewpoint that they are part of a community. Framing learning in this way, allows students to see the objective of learning as to fulfil

individual potential, but with the larger purpose of preparing them to be productive members of the communities in which they live and work. How that productivity looks, is dictated by what students have learned to value, which in the case of this study, appears to be strongly tied to a sense of human connection.

Chapter 7. Conclusion: Towards a Liberated classroom

7.1 Overview of the Study

In this study I sought to clarify the ways in which Dramatic practice was viewed by teachers as a tool of social justice, with a particular focus on revealing the ways Drama could be understood as both a critical and creative pedagogy. This included an examination into the ways in which Freire's (1970) philosophy of critical literacy and a critical dramatic multiliteracies approach could be applied so as to provide a more in depth exploration of Drama as a liberatory practice.

I interviewed seven Drama educators about their practice based on the central question: In what ways can Drama education be understood as a form of critical pedagogy? In order to do this, I sought to uncover the ways in which teachers already saw themselves as drawing on Drama-based pedagogies to explore issues of social justice. I then worked to compare this with the key principles informing Freirean (1970) critical pedagogy and a critical dramatic multiliteracies approach in order to further reveal how teachers understand, implement and enact the principles of critical consciousness within Drama education.

7.2 Scope and Limitations

This study deliberately set out to examine a variety of concepts which arose within both the data generation and data analysis stages. For example, the study was not contextualised within the current educational policy climate in the United States and indeed was never intended to do so. To capture complexity and depth of meaning, this pool of participants was deliberately chosen so as not to generalise using participant demographics, or their own student demographic. I have not focused specifically on participant demographics in regard to participant selection, data collection, findings or conclusion stages, beyond what participants themselves have identified as

pertinent information within the context of the discussion. As such, this research was a collection of narratives which provided opportunities to understand the motivations and practices of individual Drama educators in relation to the way they perceived Drama as a tool of social justice. So that, while this research was informed by theories, as evidenced in the Literature Review, that acknowledge and subscribe to the belief that demographics influence research findings and conclusions in subtle as well as explicit ways, I believe that the scope of the research would need to be significantly larger in order to adequately frame observations pertaining to this.

Future case studies on this subject, should attend to and investigate teachers' practices and motivations within the broader policy climate, as well as draw on a larger pool of participants, including students, in order to expand further on the possibilities for Drama as a tool of social justice. This could also lead to "more complex approaches to unpacking participants' views in order to examine and identify the impact of demography and notions of identity on the topic."

7.3 Key Findings

Despite the small scope of this study, it makes significant findings in relation to the nature of Drama pedagogy and how it may be used to facilitate social justice. From this, two key concepts emerged: 1) Empowering student voice through Drama and 2) Drama as community building. These factors ultimately served to suggest that Drama is a bridge between self-actualization and collective consciousness. This is based on the idea that where Drama helps us to become more in touch with ourselves, this new awareness, rather than making us more self-centred, acts instead as a pathway to an increased empathy and ability to connect with others. This heightened state of consciousness can be understood to be a form of enlightenment.

Major themes that emerged as elements of empowered student voice and community-building, included self-agency, active participation, collaboration, trust, and awareness of dynamics of power. These were all identified as contributing to a democratic learning environment. Drama as democratic practice, can be understood in this way, to draw on elements of critical pedagogy, as steps on the path toward liberated classroom practice.

7.4 Implications

This study poses the idea that Drama is a medium in which creative and critical pedagogies work to complement each other through practices that raise self-awareness and strengthen learning communities. Further studies linking how general education teachers or those specialising in subjects other than Drama, draw on Dramatic practice to supplement their teaching practice, may serve to pinpoint new perspectives on Drama as a tool of social justice.

Likewise, further studies into Dramatic practice which adheres specifically to a critical literacy or critical multiliteracies approach, may serve to shed light on new ways we could unpack Drama in our classrooms. Dramatic critical pedagogy emerges from this study as a powerful learning tool with the potential to transform classrooms into environments rich with creative possibilities to advance human thriving. This study therefore aims to provide a launching pad to inspire further exploration into how Dramatic practice works to motivate the personal and social transformation Freire (1970) defines as a crucial aspect of the liberated classroom.

One of the strategies Freire (1970) uses to combat injustice is through forums in which the oppressed are given a voice, and where oppressor and oppressed may engage in dialogue, so as to allow communication that humanises all participants with the aim to transform the social dynamic. Similarly, this study highlights Drama's potential to counteract bullying and build

among students a sense of community through empathy. It is my hope that, in emphasising Drama's humanising elements in this way, this study can add to a body of work aimed at setting up learning spaces as sanctuaries from oppressive behaviour.

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Appendix A: Ethics Approval



Human Ethics Certificate of Approval

This is to certify that the project below was considered by the Monash University Human Research Ethics Committee. The Committee was satisfied that the proposal meets the requirements of the *National Statement on Ethical Conduct in Human Research* and has granted approval.

Project Number: CF15/1445 - 2015000695

Project Title: The Liberated Classroom

Chief Investigator: Dr Rachel Forgasz

Approved: **From:** 15 May 2015

To: 15 May 2020

Terms of approval - Failure to comply with the terms below is in breach of your approval and the Australian Code for the Responsible Conduct of Research.

1. The Chief investigator is responsible for ensuring that permission letters are obtained, if relevant, before any data collection can occur at the specified organisation.
2. Approval is only valid whilst you hold a position at Monash University.
3. It is the responsibility of the Chief Investigator to ensure that all investigators are aware of the terms of approval and to ensure the project is conducted as approved by MUHREC.
4. You should notify MUHREC immediately of any serious or unexpected adverse effects on participants or unforeseen events affecting the ethical acceptability of the project.
5. The Explanatory Statement must be on Monash University letterhead and the Monash University complaints clause must include your project number.
6. **Amendments to the approved project (including changes in personnel):** Require the submission of a Request for Amendment form to MUHREC and must not begin without written approval from MUHREC. Substantial variations may require a new application.
7. **Future correspondence:** Please quote the project number and project title above in any further correspondence.
8. **Annual reports:** Continued approval of this project is dependent on the submission of an Annual Report. This is determined by the date of your letter of approval.
9. **Final report:** A Final Report should be provided at the conclusion of the project. MUHREC should be notified if the project is discontinued before the expected date of completion.
10. **Monitoring:** Projects may be subject to an audit or any other form of monitoring by MUHREC at any time.
11. **Retention and storage of data:** The Chief Investigator is responsible for the storage and retention of original data pertaining to a project for a minimum period of five years.



Professor Nip Thomson
Chair, MUHREC

cc: Ms Jacqueline McCauley

Appendix B: Interview Questions

1) How would you describe yourself as a teacher?

- a) How do you think your Drama students would describe you?
- b) Can you tell me a little bit about the students you teach or have taught, their general backgrounds.
- c) What are your expectations of student behaviour in your classroom? How do you deal with students when these expectations are not met?
- d) Can you use this opportunity to expand on how you see your role as a teacher?

2) Can you talk a little bit about your background in drama?

- a) What do you think attracts you to teaching Drama?
- b) Have you trained specifically in Drama or Drama in education?
- c) Do you have practical training in the performing arts?
- d) When did you start teaching Drama or incorporating it into your lessons?
- e) How often do you now teach Drama?
- f) Do you strictly follow a predetermined curriculum when you teach Drama? If so, how much do you feel you allow the lessons to veer from this? If not, do you follow a creative process in how you allow each lesson to take shape?

3) Do you encourage students to bring their own personal experiences or viewpoints into the drama classroom? Can you give me some examples of how you do this?

- a) What has been your experience in terms of the effects or benefits of this?
- b) Particularly relating to social justice themes in your drama classroom, how much do you feel you set the structure of the class in such lessons as opposed to allowing the students to set the tone?
- c) Do you sometimes permit or encourage students to choose their own learning topics or do you need to stick to a curriculum?
- d) How do you gauge if students are enjoying or are feeling engaged in the work?
- e) How would you describe the way you evaluate students' work in Drama class? What are the qualities you are looking for?

4) Do you have a sense of a social justice agenda in your teaching?

- a) What are the particular social justice issues you've engaged with in your teaching?
- b) Can you share some of your experience/s in how you have used drama instruction to explore a social justice theme in class?

5) What is your experience with group work or collaborative work?

- a) Have you introduced group or collaborative work into your drama instruction and if so, can you describe how you approached it?
- b) Have you used group or collaborative work in a drama setting in relation to the social justice themes we've discussed? Can you share a little about the experience?
- c) Do you set certain rules or etiquette for the students to follow in terms of the way they communicate with each other in relation to group work?
- d) From your own personal experience, what do you think are the most important aspects of group or collaborative work in the classroom?
- e) In what ways do you evaluate or assess group or collaborative work, if at all?

6) Do you feel you value reflection and self-reflection as learning tools? If so, how do you use these?

- a) Do you use techniques that may promote student reflection? Examples of this may be debate and discussion, diary writing, or forms of feedback.
- b) If so, what do you think the benefits of this are?
- c) In what ways if any, do you encourage feedback from your students relating to your own teaching and the curriculum? If so, how do you respond to this feedback?
- d) Does the notion of critical thinking play an important role in your Drama classroom?