

Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of  
Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities

By

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## **Abstract**

This thesis describes a study that examined the creation of a theatrical commons that aimed to broaden and deepen democratic engagement among diverse citizens in one public school community. The researcher considered how Forum and Image Theatre (Boal, 1979, 1995, 1998, 2002; Diamond, 2007) help people to name and invent different possibilities to address complex school community challenges at an individual and community level. It involved former refugee youth, guardians, parents and the general public as they critiqued the potential of a theatrical commons to represent their voices which are at times, marginalized from decisions made in the community and at a policy level.

This participatory action research project drew heavily on the theatrical imaginations of Augusto Boal and David Diamond. The aims of this work were grounded in critical theory (Apple, 2008 & 2009; Chomsky, 2000; Freire, 2008; Furman & Gruenwald, 2004; Giroux, 2008; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). The study itself was divided into three phases: the participants' identification of a community problem that was of great importance to them (phase 1), a workshop series that sought to explore the tensions and complexities embedded in the community dilemma, (phase 2), and a performance by the participants in a Forum Theatre event (phase 3) that invited members of a school community to imagine new possibilities for addressing a community problem. Participants were invited to reflect critically on the ability of Image and Forum Theatre to ignite critical dialogue in a diverse school community.

Two themes were derived out of the findings as they related to the research questions and literature: (1) the potential of Image and Forum Theatre to connect public

education to the pursuit of democratic community; and (2) using Image and Forum Theatre to inform system planning and reflection.

The study's findings indicate that space was created for participants to raise their voices in the following ways: (1) The participants defined the social justice issue that informed the workshops and the play; (2) Image theatre troubled the hegemony of the English language; (3) The participants defined, scripted and shared their struggles in the wider community; (4) Numerous opportunities occurred in the study that provoked multiple interpretations of complex community issues, and; (5) The audience members moved from the role of observer to spect-actor on the night of the performance.

The participants reported a significant amount about the community issue of language barriers/no voice as they participated in the theatre workshops and the Forum Theatre play. They deconstructed the relationship between language barriers/no voice and racism and the ways in which language barriers/no voice created spaces of social isolation and exclusion. As the participants critically reflected on their participation in the study the themes of agency and resistance emerged as significant units of meaning within the Image and Forum Theatre work.

Recommendations are suggested for practice, teachers, administrators and further research. They include; (1) Community problems should inform what is taught in school and how the subject matter is taught. The findings of the study indicate there is a strong relationship between a young person's ownership of community challenges and their engagement in learning about those problems. Youth should spend school time working in the community to learn about complex social justice dilemmas and use time in school to work towards addressing those challenges. This would help the

reorientation of schools towards the development of more peaceful, joyful and just communities. (2) Forum Theatre should be incorporated as an important community development strategy in high schools to engage youth, parents and educators in critically reflecting on social justice issues in the community. The findings indicate that Forum Theatre should be used to develop alternative solutions for complex community and school problems. Forum Theatre work should not be ghettoized in drama and English classrooms. (3) A new study should replicate this study's methodology and examine the tension between *agency and victimization* and its relationship to the theatre's capacity to expose hidden structural violence in school communities. The study revealed that some of the participants located the causes and impacts of language barriers/no voice in the community's social ecosystem (agency) while others assumed the barriers were the result of personal deficits (victimization). I believe a thorough investigation of this tension could add rich information about how and why some actors in school communities locate 'deficits' in the ecosystem while others locate the same deficits inside themselves.

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## CHAPTER ONE

### INTRODUCTION TO THE PROPOSED STUDY

This thesis describes a study that examined the creation of a theatrical commons that aimed to broaden and deepen democratic engagement among diverse citizens in one public school community. The research also studied how Image and Forum Theatre (Boal, 1979, 1995, 1998, 2002; Diamond, 2007) helped people to name and invent different possibilities to address complex school community challenges at an individual and at a community level. The study involved former refugee youth, guardians, parents and the general public as they critiqued the potential of a theatrical commons to represent their voices which are, at times, marginalized from decisions made at the community and policy level. For the purposes of this study, the term refugee refers to the United Nations Refugee Agency's definition as someone who "owing to a well-founded fear of being persecuted for reasons of race, religion, nationality, membership of a particular social group or political opinion, is outside the country of his nationality, and is unable to, or owing to such fear, is unwilling to avail himself of the protection of that country," (2011, par. #3).

In many parts of the world the commons are under threat. Bowers (2006) defines the commons as all parts of an ecosystem that have not been monetized or privatized. The commons can include cultural and physical resources such as language, theatre, music, rivers, knowledge of biodiversity and decision making processes. The hostile takeover of ecosystems by multinational corporations, the centralization of power into the hands of the wealthy elite, the global movement to privatize everything public, are all alarming signals that the enclosure of the commons is one of the most pressing social

justice concerns (Boal, 1979 & 1998; Bowers, 2006; Diamond, 2007; Franklin, 1998).

Bowers (2006) defines the enclosure of the commons as “transforming what was communally shared into what is privately owned and monetized” (p. 3). When the physical and cultural commons are reduced, local decision making is usurped and a community’s capacity to address social injustices is severely limited (Bowers, 2006). In order for a community to renew itself and deal with social injustice, it must be able to access and benefit from the wisdom of all members of a community (Newman & Jennings, 2008).

In Canada public schools are one of the few social institutions where children, adolescents and adults have the potential to gather together to become living expressions of the codified dreams and aesthetic judgments about what constitutes the ‘good life.’ Schools are liminal spaces where wisdom and natality fuse together to ignite the social imagination. As such, public schools are micro commons situated within the larger commons and in these micro commons students share a myriad of experiences that promote both the individual questioning of the status quo and the adoption of powerfully circulated ideologies. In effect, public schools create intellectual collisions that can assist in the enlargement of the commons or accelerate its demise (Foster, 2004).

A young person’s promise to renew the community’s’ collective understanding of what it means to live together in a democratic society enlarges the commons (Denzin, 2009). It also necessitates that all actors in public schools are consciously invited to critically reflect on the world in which they live and to imagine a better world; a world that is more joyful, peaceful, sustainable, and economically just. For young people to be

able to actualize these promises and participate fully in the life of the commons, they must be equipped intellectually and morally to analyze *and* feel the imagined possibilities of contested definitions of the 'good life' (Franklin, 1998). In order for community renewal of the commons to occur, I believe that intellectual collisions must be anticipated and embraced as a fundamental pursuit in public education.

Critical reflection and the articulation of a better world metaphorically frame a rehearsal space for students to learn to rigorously debate important issues that affect their communities. In other words, schools can offer semi private spaces where young people begin to understand and try out their democratic responsibilities. However, to do this type of work in public schools requires some fundamental changes in the method, matter and manner of public education in Canada (Giroux, 2007). If students are to 'live democracy' in order to prepare for an active and thoughtful life in the commons, new practices and knowledges must be introduced into the public education system. To extend the metaphor to actual practice, the primal language of the theatre may be an accessible mode to explore one's role in the larger commons (Boal, 1998; Rohd, 1998; Taylor, 2003).

This study investigated the creation of a theatrical commons as a means to increase and enrich democratic spaces in Manitoba school communities. A theatrical commons is an aesthetic space where diverse actors come together to solve complex community problems. It is a space that belongs to all members of the community. Augusto Boal who is credited for the development of the Theatre of the Oppressed which includes Image Theatre, Forum Theatre and Legislative Theatre, devised a number of theatrical processes that invited oppressed communities from all over the

world to identify the forces or groups that were designers of oppressive circumstances. In his theatrical workshops and plays, participants would work together to rehearse ways to overcome oppression/s. Boal's Forum Theatre plays would end in a crisis, then force audience members to figuratively and literally leave their seats to make 'interventions' to end the oppressions (Boal, 1979, 1995, 1998). Boal defined a 'crisis' as the moment in the play when the characters were most negatively impacted by their shared struggle. These crises or climaxes were orchestrated to cultivate mutual responsibility between the actors and the audience for the problem under exploration.

David Diamond built on Boal's work and created a number of theatrical processes called Theatre for Living (Diamond, 2007). Diamond's conscious movement away from the oppressed/oppressor binaries still resonates with the emancipatory goals of Boal's work but it honors the array of complex actors who live in a given ecosystem. In a Forum Theatre event Boal would not accept interventions from any 'oppressors' whereas Diamond sees no choice but to dissolve all boundaries between the constructs of the powerful and powerless if social change is to occur in a community. Another important component of Diamond's and Boal's work is that the work must be done by the people who actually live the community issue under investigation. Plays are constructed and performed by those who have intimate knowledge about community problems. Boal's and Diamond's work challenges the enclosure of the commons by working with others to make space for marginalized voices. The people closest to the problem define it and then represent its complexity and significance to others in the wider community.

Diamond and Boal have worked in solidarity with many marginalized communities over the years. One of Diamond's first Forum Theatre productions was a play called *Sanctuary* that was created and performed by former refugees who were living in Vancouver ([www.headlinestheatre.com/past\\_work/sanctuary.htm](http://www.headlinestheatre.com/past_work/sanctuary.htm)). This play deconstructed the barriers refugees face throughout the settlement process as well as the violent circumstances which forced people to leave their homelands. In 1989 *Sanctuary* challenged the essentialized portrayals of refugee youth and adults in the local and national media. Families involved in the play challenged the power relations embedded in the dominant immigration discourse which spoke at them, about them, for them, but not with them (Diamond, 2007).

Fifteen years after *Sanctuary* was performed, a number of Vancouver art and community activists once again challenged the media's portrayal of immigrant groups who were being consistently vilified within local news reports. In 2004 the *Vancouver Sun* published numerous articles about Indo-Canadian gang violence (Diamond, 2007). Diamond and other community activists characterized the articles as sensationalist and derogatory. The newspaper articles elicited a number of conversations within the Indo-Canadian community and within Diamond's Headlines Theatre Company about the historical negative representations of different immigrant groups by the Canadian media (Diamond, 2007). The corporate media 'shared' the experience of newcomers from the perspective of 'Canadians' who were impacted by immigration. This critical reflection led to the creation and performance of the 2004 forum theatre production called *Here and Now* ([www.headlinestheatre.com/past\\_work/Hereandnow/index.htm](http://www.headlinestheatre.com/past_work/Hereandnow/index.htm)). The play forced the audiences and the actors to question the forces that kept former refugee families

silenced and disenfranchised from local decision making. It is my contention that the voices of former refugees are also silenced, misrepresented and at times excluded from the Manitoba commons. I also believe that former refugee families and community and school leaders in Manitoba must intensify their critiques about the marginalization of former refugee voices from local and provincial decision making spaces inside and outside of schools.

Many former refugees who come to Manitoba face many barriers and challenges in their attempts to influence the method, matter and manner of public education (Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007; McBrien, 2005; Stewart, 2007; Tavares & MacKay, 2004). My belief is that public education should provide intellectual nourishment in the commons. This would require that all families have the opportunity to shape and inform the process of education. In 2003 Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth initiated a research project to identify some of the challenges and strengths in school programs designed to support newcomer youth, particularly those who have been impacted by war. MacKay and Tavares (2005) reported that representatives from 53 different schools responded to the surveys. Over 80% of the respondents indicated that significant improvements needed to be made to school programs targeted at newcomer youth. What was absent from this study were the voices of former refugee youth and their families. Hundreds of refugees arrive in Manitoba each year and there is not enough action research available that identifies examples of innovative practices that aim to reduce educational barriers that impact former refugee youth and their families (Ngo, 2009; Stewart, 2007).

For the past ten years I have worked as a classroom teacher and an educational consultant in Manitoba. In that time I have witnessed an increase in the number of

children who have been impacted by war enter our classrooms. The compilation of their stories held in my memory are coloured by extreme violence, gross human rights violations, collective and individual strengths, resistance and resilience. Many of my colleagues have shared anecdotal stories about the 'attrition rates' of refugee youth in our schools. Those stories are riddled with dysfunctional logic equations. Why is it that so many former refugee youth and their families have disappeared from our classrooms? Where are these families now? I believe public schools should be places where young people and their families can safely hold educators and policy makers accountable to prevent the *educational displacement* of former refugee youth once they arrive in Manitoba public schools. There is a paucity of programs within public schools that apprise young former refugee students of their rights as members of Canadian society (Ngo, 2009).

In order to open up a space for this study and to better understand the difference between the work of Boal and Diamond, a brief discussion about the study's philosophical bricolage must be undertaken. A reaction to the theoretical positions in the postmodern project, the emancipatory aims in critical educational research, and the ontological possibilities offered by *The Force of the Example* (Ferrara, 2008) informed the study's aims and methodological considerations. These theoretical tensions are discussed in the next section in order to situate this study in relation to the ontological fracture.

## **An Ontological Fracture**

Since noting the “triple crises of representation, legitimization and praxis,” (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 19) qualitative researchers have struggled ontologically between the rampant relativism in some postmodern discourses and the rigidity of the modern period. ‘Representation’ refers to a researcher’s ability to accurately understand and report on the lived experiences of participants. ‘Legitimization’ refers to the reliability, confirmability, validity, and generalizability of data and ‘praxis’ in this context is defined as an actor’s use and embodiment of knowledge to transform his or her life. The triple crisis made problematic three key modern assumptions: (1) qualitative researchers can capture the lived experiences of research participants; (2) it is possible to determine the reliability, validity and generalizability of qualitative data, and ; (3) qualitative research can name community problems and promote agency amongst the researcher and the research participants (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 19). In response to the triple crises, new knowledges entered the academy. Critical, feminist, indigenous, critical race, and queer theories offered new possibilities inside the fractures of dominant, positivistic western assumptions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Throughout the ‘crises,’ critical theorists and postmodernists posited that people have multiple subjectivities that are mediated by power relations and historical, contextual, and interpretive forces. These crises have also inspired qualitative researchers to account for themselves in the research process and to deconstruct the power relations embedded in their research projects. The ‘action turn’ (Reason & Torbert, 2001, in Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005) is the fusion between qualitative research, praxis and the enrichment of the human experience. However, post

modernists and critical theorists have offered very different stories about the existence of human agency and the potential/futility of research to ignite social change.

It is my position that cultural relativism can be used to circumvent the pursuit of a more socially just world when people experience moral, ethical and intellectual collisions. The commons is negated when *anything goes* and rigorous public debate about political, religious and ethical issues is labeled as an infringement on individual rights and liberties. Some postmodern discourses provide absolution to a world of consumers who live and work in moral silos. If we are “but shadows of people, events and places” (Guba & Lincoln, 2005, p. 212) I contend that at its most extreme, the postmodern project leads to moral bankruptcy and nihilism; at minimum apathy is an acceptable political position. Instead, I believe that a critical theoretical foundation has more to offer educators in the pursuit of social justice, since it can help individuals and groups to name oppressive circumstances; it respects and encourages human agency; and it can provoke action towards a more humane and socially just future.

Critical theorists express fixed ‘truths’ because they acknowledge the social pathologies that exist in the physical and cultural ecosystems. Many critical theorists have written extensively about the hegemonic effects of the unquestioned aims of schooling, standardized curricula, certain teaching methodologies, and the effects of privatization in school systems (Apple, 2008 & 2009; Chomsky, 2000; Freire, 2008; Furman & Gruenwald, 2004; Giroux, 2008; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). The critical bricolage (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005) has opened spaces within public schools and teacher education programs for intellectual deconstruction and the imagined possibilities for critical pedagogies. The aim and act of deconstruction

develops 'critical consciousness' (Freire, 2008) so that oppressed people can overcome their oppression(s) or oppressor(s) in order to actualize socially just communities. In this way, critical questioning becomes a fundamental part of a vibrant and healthy commons (Denzin, 2009).

A diverse body of research work framed within critical epistemologies exists with contested boundaries but it has aimed much of its work at the emancipation and the transformation of public schools actors into activists who learn to confront social injustices (Apple, 2008 & 2009; Chomsky, 2000; Freire, 2008; Furman & Gruenwald, 2004; Giroux, 2008; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). However, one of the challenges sometimes leveled at this body of work is its creation of artificial binary oppositions like oppressed/oppressor. Due to the dynamic nature of power relations and the complexity inherent in any cultural and physical ecosystem, binary oppositions can be reductive because they artificially simplify relationships that are extremely complex (Diamond, 2007).

The ontological positioning and the methodology of this study is situated in an aesthetic, philosophical space where multiple subjectivities and truth can coexist. We created a space where members of a shared school community could activate one another to pursue a better world. The study drew on the philosophical work of Alessandro Ferrara and his conceptualization of the *Force of the Example* (2008) where he contends that examples can have universal significance. I have suggested that public schools are liminal spaces where adults and children can imagine and set in motion the realization of a better world. Public education itself is in many ways a courageous declaration that it is possible for people who manifest multiple subjectivities to agree on

what constitutes the 'good life' (Noddings, 2003). This requires that at some point a group of people must 'see' what currently exists and make some collective judgments about the relative goodness of their decisions for the present and the future. I posit that in order for the public school to fulfill its role in the enlargement of the commons, educational research must identify and share "outstanding moments of authentic congruency that are capable of educating our discernment by way of exposing us to selective instances of that special pleasure called by Kant the 'feeling of the promotion of life'" (Ferrara, 2008, p. 22). This type of judgment exercised to determine the relative goodness of human endeavors is made within an aesthetic dimension which may lessen the paralysis of the triple crises (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005).

Guba and Lincoln (2005) suggest that a 'spiritual' positioning has recently emerged in qualitative research and it may offer places for researchers to discover common emancipatory interests. In the same way that a group of people can listen to an exquisite piece of music and agree that it is beautiful and exemplary, human beings can also identify axiological truths and knowledges that can ameliorate the ontological fracture (Ferrara, 2008). I believe this can be done by embracing the utility of an aesthetic philosophical space to make judgments about the worthiness of any emancipatory change.

### **Contextual Background Information**

According to Manitoba Education ([www.edu.gov.mb.ca/edu/mandate.html](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/edu/mandate.html)) the purpose of schools in Manitoba is: "To ensure that all Manitoba's children and youth have access to an array of educational opportunities such that every learner experiences success through relevant, engaging and high quality education that

prepares them for lifelong learning and citizenship in a democratic, socially just and sustainable society” (par. #4). It is only recently that Manitoba Education declared its mission publicly on the government website. I contend that what is also required in Manitoba is the engagement of the larger citizenry in a process to imagine and debate what would constitute a ‘democratic, ‘socially just’ and ‘sustainable’ Manitoba. To address complex social justice problems in Manitoba, I think communities must also be given a chance to discuss Manitoba as it exists now and what Manitoba should or could look like in the future. If this were to happen, public schools would have a much clearer sense about what and how students should learn. It is also imperative that at all levels of the educational system, the ‘community’ has the opportunity to debate contentious issues and make decisions about the most important issues facing public schools (*Canadian Centre for Policy Alternatives Review, 2008*).

Many newcomers arrive in Manitoba each year. I believe that all the partners who comprise the Manitoba public education system must initiate cyclical processes so the commons becomes inclusive of the values, ethics and knowledges brought to Manitoba from all over the world. Across Canada policy and programming decisions linked to immigration and supporting newcomers in public schools revolve around the creation of strategies to assist newcomers to acclimatize and adapt to their new lives in Canada (Van Ngo, 2009). There is little educational participatory action research available which explores the use of the arts as a means to create the space for former refugee families to participate fully in Canadian society (Denzin, 2009). A school, community, even a province or a country should be different in remarkable ways because new people have entered the commons (Ngo, 2009). Schools should not aim to create carbon copies of

programs and people in the name of cultural integration and inclusion (Denzin, 2009; Ngo, 2009). In addition, a world where any idea is acceptable in the name of cultural autonomy can dangerously absolve citizens of their responsibility for collective renewal (Appiah, 2006; Sen, 2006; Van Ngo, 2009).

### **New Members of Canadian Communities**

In 2008 Canada welcomed 247,243 newcomers, and 11,230 of Canada's new immigrants came to Manitoba (Citizenship and Immigration Canada, 2009). According to Citizenship and Immigration Canada, in 2008 the top three source areas from which new Manitobans immigrated were: (1) Asia and Pacific, (2) Europe and the United Kingdom, and (3) Africa and the Middle East (Table 1.1). Manitoba Labour and Immigration reports that over 15,000 immigrants arrive in Manitoba each year ([www2.immigratemanitoba.com/browse/choose/working](http://www2.immigratemanitoba.com/browse/choose/working)). Table 1.2 shows that Canadian school communities reverberate with a consonance of languages that are reflective of these immigration patterns. In cafeterias, classrooms, and gymnasiums all over Manitoba, thousands of young people and their families add new textures to Canada's cultural mosaic each year.

**Table 1.1 Permanent Residents By Province or Territory and Source Area**

**Canada – Permanent residents by province or territory and source area**

Source area	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
	<b>Number</b>									
Africa and the Middle East	517	680	721	546	619	749	730	795	775	881
Asia and Pacific	455	362	352	409	365	404	556	924	903	740
South and Central America	80	64	84	98	70	119	84	135	84	144
United States	106	111	126	101	124	176	159	245	206	289
Europe and the United Kingdom	437	391	415	265	296	322	400	485	555	597
Source area not stated	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	2	0	0
<b>Nova Scotia</b>	<b>1,595</b>	<b>1,608</b>	<b>1,698</b>	<b>1,419</b>	<b>1,474</b>	<b>1,771</b>	<b>1,929</b>	<b>2,586</b>	<b>2,523</b>	<b>2,651</b>
Africa and the Middle East	217	438	450	385	348	443	390	476	537	539
Asia and Pacific	456	306	332	372	369	649	830	1,419	1,715	2,339
South and Central America	78	83	97	112	101	123	164	162	147	209
United States	88	93	114	107	114	169	172	223	188	245
Europe and the United Kingdom	380	444	331	241	247	298	362	438	594	610
Source area not stated	0	0	1	0	0	2	0	1	0	0
<b>Other Atlantic provinces*</b>	<b>1,219</b>	<b>1,364</b>	<b>1,325</b>	<b>1,217</b>	<b>1,179</b>	<b>1,684</b>	<b>1,918</b>	<b>2,719</b>	<b>3,181</b>	<b>3,942</b>
Africa and the Middle East	8,087	9,686	12,327	12,265	12,609	14,097	13,845	16,180	16,306	16,197
Asia and Pacific	8,459	9,324	9,767	8,711	8,798	9,260	8,850	8,671	7,205	7,731
South and Central America	3,831	4,195	5,553	5,477	6,833	7,829	8,312	8,201	9,169	9,245
United States	426	493	501	521	701	775	732	1,006	982	1,032
Europe and the United Kingdom	8,347	8,800	9,448	10,601	10,613	12,271	11,551	10,613	11,510	10,984
Source area not stated	0	1	1	6	1	13	25	14	29	23
<b>Quebec</b>	<b>29,150</b>	<b>32,499</b>	<b>37,597</b>	<b>37,581</b>	<b>39,555</b>	<b>44,245</b>	<b>43,315</b>	<b>44,685</b>	<b>45,201</b>	<b>45,212</b>
Africa and the Middle East	18,533	22,850	26,642	25,461	22,202	25,345	25,665	24,176	21,649	22,972
Asia and Pacific	53,060	73,855	83,393	74,361	66,297	65,682	78,899	68,507	57,415	55,874
South and Central America	9,191	10,210	11,785	11,190	10,214	10,924	12,513	12,118	12,218	12,100
United States	3,004	3,286	3,255	2,845	3,099	3,849	5,147	5,698	5,134	5,336
Europe and the United Kingdom	20,377	23,306	23,542	19,727	17,902	19,262	18,234	15,311	14,845	14,566
Source area not stated	1	4	24	4	8	32	67	82	54	48
<b>Ontario</b>	<b>104,166</b>	<b>133,511</b>	<b>148,641</b>	<b>133,588</b>	<b>119,722</b>	<b>125,094</b>	<b>140,525</b>	<b>125,892</b>	<b>111,315</b>	<b>110,896</b>
Africa and the Middle East	626	1,044	1,089	957	1,347	1,671	1,570	1,922	1,764	1,867
Asia and Pacific	1,436	1,731	1,814	2,055	2,696	3,264	3,807	5,090	5,872	5,810
South and Central America	228	263	267	415	614	563	555	433	811	737
United States	152	99	135	107	139	155	207	195	210	237
Europe and the United Kingdom	1,283	1,498	1,286	1,081	1,707	1,771	1,957	2,407	2,294	2,570
Source area not stated	0	0	0	0	0	2	0	0	3	0
<b>Manitoba</b>	<b>3,725</b>	<b>4,635</b>	<b>4,691</b>	<b>4,615</b>	<b>6,503</b>	<b>7,426</b>	<b>8,096</b>	<b>10,047</b>	<b>10,954</b>	<b>11,221</b>
Africa and the Middle East	327	507	508	509	488	582	558	618	646	904
Asia and Pacific	671	719	702	693	639	735	848	1,053	1,710	2,442
South and Central America	72	53	51	53	99	87	139	206	186	223
United States	94	82	88	106	104	116	124	142	133	170
Europe and the United Kingdom	564	521	355	306	338	423	449	705	841	1,097
Source area not stated	0	0	0	0	0	0	1	0	0	0
<b>Saskatchewan</b>	<b>1,728</b>	<b>1,882</b>	<b>1,704</b>	<b>1,667</b>	<b>1,668</b>	<b>1,943</b>	<b>2,119</b>	<b>2,724</b>	<b>3,516</b>	<b>4,836</b>
Africa and the Middle East	1,787	2,155	2,863	2,755	2,734	2,972	3,025	3,760	3,527	4,175
Asia and Pacific	6,128	7,463	8,624	7,781	8,792	8,644	11,024	11,244	11,213	12,256
South and Central America	607	774	1,008	933	1,155	1,164	1,356	1,545	1,782	2,198
United States	548	549	581	474	555	759	758	980	938	1,225
Europe and the United Kingdom	3,025	3,423	3,325	2,840	2,603	2,932	3,241	3,179	3,384	4,328
Source area not stated	0	0	4	0	0	4	0	8	17	13
<b>Alberta</b>	<b>12,095</b>	<b>14,364</b>	<b>16,405</b>	<b>14,783</b>	<b>15,839</b>	<b>16,475</b>	<b>19,404</b>	<b>20,716</b>	<b>20,861</b>	<b>24,195</b>
Africa and the Middle East	3,460	3,539	3,628	3,441	3,307	3,655	3,475	3,903	3,338	3,740
Asia and Pacific	25,853	26,904	27,845	24,630	25,683	25,861	33,161	29,476	26,504	30,121
South and Central America	1,191	1,357	1,362	1,187	1,252	1,430	1,504	1,499	1,477	1,619
United States	1,104	1,090	1,083	1,020	1,162	1,496	1,954	2,436	2,632	2,655
Europe and the United Kingdom	4,514	4,536	4,556	3,775	3,824	4,583	4,671	4,764	4,990	5,807
Source area not stated	1	2	8	4	1	3	5	5	16	8
<b>British Columbia</b>	<b>36,123</b>	<b>37,428</b>	<b>38,482</b>	<b>34,057</b>	<b>35,229</b>	<b>37,028</b>	<b>44,770</b>	<b>42,083</b>	<b>38,957</b>	<b>43,950</b>
Africa and the Middle East	3	9	10	21	18	17	22	31	21	29
Asia and Pacific	69	75	96	49	85	76	75	85	93	140
South and Central America	4	9	4	7	9	14	13	5	16	19
United States	11	25	25	13	15	12	10	11	18	20
Europe and the United Kingdom	61	37	38	32	37	40	41	43	46	80
<b>Territories**</b>	<b>148</b>	<b>155</b>	<b>173</b>	<b>122</b>	<b>164</b>	<b>159</b>	<b>161</b>	<b>175</b>	<b>194</b>	<b>288</b>
Africa and the Middle East	33,557	40,908	48,238	46,340	43,672	49,531	49,280	51,861	48,563	51,304
Asia and Pacific	96,587	120,739	132,925	119,061	113,724	114,575	138,050	126,469	112,630	117,453
South and Central America	15,282	17,008	20,211	19,472	20,347	22,253	24,640	24,304	25,890	26,494
United States	5,533	5,828	5,908	5,294	6,013	7,507	9,263	10,936	10,441	11,209
Europe and the United Kingdom	38,988	42,956	43,296	38,868	37,567	41,902	40,906	37,945	39,059	40,639
Source area not stated	2	7	38	14	10	57	98	112	119	92
Province or territory not stated	5	12	23	0	15	0	4	16	52	52
<b>Total</b>	<b>189,954</b>	<b>227,458</b>	<b>250,639</b>	<b>229,049</b>	<b>221,348</b>	<b>235,825</b>	<b>262,241</b>	<b>251,643</b>	<b>236,764</b>	<b>247,243</b>

\*Newfoundland and Labrador, Prince Edward Island and New Brunswick

\*\*Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut

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**Table 1.2. Dominant Languages Spoken By Canadian Newcomers 1999-2008**

**Canada – Permanent residents by mother tongue**

Mother Tongue	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
	<b>Number</b>									
English	18,606	19,560	22,136	18,868	18,694	22,032	22,906	24,884	26,615	28,751
Mandarin	24,975	31,389	36,178	28,127	31,714	31,456	37,321	28,049	23,207	26,086
Arabic	12,496	15,492	20,217	18,049	17,218	18,985	19,516	20,008	18,996	21,925
Tagalog	8,328	9,612	12,557	10,610	11,442	12,443	16,332	16,099	16,539	20,835
Spanish	7,250	8,719	10,143	10,461	12,489	14,319	17,106	17,059	16,913	16,292
Punjabi	11,396	14,038	14,402	15,270	13,845	13,256	17,037	17,714	14,281	14,315
French	4,722	5,343	5,597	5,199	5,391	6,802	7,476	7,430	8,305	8,334
Urdu	8,616	13,613	15,250	13,466	11,960	11,722	12,798	11,231	8,896	7,899
Korean	7,236	7,661	9,664	7,410	7,179	5,420	5,905	6,295	5,983	7,377
Russian	9,349	9,449	10,017	9,416	8,392	8,759	8,637	7,300	7,293	6,697
Chinese	9,927	8,761	7,113	6,768	4,412	4,656	5,743	6,114	5,230	5,693
Farsi	4,653	4,502	4,680	6,916	5,042	5,069	4,936	6,117	5,838	5,459
Hindi	2,937	4,303	5,339	5,320	4,395	5,347	6,017	5,220	4,604	4,615
Tamil	5,150	6,480	6,195	5,825	4,915	5,113	5,318	5,237	4,292	4,492
Gujarati	2,039	5,316	5,463	5,964	4,731	4,656	7,363	5,615	5,183	4,193
German	2,207	2,201	1,961	1,866	2,245	2,387	2,565	3,077	2,864	4,144
Romanian	3,542	4,541	5,628	5,815	5,559	5,859	5,261	4,877	4,494	3,536
Cantonese	5,451	5,322	4,704	5,243	5,207	5,008	5,452	4,677	3,977	3,434
Bengali	2,357	3,495	4,414	3,517	2,498	3,158	4,656	4,411	3,271	3,370
Creole	1,516	1,786	2,693	2,415	2,386	2,254	2,252	1,956	1,989	3,142
Portuguese	1,015	1,311	1,461	1,229	1,259	1,424	1,540	1,730	2,197	2,856
Other african languages	555	727	720	1,125	2,375	3,512	3,250	2,781	2,452	2,187
Other Southeast Asia languages	691	572	617	403	507	702	742	1,093	1,479	2,100
Vietnamese	1,412	1,782	2,058	2,164	1,709	1,814	1,872	3,062	2,540	1,915
Dari	1,613	2,240	2,705	2,659	2,499	2,062	2,383	2,265	1,868	1,599
<b>Top 25 languages</b>	<b>158,039</b>	<b>188,215</b>	<b>211,912</b>	<b>194,105</b>	<b>188,063</b>	<b>198,215</b>	<b>224,384</b>	<b>214,301</b>	<b>199,306</b>	<b>211,246</b>
<b>Other languages</b>	<b>31,915</b>	<b>39,243</b>	<b>38,727</b>	<b>34,944</b>	<b>33,285</b>	<b>37,610</b>	<b>37,857</b>	<b>37,342</b>	<b>37,448</b>	<b>35,997</b>
<b>Total</b>	<b>189,954</b>	<b>227,458</b>	<b>250,639</b>	<b>229,049</b>	<b>221,348</b>	<b>235,825</b>	<b>262,241</b>	<b>251,643</b>	<b>236,754</b>	<b>247,243</b>

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**Constraints that Impact Refugee Families in School Communities**

Within the last seven years, three studies were conducted in Manitoba concerning the constraints that impact newcomers in school communities (Kanu, 2008; MacKay & Tavares, 2005; Stewart, 2007). The three studies were precipitated for two main reasons: (1) educators in school systems, immigrant service providers, newcomer youth, newcomer families, or policy makers expressed concerns about the barriers that impact newcomers in school communities; and, (2) there has been a pronounced increase of children who have been impacted by war entering the Canadian school system. (Kanu, 2008; Stewart, 2007). According to the United Nations Refugee Agency, at the end of 2008 there were 14,405,400 displaced persons in the world and

10,478,000 refugees ([www.unhcr.org/pages/4a0174156.html](http://www.unhcr.org/pages/4a0174156.html)). Table 1.3 shows that the number of refugee claimants in 2008 in Canada is the highest it has been in seven years.

**Table 1.3. Total Entries of Refugee Claimants By Gender and Age**

**Canada – Total entries of refugee claimants by gender and age**

Age	1999	2000	2001	2002	2003	2004	2005	2006	2007	2008
	<b>Number</b>									
0 to 14 years of age	2,537	3,215	3,947	2,925	3,012	2,271	1,636	1,990	2,967	3,886
15 to 24 years of age	4,432	4,958	6,140	4,550	4,152	3,201	2,491	2,760	3,025	3,798
25 to 44 years of age	9,928	11,995	13,439	9,901	9,307	7,381	5,635	6,351	7,870	10,324
45 to 64 years of age	1,349	1,860	2,245	1,798	1,792	1,396	1,087	1,320	1,584	2,252
65 years of age or more	196	240	276	204	172	150	146	189	198	248
Age not stated	3	4	0	2	0	0	0	0	0	1
<b>Males</b>	<b>18,445</b>	<b>22,272</b>	<b>26,047</b>	<b>19,380</b>	<b>18,435</b>	<b>14,399</b>	<b>10,995</b>	<b>12,610</b>	<b>15,644</b>	<b>20,509</b>
0 to 14 years of age	2,338	3,085	3,730	2,790	2,786	2,096	1,601	1,938	2,825	3,790
15 to 24 years of age	2,577	3,253	4,208	3,100	2,864	2,358	1,847	1,905	2,429	3,036
25 to 44 years of age	4,989	6,522	8,073	6,226	5,975	5,034	3,840	4,634	5,618	7,130
45 to 64 years of age	1,191	1,636	1,936	1,538	1,482	1,347	1,149	1,421	1,567	1,976
65 years of age or more	366	396	461	308	257	230	259	364	364	410
Age not stated	5	0	1	0	1	1	0	0	0	0
<b>Females</b>	<b>11,466</b>	<b>14,892</b>	<b>18,409</b>	<b>13,962</b>	<b>13,365</b>	<b>11,066</b>	<b>8,696</b>	<b>10,262</b>	<b>12,803</b>	<b>16,342</b>
0 to 14 years of age	4,875	6,300	7,677	5,715	5,798	4,367	3,237	3,928	5,792	7,676
15 to 24 years of age	7,009	8,211	10,348	7,650	7,016	5,559	4,338	4,665	5,454	6,834
25 to 44 years of age	14,917	18,517	21,512	16,127	15,282	12,415	9,475	10,985	13,488	17,454
45 to 64 years of age	2,540	3,496	4,181	3,336	3,274	2,743	2,236	2,741	3,151	4,228
65 years of age or more	562	636	737	512	429	380	405	553	562	658
Age not stated	8	4	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	1
Gender not stated	1	2	1	1	0	0	0	2	0	0
<b>Total</b>	<b>29,912</b>	<b>37,166</b>	<b>44,457</b>	<b>33,343</b>	<b>31,800</b>	<b>25,465</b>	<b>19,691</b>	<b>22,874</b>	<b>28,447</b>	<b>36,851</b>

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Manitoba studies indicate that newcomer youth and particularly youth and families who have been impacted by war, face significant barriers in school communities (Kanu, 2008; MacKay & Tavares, 2005; Sloane, 2009; Stewart, 2007). MacKay and Tavares (2005) reported that 80.7% of their respondents felt that significant improvements need to be made in terms of programming for immigrant and refugee youth and young adults (2005). Stewart (2007) explored the personal, social and academic needs of refugee students and found that students who arrive in Canada from

war affected countries are disenfranchised from schools and that many schools currently do not meet the needs of these learners. In the spring of 2009 as part of my work for the Manitoba School Improvement Program, I facilitated a participatory action research project to identify constraints that impact newcomer families in two school communities. The action research revealed numerous barriers that prevented newcomer parents from fulfilling their roles as advocates for their sons' and daughters' education. Some of the parents in this study described the inaccessibility of classroom teachers, a lack of multilingual information about Canadian schools and a mistrust of school authority figures as significant barriers. Kanu (2008) studied the educational needs and barriers for African refugee youth in two inner city schools. In Kanu's (2008) study, the youth participants reported their parents had difficulty providing academic support at home due to work obligations and their parents' limited English language proficiency. Parents in Kanu's (2008) study reported that an intense focus on their economic survival and the slow pace of cultural adaptation also impeded the academic success of their children.

The above mentioned studies indicate that newcomer youth, particularly those who have been impacted by war, face many settlement challenges. A shortage of safe and affordable housing, food security and a lack of employment opportunities for newcomers with limited language proficiency are just some of the difficult challenges facing the newest members of Manitoba communities (Stewart, 2007). The studies also indicate that some former refugee families are marginalized in public schools in Manitoba. Cultural differences with respect to what defines supportive parent involvement in schools and inadequate access to culturally sensitive psychosocial

supports are some of the factors that marginalize former refugee parents from the life of the school (Kanu, 2008).

A number of school programs targeted for newcomers across Canada are resource poor and focus mainly on the social and cultural domains of acculturation (Van Ngo, 2009). In Winnipeg, the Boys and Girls Club, the Immigrant and Refugee Community Organization of Manitoba, the NEEDS Centre and The Peaceful Village provide excellent after school homework support and recreational programming for newcomer youth. However these programs are entirely dependent on short term funding cycles and the generation of 'new' projects that appeal to funders. What is absent in these recent Manitoba studies and in many of the programs for newcomers across Canada is a focus on the political sphere of acclimation and adaptation (Denzin, 2009; Van Ngo, 2009). Too many programs for refugee youth and families are centered in a charity based framework which mutes necessary critiques of school and community programs (McBrien, 2005; Ngo, 2009). Ngo (2009) characterizes a charity based framework as one that cultivates dependence and the relinquishment of cultural knowledge that contradicts or conflicts with the dominant discourse. Programs for newcomer families are often informed by white, middle class, Christian values. They focus on the reduction of linguistic and social differences and in some cases operate as cultural photocopiers. Newcomers have limited opportunities to redefine *what* is taught in schools and *how* subject matter is addressed in schools. Community and school programming frameworks should be centered within a human rights or social justice discourse (Denzin, 2009; McBrien, 2005; Van Ngo, 2009). This study aimed to use a

politicized theatrical process as a means to learn more about the political sphere of acclimation and adaptation.

### **Purpose of the Study**

As supported previously (Apple, 2008 & 2009; Chomsky, 2000; Freire, 2008; Furman & Gruenwald, 2004; Giroux, 2008; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005), my contention is that the commons are under threat and public schools are one of the few remaining social institutions that have the power to reinvigorate the commons. Image Theatre and Forum Theatre offer rich possibilities to reinvigorate the commons (Boal, 1998; Diamond, 2007; Rohd, 1998; Taylor 2003). Through the creation of dynamic aesthetic spaces where people can rehearse to make change in their lives (Diamond, 2007), the theatre may offer schools opportunities to have students enter and enrich the political theatre that is their lives. There is insufficient knowledge about the ways in which theatrical practices in school communities might engage participants in processes where they must name the world as it is, articulate how the world ought to be, and make aesthetic judgments about what constitutes the 'good life' for all members of a community (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). In fact, I believe that the public school has been increasingly dislocated from this fundamental pursuit.

This study created an aesthetic space within the research process where very diverse actors in a community engaged one another in rigorous debate about issues that are of paramount importance to those who live in the community. It is within this aesthetic space where I sought to gather examples of the ways in which different 'actors' in school communities rehearse for revolutionary change (Boal, 1979). There is little research on the use of Image Theatre, Forum Theatre or the Theatre for the

Oppressed as strategies to reinvigorate the commons and make changes in school communities. I was also unable to find any studies that utilized the principles and practices of Theatre for Living (Diamond, 2007) as a part of the planning and reflection process at any level of the public school system in Manitoba. A number of the Forum Theatre strategies pioneered by Boal and the philosophical grounding of Diamond's theatrical work may provide a sound foundation to introduce alternative ways in Manitoba for school communities to link their promises and practices to the pursuit of more joyful, peaceful and democratic communities.

### **Significance of the Study**

The study endeavored to introduce a theatrical process to broaden and deepen democratic engagement between diverse citizens in one public school community. The study also hoped to contribute to a greater understanding of how Image, Forum and Legislative Theatre help people name and invent different possibilities that address complex school community challenges. The study revealed many ways that theatre can help people reclaim their “protagonistic function” on the stage and in their communities (Boal, 1979, p. 119). On stage and in the audience, actors make connections to the dilemmas that unite human beings in their joy and in their pain (Rohd, 1998). Theatre work can inspire dialogue, encourage people to explore choices, and help citizens to practice community development within a safe space (Boal, 1995, 1998; Diamond, 2007; Rohd, 1998; Taylor, 2003). Using theatre as a research methodology also helped participants consider what policy and school programming lessons could be gleaned through the infusion of Image Theatre, Forum Theatre and Legislative Theatre in public school spaces. Finally, the study involved newcomer youth and parents in order to

create the space for potentially 'marginalized' voices to influence educational policy decisions made in Manitoba.

Public schools should not aim to create carbon copies of programs and people in the name of cultural inclusion and integration (Sen, 2006). A world where any idea or moral imperative is acceptable in the name of cultural autonomy can dangerously absolve public schools of the responsibility for community renewal (Ferrara, 2008). I believe the liminal spaces of public schools must be embraced, and become places where caring adults and children work together to imagine a better future. In order to "learn to love humanity through its particular expressions" (Santal, 1996, p.343), community members should rigorously engage with others to understand and come to agreement about what constitutes the 'good life.' This study is significant because some of the stories embedded in the research process reveal elegant and stimulating political debate about contentious individual and community issues.

In terms of actual practice, this study is significant to policy makers, school division administrators, school administrators, classroom teachers and students because the research uncovered new learning about the ways in which Image and Forum Theatre can incite rigorous democratic engagement across school communities. We are a long way from having educational policy makers consider Forum Theatre as a viable alternative to strategic planning. The study does indicate this would be a worthwhile endeavor to pursue. Teachers and students may also be interested in the study's results because Image and Forum Theatre hold some promise to create space for students and teachers to critically reflect together on their roles and responsibilities as democratic citizens.

## **Overview of the Methodology**

The study was located in one public high school community in Manitoba. It began with an invitation to approximately 30 former refugee youth and parents to name and select a community problem that was of great importance to them. The participants from the community meeting were invited to participate in a five day Image and Forum Theatre workshop to deeply explore the roots and impact of the community problem as well as possible solutions. The workshop participants were asked to make a Forum Theatre play using the content of the workshops in order to inspire dialogue and problem solving during a public performance of the play in which the general audience was invited to participate. The research process was divided into three phases: identification of the community issue and participant recruitment (phase 1), the workshop series (phase 2), and the Forum Theatre event (phase 3) (Boal, 1979, 1998; Diamond, 2007).

To begin phase 1, I solicited the necessary school division and school permissions. Next I approached three English as an Additional Language (EAL) teachers and described the research project to them. I asked the teachers for permission to speak with three of their classes. I spoke to as many classes as possible in order to elicit a potential of roughly 30 participants. The purpose of the initial meeting with the classes was to invite students to participate in a group dialogue where they would name community challenges they would like to see improved. They were told that the issue they selected would inform the theatre workshops and the Forum Theatre play.

During the first meeting with the students I took the opportunity to clearly outline the entire study, hand out letters of invitation to participate in the study, and to describe

how the group dialogue fit into the overall study. Students were also notified that their parents/guardians were invited to participate, and those who indicated an interest were provided with additional letters of invitation to take home so that parents/guardians had the opportunity to engage in the study. Approximately one week later all of the students from the class visits and/or those who contacted me via email or telephone were provided with phase 1 consent forms and stamped envelopes by the EAL teachers who distributed them on my behalf. The decision to provide all the students with the phase 1 consent forms meant that the EAL teachers were not aware of which students elected to participate in the study. The consent forms were signed and returned to me by regular post.

It was stated on the consent forms that participants had the right to remove themselves at any point in the study or to re-engage at any point in the study. I asked the EAL teachers to provide one oral reminder to the students regarding when the consent forms were due. Students, parents and guardians had two weeks to hand in their parent/consent forms.

On June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011 I facilitated a meeting with 26 former refugee youth and parents/guardians from the school community to thoroughly explain the research project again and to ask them to identify a community or school problem that was of great importance to them. In small groups, the adults and children discussed some of the challenges in the school community they would like to see improved. A large group discussion followed the small group conversations. The small groups reported back to the large group providing highlights of their conversations. Through a consensus building activity, the participants named the community problem that informed the

content of the workshops and the Forum Theatre play. The community issue participants selected was, “Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice.”

After the theme for the workshops and the play was determined, I invited the participants to remain involved and to participate in the workshop phase of the study. At this time, the workshop process was described in detail. At the end of the meeting I handed a phase 2 consent form to all of the participants. The consent form contained the workshop location, dates and times. I hoped that if 26 members of one school community identified a community problem that was important to them, its exploration would be worthy of their time and expertise in the workshops and in the Forum Theatre play.

Phase 2 of the research project consisted of a five day Image and Forum Theatre workshop that took place in July 2011. The participants were provided with detailed information about the contents of the workshops in advance because I anticipated the workshops would provoke people to access personal beliefs and stories that related to the issue of “Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice.”

The workshops aimed to deeply explore the theme through the use of theatre games, Image Theatre and Forum Theatre exercises. Image Theatre work involves making shapes with one’s body to communicate representations of collective and individual ideas. Forum Theatre involves the creation of short plays about specific community dilemmas. The plays are approximately 20 minutes in length and they end in crisis. Forum Theatre plays end in a crisis to turn the audience into spect-actors (Boal, 1979; Taylor, 2003) or people who use their knowledge and energy to publicly rehearse

for community change. The crisis is used to mobilize the audience, and to incite dialogue and problem solving. The plays are restarted and audience members are provoked to replace certain characters on stage and make interventions that will help address the complex problems that have been represented in the play. In essence, Forum Theatre is a rehearsal for community development work (Boal, 1979).

The workshop series was a five day process where 33 participants were involved in theatrical games designed to build trust. The workshops took place from July 4<sup>th</sup> to July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Forum Theatre exercises were used so that the community challenge could be deconstructed from multiple angles. The theatre exercises and games were used to “till the soil in order to uncover important truths about what a community has decided it must tell” (Diamond in person at Theatre for Living Workshop, Winnipeg, 2009). Photographs were taken of the workshop images as another rich source of data. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 participants by me at the end of the workshop series to better understand what the participants experienced throughout the workshops, as well as to make a record of the innovative solutions offered by participants that could help address the issue of “Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice?” The photographs were taken by volunteer participants to facilitate dialogue in the semi-structured interviews using a method called Photo-elicitation that will be explained in Chapter 3.

Each workshop culminated with a discussion circle to capture the participants’ reflections at the end of each workshop. These reflections were recorded by the community therapist and one other volunteer participant. The decision to have some of the study’s participants take the photos and record the discussion circle comments was

to help limit my bias and/or influence on participants in the study. This way it was the participants who decided what images filled the photographs and what words were recorded in the discussion circles. I also recorded my own detailed observations after each workshop session as text to be analyzed in conjunction with the semi-structured interviews. On day five of the workshop, I outlined the parameters of involvement in phase 3 of the study, and handed out the phase 3 consent forms.

Participants in phase 3 created a Forum Theatre play that culminated as a public community event on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Thirty of the workshop participants chose to create, rehearse, and perform in the Forum Theatre play. My initial estimate was that I would require seven to ten actors to generate the play (Diamond, 2007). I also thought the play would require three to four participants to develop the set, costumes and venue.

The actors used the content from the workshops to create a 27 minute play that ended in a crisis (Boal, 1979). With my assistance, the participants deconstructed the process of Forum Theatre to help them prepare for the public Forum Theatre event. Former refugee families, educators, community service providers, policy makers and other members of the school community were invited to attend the public performance. In addition to the advertising that occurred via word of mouth between family and friends, the actors put up posters in the community and I emailed invitations to settlement service provider networks. I attempted to solidify the attendance of policy makers, and community leaders in advance of the public performance via invitational email. In the written correspondence to the community leaders and policy makers, there was a brief description of the process which helped the actors prepare for the event. If the policy makers and community leaders did attend, I hoped the event would evolve

into a Legislative Theatre production. Legislative Theatre “brings theatre back into the centre of political action - the centre of decisions- by making theatre as politics rather than making political theatre” (Boal, p. 20, 1998). The intent of a Legislative Theatre event is for citizens to rigorously engage with policy makers in order to bring about positive change in their communities. As previously explained, the enclosure of the commons often results in those who are most impacted by a community problem having the least decision making power (Bowers, 2006). Legislative Theatre attempts to locate ordinary citizens in the same room with those who have considerable control over community decisions.

The Forum Theatre event involved the video-taped performance of a 27 minute play that ended in a crisis. The play ended with an innocent and terrified boy pointing a gun at another boy as a police officer arrived on the scene. The motivation behind ending at a crisis point is to disintegrate the barriers that exist between the actors and the audience. The play restarted and the audience was invited to offer interventions that would help to solve the problems that were presented on stage. These interventions were received by the actors who stayed true to their characters’ lived experiences. My role as the Joker (Boal, 1979; Diamond, 2007) was to consistently bring out the policy and pragmatic suggestions offered within the interventions. The discussion following each intervention fluctuated between the deconstruction of the moment when the intervention was presented on stage (micro level) and the implications for the community (macro level). It has been the experience of both Diamond and Boal that audience interventions are extremely diverse (Boal, 1979,1998; Diamond, 2007). My

intent was that all the interventions from the practical to the philosophical were accepted and addressed by me/the Joker, the actors and the audience (Diamond, 2007).

It must be acknowledged here that the role of the Joker is a position of privilege. It was incumbent upon me to consistently check with the actors and the audience members to avoid inadvertently inserting my own biases in their mouths and ears. The actors also used rehearsal time to practice the acceptance of interventions on stage so the audience would be able to safely challenge what they saw and heard. There was also the slight possibility that the audience would remain silent after the first run of the play. If this was to happen, the silence would also become data to be analyzed. A video recording was made of the Forum Theatre event for the purpose of analysis.

Tickets for the Forum Theatre event were given out by me, the workshop participants and the actors. The tickets were free and the event was held at the Ellice Café Theatre in Winnipeg. Some of the costs were incurred by me and some of the costs were subsidized by the organization I work for called the Manitoba School Improvement Program. I applied for an action research grant from Manitoba School Improvement as part of my personal professional development allotment. Each spectator who attended the Forum Theatre event was provided with an audience consent form along with their ticket so people understood that if they decided to participate in the play that it was being video-taped and it was going to be used for research purposes. At the front doors of the theatre I had two volunteers collect the consent forms from the audience members. Extra copies of the consent forms were on site in case someone forgot to bring his or her consent form.

Throughout the Forum Theatre event, the interventions were recorded by a video camera. A written description of the interventions was offered to the actors, community leaders, settlement service organizations, government officials, and other interested community members in order to potentially impact the community problem of, “Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice.” Some of the actors may also choose to use the content of the interventions to inform grassroots initiatives. The detailed descriptions of the interventions were also used to analyze the Forum Theatre process. The audience was filled with 77 ‘spect-actors’ on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

The volunteers who collected tickets at the front door also invited audience members to participate in a focus group that occurred approximately one month after the performance to offer testimonials about the Forum Theatre experience, any new understandings about the issue presented on stage, feedback on the interventions that were contributed by fellow audience members, feelings of readiness to take action on the issues with which they were confronted throughout the play, and their reflections on the use of theatre to promote social discourse and social justice.

Finally, the actors who performed in the play were invited to debrief their performance experiences in a focus group one month after the performance. The focus group was facilitated by me, audio taped, and I used the discussion circle format employed throughout the workshops to elicit reflective comments.

This aesthetic, qualitative action research project was situated in a philosophical space that assumed it was possible to analyze the power exerted by the ‘exemplarity’ to uncover universal significance in diverse contexts (Ferrara, 2008). It assumed diversity would manifest itself in the publicly shared excerpts of the community’s narrative as it

pertains to the social justice issue of, “Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice.” The participants’ personal and social ‘histories’ displayed multiple subjectivities. The analysis of the exemplarity’s ability to conjure universal significance manifested itself through the theatrical processes and in the solutions offered as participants engaged in the workshops and in the Forum Theatre event (Boal, 1998).

The interpretive community (Creswell, 2007) that created the expression of exemplarity revealed ‘critical theory’ in action. A primary aim of the research was to invite participants to discuss the conditions of their existence in hopes that the participants in the research process would contribute to transformational dialogues within the community so that positive change would occur. I deconstructed my role in the research process and invited participants to ‘tell their own truths’ throughout the process. The participants who were involved in the theatrical processes were invited to identify and imagine new solutions for problems that existed in their public school and in the wider community (MacKay & Tavares, 2005; Stewart, 2007). The data were analyzed to understand what meanings participants gave the workshops and the Forum Theatre play, what new thoughts or perspectives participants gleaned with regards to the issue of, “Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice,” and the ways in which the workshop and play activated or deactivated the participants to ‘improve’ the community problem explored in this action research study.

The methodology and theatrical process of this study resonated most closely with Diamond’s theatrical commons. The intention was that participants in the workshop and during the Forum Theatre event would not interact with one another by wielding binary oppositions. My belief is that someone can be both oppressed and the oppressor

even in the same moment (Diamond, 2007). For example, in the last scene of the *Silos of Silence* play, the character Chris tries to coerce another character Ita into delivering a bag of drugs to “Mr. Michaels” who lives in an apartment, “just up the street,” (*Silos of Silence*, 2011). Ita demonstrates a great deal of resistance and agency in the face of great pressure and Chris is not portrayed as a cartoon thug. In fact, we learn in the play that Chris’s predicament is just as perilous as Ita’s predicament. The play attempted to honor the complexity of the community problem and create ownership for the issues by unmasking and electrifying the power relations on stage. There was no *us* and *them*, only *us*.

### **Research Questions**

The research questions were informed by the work of critical theorists and educators who insist that the primary aims of education are the elimination of oppression and the enrichment of the human experience. Bowers’ alarm bell that signals the enclosure of the commons (2006), Boal’s emancipatory theatrical work, Diamond’s *Theatre for Living*, and finally the Manitoba studies on the constraints that impact newcomer youth reveal some of the social consequences when people are marginalized from full participation in the life of the commons. The following research questions guided the study:

1. Can a theatrical commons create space for diverse voices to be heard in a school community?
  - a) What potential is there in Image and Forum Theatre to connect the aims, method and matter of public education to the pursuit of more joyful, peaceful and democratic communities?

- b) How might Image, Forum and Legislative Theatre inform the cycles of planning and reflection across school systems?
  - c) How might a theatrical commons create space for marginalized voices to influence decisions made at an individual, community and policy level?
2. What is learned about the community issue under investigation?
  3. What meaning(s) do participants give to the Image Theatre exercises, the development of the play and the interventions offered by the audience?

This was a qualitative study which necessitated that the research questions were broad enough to allow the voices of participants to influence the direction/s of the inquiry. To complete a complex and detailed analysis of the study, the following media and methods were utilized by me in order to gather detailed information and testimonials: photographs of the theatrical images from the workshops; a video of the Forum Theatre event; written observations recorded by me throughout the workshops and play creation process; a written record of what participants said in the discussion circles at the end of each workshop; a written document of the recommendations elicited at the Forum Theatre event; focus group testimonials from audience members who attended the Forum Theatre event; a written record of what the actors said in a focus group after the theatre event, and photo elicitation interview data from the workshop participants.

## **Delimitations**

This research project was confined to the study of one theatrical commons in one school community. It was imperative that the school community had a history of welcoming many newcomers each year. I delimited the study to a community where I had already developed significant relationships with students, parents, settlement service providers, and educators. In order to introduce and build a theatrical commons within the time constraints of the study it was imperative to build on relationships that already existed. Half of my time as an educational consultant and a project coordinator is spent in this school community. The decision to conduct the study in this particular community necessitated that I reflect critically on the impact existing relationships may have had on the research process.

Phase 1 of the study involved 26 former refugee parent/guardian and youth participants who live in one urban school community. They defined the community problem that informed the content of the workshops and the Forum Theatre event. The workshops involved 33 former refugee parent/guardian and youth participants. The public Forum Theatre event involved 30 actors and another 3 production members who were not involved as participants in phase 1 or 2. There were 77 audience members who attended the Forum Theatre event on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011.

My roles in the research process were as follows: action researcher, workshop facilitator and the Forum Theatre Joker. In this study I played many roles which necessitated an articulation of the potential limitations of the study.

## **Limitations**

As previously stated, I was responsible for many parts of this study. One possible limitation of this study is that my bias has influenced the analysis and interpretation of the data. To reduce the effects of researcher bias, I asked some of the research participants to collect some of the data that were analyzed. On the consent forms provided to participants there was an opportunity for participants to indicate whether or not they were willing and able to record data or photograph the theatrical images built during each phase of the study. My intent was that the photography, discussion circle records, and the journal entries would be authored by the participants. Therefore the participants had the power to select a substantial amount of what data were collected and analyzed.

Another potential limitation of this study is that my relationship with some of the participants may have influenced their perceptions about the worthiness of the research process and Forum Theatre in general. I work in this school community as an educational consultant and as a program coordinator for newcomer families. I knew 10 of the youth participants and two of the adult participants from phase 2 and 3 prior to their involvement in the study. The possibility does exist that some of the students and parents may have wanted the study to 'succeed' because they view me as an advocate for newcomer youth in the community.

In some action research projects the researcher tries to remain distant so he or she constructs rigid boundaries to observe other people who are engaged in critical reflection about their professional practice (McNiff & Whitehead, 2006). A possible limitation of this study (though it is considered one of the strengths of action research) is

that I considered myself to be a participant. I did not endeavor to set up rigid boundaries between myself and the other participants. My intent was to make space for the participants' leadership and direction. I constantly needed to critically reflect on my accountability to the participants in relation to the research process throughout the study. It must also be said that I do wish to see more intellectual collisions occur in public schools. This study was aimed at the deconstruction of a theatrical commons but it also had a moral imperative in that I do hope to see public schools become more inclusive of marginalized voices. My assumption is that action research that is nested within a critical epistemology can potentially enrich the commons through the inclusion of more marginalized voices.

Due to the rich interpretive possibilities inherent in this particular study's methodology, other interpretations may conflict with my interpretations. The richness and complexity that I tried to capture in the testimonials and other pieces of information was also dependent to some degree on my ability to facilitate the Image and Forum Theatre exercises.

Another possible limitation of the study may be the close proximity of the photo-elicitation interviews to the workshops. If the theatre experiences were intense and powerful for the participants there is a possibility that the testimonials offered by the participants were more 'passionate' than if data were collected at a later date.

There was a four week break between the performance of the play and the focus group with the actors. It is possible that various individual life events or everyday experiences may have influenced the testimonials provided by the actors during the focus group.

Phase 2 and 3 of the study involved a significant time commitment from the participants. A five day workshop process and play rehearsals may have limited who was able to participate in phase 2 and 3 of the study.

In phase 3 I chose to compensate the participants for their time. Each actor in the play was paid \$10.00 per hour for his or her participation in the play rehearsals and the dress rehearsal. If the actor participated in all of the rehearsals and the dress rehearsal she or he earned \$160.00. It is possible that some of the participants elected to participate in phase 3 because they were being compensated for their time.

The workshop phase of the study involved several physical activities. This may have limited who chose to participate in phase 2 of the study. All of the theatre exercises and games could be adapted but participants may have self-selected to opt out of the study due to the physical activities. To lessen the impact of the participants' physical exertion in the workshops, I provided all of the participants with healthy snacks, lunch and drinks throughout the workshop. I also demonstrated possible adaptations to each physical activity when it was necessary.

Finally, the decision to videotape the performance of the Forum Theatre event may have limited who decided to attend and/or engage in the play. To decrease the impact of this limitation, the purpose and benefits of videotaping the event were clearly articulated in the audience consent form that was given to all attendees.

### **Summary**

In conclusion, public schools can breathe life into the commons or negate the fusion between wisdom and natality that is inherent in a vibrant and healthy community. The relationship between public education and the actualization of a more joyful,

peaceful, and democratic society needs to be strengthened (Apple, 2009; Denzin, 2009, Giroux, 2007). Schools must create and experiment with processes that will inspire and challenge students and parents to live and practice democracy. This study built a theatrical commons in one school community in order to practice democracy with others who cared deeply about the same community problem. The participants in the study were former refugees who relocated in Canada. As the literature indicates, they face many challenges as they try to gain access to the commons. It is hoped this study will have in some small way ignited powerful dialogue between diverse members of a community to increase the size and accessibility of the commons.

Chapter Two begins with the philosophical and theoretical foundation for the study. Critical theory has informed the theoretical and methodological considerations of the study. It concludes with a review of the local literature that concerns the barriers that impact newcomer youth and their families. In Chapter Three, I detail the study's methodology of action research. In Chapter Four, I provide an analysis of the data and in Chapter Five, I make recommendations regarding methodological tensions, ideas for practice and future action research in this area.

## **CHAPTER TWO**

### **REVIEW OF LITERATURE**

The review of literature is divided into three sections: the philosophical foundations of the study, a review of Boal and Diamond's theatrical work, and a review of the context specific literature that explores the ways in which former refugees who relocate to Canada are at times marginalized from the commons. The philosophical discussion reveals the assumptions about the researcher's values and position in the research. An exegetical examination of the theatrical work of Boal and Diamond provides further insight into the study's theoretical framework and the methodology. The last section of the review includes a discussion of the constraints that impact newcomers in Manitoba to situate the study within its political aims and context. All three sections inform the study's purpose, the research questions and its potential significance.

#### **Critical Theory**

Critical Theory has its roots in the Western European Marxist tradition known as the Frankfurt School. In the early 1920's, German scholars founded a research institute at the University of Frankfurt. They challenged many aspects of orthodox Marxist thought and engaged in rigorous cultural analysis (Sim & Van Loon, 2001). The Frankfurt School's major figures were: Theodor Adorno, Max Horkheimer, and Herbert Marcuse. They resisted Karl Marx's grand narrative that reduced every social injustice to the struggle between the bourgeoisie and the proletariat.

Members of the Frankfurt School deemed a theory 'critical' if its aim was the emancipation of people from oppressive circumstances (Bohman, 2005). Critical

theorists work with the following assumptions: thinking is mediated by power relations, facts are never 'neutral,' and the relationship between a signifier and the signified is never fixed (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005). Critical theory is political and it "is adequate only if it meets three criteria: it must be explanatory, practical, and normative, all at the same time. That is, it must explain what is wrong with current social reality, identify the actors to change it, and provide both clear norms for criticism and achievable practical goals for social transformation" (Bohlman, 2005, [plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/](http://plato.stanford.edu/entries/critical-theory/)).

Critical theorists would claim that public schools must contain spaces for students to learn to question *previously unquestioned* assumptions and it must always orient itself to the future (Apple, 2008, 2009; Giroux, 2007; McLaren, 2001). My contention is that students must develop the agency and have the freedom to ask the question, What kind of future do we want? They must see themselves as capable and hopeful actors who have the courage to make a difference in a world that has an insatiable tolerance for political apathy. Public schools have the potential to dismantle silos of difference and provide opportunities for young people to engage in rigorous debates to learn to "love humanity through its particular expressions," (Sandel, 2009, [www.justiceharvard.org/index.php?option=com\\_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=20](http://www.justiceharvard.org/index.php?option=com_content&view=article&id=49&Itemid=20)).

Educational research must continue to inject social and cultural criticism in the commons to orient student learning towards the practice of and for democracy (Apple, 2009; Denzin, 2009; Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005; McLaren, 2001). Unfortunately, as Giroux (2007) states, the accountability agenda that surrounds public schools in Canada and the United States threatens to further distance public schools from the

pursuit of a more peaceful and democratic world. In the era of prescriptive curricula and standardized testing it is now more important than ever to nurture sites of peaceful resistance in public schools so students can deconstruct how oppression/s subordinates human interests centred on the care and love for other human beings (Boulding, 2000; Noddings, 2003).

Critical researchers and pedagogues have a responsibility to engage in research that also promotes hope. The frightening premise in Gramsci's (Sim & Van Loon, 2001, p. 36) idea of hegemony is that people will not be able to escape the tyranny of hidden ideologies that protect the ruling class. The post-Marxist critical theorist Zizek (Sim & Van Loon, 2001, p. 130) contends that all people are complicit in the maintenance of the illusions that marginalize individuals in society. The oppression is recognizable and transparent but individuals choose to interpellate themselves into a comfortable and familiar doctrine (Sim & Van Loon, 2001). I believe the concepts of hegemony and interpellation theoretically extinguish human agency. Educational research situated within a critical epistemology is less reductive when it recognizes that its aims must move beyond the public expositions of various abuses of power and privilege. Hope and love can move the critiques of power and privilege into the streets to activate citizens so they can more effectively renew their communities (Kincheloe & McLaren, 2005).

### **Exemplarity**

Ferrara (2008) in his book, *The Force of the Example: Explorations in the Paradigm of Judgment*, offers a view of exemplary validity which renews human agency and crosses different contexts to find examples of universal significance. He asserts that the ability humans have to make aesthetic judgments about works of art can also

be accessed in political and cultural studies. Ferrara (2008) makes the claim that a group of very diverse people has the capacity to decide if a painting is beautiful because it resonates with their primal sense of what constitutes an enrichment of the human condition. He calls this moment of recognition and collective knowing *world disclosing* (p. 37). Exemplarity can be used to make judgments in the aesthetic realm about innovations or political systems of consequence if it provides a deeper understanding of the world.

Ferrara (2008) cautions that sometimes old language will be insufficient to truly communicate the significance of an example because examples:

orient us in our appraisal of the meaning of action not as schemata, but as well-formed works of art do: namely, as outstanding instances of congruency capable of educating our discernment by way of exposing us to selective instances of the feeling of the furtherance of our life. And the force of examples transcends local boundaries more easily than the force of laws or principles because they tap intuitions that run deeper, in the constitution of our subjectivity, than the level that requires translations. (p. 61)

For people to truly know one another they must talk about what they believe to exist and what they believe should exist (Kincheloe, 2005). Ferrara's thesis honors human agency, respects that multiple and fluid subjectivities exist, and acknowledges different historical contexts. He suggests that even when we try to navigate contentious moral dilemmas in the company of others it is possible to make universal judgments that appeal to the 'common good.' If one of the aims of public education is community renewal, his work suggests it is possible to work with diverse groups of people to

determine what must be renewed and how it should be renewed. Public schools offer the opportunity to bring communities together to look for examples and moments of 'outstanding' instances of congruency that move beyond positivist assumptions and total relativism (Kozol, 2009,). The relevance to this study is Ferrara's position that a vibrant and healthy democracy hinges upon a citizenry's capacity and willingness to speak about the unspeakable and that it is possible to collectively define and actualize peaceful and democratic societies. It is my position that public schools are places where communities could engage in this difficult and complicated work.

In Ferrara's work I can also find the courage to move beyond deconstruction and leave my cage of irony in order to imagine and bear witness to powerful demonstrations of human compassion, love and innovation. More powerful than the laws of principle or theoretical dogma, aesthetic judgments can transcend the individual and enrich the collective human experience (Ferrara, 2007) by allowing people to move beyond identity fragments. This study was situated in a diverse school community that exists in a perpetual state of cultural flux. His work provided some epistemological freedom inside a study that could have potentially suffered from reflexivity paralysis.

My interpretation of Ferrara's thesis suggests that Boal and Diamond's theatrical work may open up aesthetic spaces for communities to define social injustices and to make collective judgments in pursuit of emancipatory interests. The relevance to this study is that a theatrical commons created a safe place for members of the school community where this study is located, to identify and reconcile complicated moral and ethical dilemmas. Boal (1979, 1995, 1998, 2002) and Diamond (2007) have worked with communities all over the world and used Forum Theatre to: ignite peoples' capacity for

critical reflection, foster human agency, and mobilize people to make a difference in the lives of others in their communities. The next section provides a summary of the relevant theatre work that informs this study's methodology and epistemological position.

### **Theatre of the Oppressed**

*Theatre of the Oppressed* was developed by Augusto Boal. He was a critical theorist who used the aesthetic language of the theatre to theorize about the world. In fact, there are many theoretical parallels between Boal's work and the work of Paulo Freire. In the 1960's Boal invented a theatrical method where the audience members could stop the performance of a play and make interventions. The interventions were designed to tear down the barriers between the audience and the actors so that people could reclaim themselves as protagonists in their own lives. His plays became rehearsals for social transformation in communities. Boal found that audience members who became spect-actors took the innovations introduced on stage to the streets as community activists.

In his book *Theatre of the Oppressed*, Boal (1979) introduces his theoretical positioning by walking the reader through a contested history of theatre. Before it was used as a social weapon and commodified, the theatre belonged to the masses (p. IX). Unbridled moments of singing, dancing and celebrating in the street constituted liberated artistic expression. To build his argument, Boal juxtaposes these early spontaneous celebrations of humanity with Aristotle's conception of the theatre and makes the case that the hegemonic structure of the Greek tragedy still influences the breadth of modern theatre, film and television. In the Greek tragedy, the plot is

superordinate and the characters must move through a structure that holds them captive. Through the power of mimesis and catharsis the audience adopts the role of passive recipient and the social structures and oppressive circumstances remain hidden. He asks, "Where were the people when Richard and Macbeth were committing their crimes or when Lear divided his kingdom? These are questions which do not interest Shakespeare" (Boal, 1979, p. 65).

In the Greek tragedy, the possibility for change is muted as the characters remain reflections of a reality that exalts the powerful and diminishes the capacity of the less powerful to see and change their oppressive circumstances. To interrogate this premise Boal deconstructs the role of the 'spectator' in order to make the case for theatre to move beyond its oppressive functions. Using examples from Bertolt Brecht's (1979) work, he begins to disrupt the relationship between spectator and actor. Boal shows how Brecht created dilemmas for his audiences that could not be resolved within the framework of the Greek tragedy. Characters were unlikeable and their behaviors prevented many of his audience members from relating to the decisions made on stage. The audience was asked to think and make sense of the characters and the plot for themselves (Boal, 1979).

Boal takes Brecht's challenge much further because he attempts to make the reader uncomfortable with being a conscious, yet inactive spectator. Boal endeavors to dismantle the use of empathy which allows audience members to remain submissive:

Empathy must be understood as the terrible weapon it really is. Empathy is the most dangerous weapon in the entire arsenal of the theatre and related arts (movies and TV). Its mechanisms (sometimes insidious) consist of the

juxtaposition of two people (one fictitious and another real), two universes, making one of those two people (the real one, the spectator) surrender to the other (the fictitious one, the character) his power of making decisions. The *man* relinquishes his power of decision to the *image*.

But here there is something monstrous: when man chooses, he does so in a real, vital situation, in his own life; when the character chooses (and therefore when he induces man to choose), he does so in a fictitious, unreal situation, lacking all the density of facts, nuances, and complications that life offers. This makes man (the real one) choose according to unreal situations and criteria. (Boal, 1979, p. 113)

Empathy keeps audience members riveted in their seats. Pleasure manifests in the theatre when patrons come to believe they have shared an emotional experience with symbolic representations of injustice, evil, heroism, or joy. The audience becomes complacent because it believes it has done something worthwhile through bearing witness to the suffering of other humans. Boal makes the viewer uncomfortable in this passive state. Whether or not participants get involved in the play is a conscious choice. He contends that all theatre is political, “because nothing is alien to the superior art that rules the relations among men” (Boal, 1979, p. 11). Theatre belongs in the hands of the men and women who have a vested interest in changing oppressive conditions in society.

*Theatre of the Oppressed* consisted of the engagement of disenfranchised or oppressed communities in a series of theatrical games to help people dissolve the artificial separation between mind and body. Boal would then invite people to make

images with their bodies that illustrated oppressive circumstances they faced. Slowly people would activate their images and give language to the problems under investigation. Workshops would culminate in Forum Theatre plays that would end in a crisis and then restart to allow for the spect-actors to make interventions. Boal introduced the role of the Joker, the person who explains the games, invites the interventions and pulls out units of meaning and themes. The Joker does this without trying to control the process or imposing his or her own 'interventions.'

A criticism of Boal's work is that he embraced the oppressor/oppressed binary oppositions. In Forum Theatre events and through his workshops he would never allow the oppressor to be replaced on stage. He believed there were monsters in the world who did not have the capacity to change and there were those who should not be absolved for their crimes against humanity. Possibly this was linked to the reality that Boal himself was tortured and exiled from Brazil in 1971 (Paterson, 2005). However, in 1986, Diamond, a mentee of Boal, began to experiment with the language of *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Both practitioners used Forum Theatre to initiate community dialogue, and create plays to be performed by people who were living the community problems. The performances did not "preach" and they present the most realistic example of the issues that are being explored (Diamond, 2007).

Diamond and Boal's work differ in two very important ways. Firstly, Diamond resisted the binary oppositions of oppressor/oppressed. His theatrical process was renamed *Theatre for Living*. In a *Theatre for Living* workshop in which I participated in June 2009, Diamond described a difficult conversation he had with his mentor Augusto Boal, "There is no us and them. If we see monsters, it is because society grows them,"

(Diamond, personal communication, 2009). The second difference between Diamond's and Boal's work are their stances on whether Forum Theatre is 'therapy.' For Diamond the work is not therapy, although he concedes the games and the plays may end up being 'therapeutic' for some people. Boal delved into the use of *Theatre of the Oppressed* as a therapeutic tool for communities through his experimentation with the techniques called *Rainbow of Desire* and *Cops in the Head* (Boal, 1995).

For the past 30 years, Diamond has been the director of Headlines Theatre in Vancouver, British Columbia. He has worked with diverse and disenfranchised communities from all over the world to create transformational dialogue about some of the world's most pressing social justice concerns. He has won numerous awards and has helped to reinvigorate the commons all over Canada using the aesthetic language of the theatre. *Theatre for Living* comes from the roots of Boal's work but Diamond has made it more inclusive by his refusal to adopt the binary oppositions of oppressor/oppressed. He acknowledges people are extremely complex and they can be a victim and a victimizer even in the same moment. As such, Diamond's work provides insight and possibility for schools and school systems to activate a critical reflective citizenry who will make the world more joyful, peaceful and democratic.

Boal and Diamond have publicly deconstructed their theatrical processes (Boal, 1979, 1995, 1998, 2002; Diamond, 2007) and they have described the methods which have resulted in transformational dialogue in communities that have been at times silenced and marginalized. Boal's and Diamond's work makes room for muted voices and mitigates the effects of unhealthy power relations. Image Theatre, for example, provides English as an Additional Language Learners (EAL) with accessible entry points

so body language communicates what language barriers intentionally and unintentionally prevent. This study benefitted from the work of these two individuals in its creation of an accessible theatrical commons in one very diverse school community.

### **Research Beyond the Borders of Manitoba: The Constraints that Impact Former Refugee Families in School Communities**

There is a great deal of international research that exists which explores the challenges newcomers face as new English language learners (Mc Brien, 2005; Ngo, 2009; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). For example, a number of studies have documented that once students acquire conversational English, classroom teachers are less likely to design programs for students that assist them in their acquisition of content area English (Mc Brien, 2005). In this body of work, former refugee students who may have experienced interrupted schooling or have no formal schooling experience at all, are often grouped together with immigrant students who may have a great deal of formal schooling experience. Refugee youth who are illiterate or semi-illiterate are often invisible in state or provincial policy documents with regards to their specific programming needs (Ngo, 2009; Sidhu & Taylor, 2007). More research is needed to discern the specific language programming needs of refugee learners (Sidhu & Taylor, 2007).

Many former refugee youth and parents feel marginalized from the social life of the school and express loneliness and frustration with regards to the absence of more inclusive practices and policies in schools (Khawaja, Whitehead, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008; Kia-Keating & Ellis, 2007). Programs and services which attempt to assist refugee families to deal with depression and trauma are often grounded in a

western medicalized model (Khawaja, Whitehead, Schweitzer, & Greenslade, 2008).

More space needs to be created for former refugee families to teach school personnel about diverse ways that help communities and individuals cope with trauma and loss.

Many programs and services for former refugees focus on initial settlement needs and assimilation. Very few programs exist across Canada that use the content of the *Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms* to inform acculturation and settlement programs (Ngo, 2009). In addition, there are not enough spaces for former refugee youth and parents to challenge those who occupy positional power when they face discrimination at school or in the wider community (Ngo, 2009). This study added to this body of research through the examination of a theatrical and politicized commons where former refugee families were invited to deconstruct the challenges that exist in their community and work together to address some of those challenges.

The decision to invite former refugee families to participate in this proposed study was made because former refugees often face many settlement challenges after their arrival in Canada. The newest members of Canadian communities often encounter many barriers when they enter the public school system. Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed*, and Diamond's *Theatre for Living* work support the rationale for the decision to work in solidarity with former refugee families. *Theatre of the Oppressed* and *Theatre for Living* share an emancipatory focus, an unapologetic social justice axiological foundation and great concern for those who have power and voice in the commons and those who are at times oppressed. It is my contention that former refugee families are at times marginalized from full participation in the commons. Boal and Diamond's theatrical work assisted the research participants to build a commons that

allowed many people in one school community to work in solidarity to reduce the barriers that impact many former refugee families.

There have been three studies completed within the last five years in Manitoba that clearly show that former refugee youth and their parents have been marginalized in the public school system. Findings suggest that public schools in Manitoba currently have little space for the cultural wisdom that arrives from all over the world, wisdom that could positively influence the method, matter and manner of public education.

### **The Constraints that Impact Refugee Families: Local Findings**

In the spring of 2009 I conducted an action research in my role as a consultant with the Manitoba School Improvement Program (MSIP). MSIP is a non-profit organization and its mission is to, “promote educational equity and social justice by collaborating with public secondary schools and school divisions to build their capacity to improve student learning and engagement” ([www.msip.ca](http://www.msip.ca)). For the past nineteen years, MSIP has provided grants and consultant support to students, teachers, administrators, superintendents and community members who wish to ‘improve’ their schools. Improvement is collaboratively defined in each context and it is within the last three years that MSIP has made significant efforts to publicly and explicitly link its organizational aims with the realization of more peaceful and democratic communities.

The aim of the 2009 research project was to identify the constraints that impact refugee youth and their families in the public education system and in the wider community. MSIP assumes that public schools share much of the responsibility for the continuous renewal of the communities in which they are situated. Communities invest their hopes for a better world in public schools because the primary aim of public

education is to help young people actualize their communities' collective understandings of what it means to live together peacefully in a democratic society. To ensure that public schools are better able to create the conditions for all children to work towards a more just society, MSIP believes it is imperative the voices of newcomers are prominent in these conversations and the subsequent action planning required to create these transformational spaces. A number of educators who worked with MSIP cited the need for improved programming for newcomer youth in public high schools. The study was guided by the ethics and research protocols of the Government of Manitoba ([www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/iru/library\\_publications/partnership\\_research\\_in\\_education.pdf](http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/k12/iru/library_publications/partnership_research_in_education.pdf)). It is also important to note that this action research project is a sample of local findings and that it was not published though it was used to create a program that supports former refugee youth and families who live in Winnipeg's inner city.

The Manitoba School Improvement action research project took place from April to June in 2009 in two inner city school communities. The goals of the action research were to: cultivate the mutual involvement of community partners and existing supporting agencies; identify the specific constraints that marginalize refugee and immigrant families, and; use the research to develop a comprehensive program to address the social, academic, and financial needs of refugee and immigrant groups in Winnipeg's inner city. I employed the following methods to collect data: 41 semi structured interviews, one focus group, and the analysis of 64 English Language Arts assignments. The research participants were comprised of the following groups: newcomer students, parents, and caregivers, immigrant and refugee service providers, educators,

administrators and educational consultants. In total there were 126 people who participated in the study.

There were three other studies conducted recently in Manitoba that sought to identify the constraints that impact newcomer youth in public school communities. Stewart (2007) conducted a bio-ecological investigation into the psychosocial and educational needs of children affected by war. This qualitative study detailed how different ecologies interacted and influenced the educational and psychosocial needs of the students (Stewart, 2007). She interviewed 13 high school students from the same inner city school. She reported that students had difficulty because of low literacy levels, the school was not always welcoming, students were not always supported because of policies or school rules, and students had to manage significant financial burdens while trying to adjust and thrive in school. In 2005, MacKay and Tavares conducted a province wide study to identify how schools perceived their ability to offer appropriate programming for immigrant and refugee youth. MacKay and Tavares reported that over 80% of the survey respondents indicated schools needed to make significant improvements to student programming.

Findings of these local studies indicate that students and caregivers were unable to access culturally appropriate services to deal with loss and trauma. Many refugee youth reported feeling disconnected from the school and the larger community. Students did not see themselves reflected in the content or processes of the school. Students also reported a lack of structured mentoring opportunities for youth and their families (Kanu, 2008).

Many former refugee youth felt misunderstood by some of their teachers. Students, parents, guardians and community service providers perceived school assessments to be inadequate for the purposes of the identification of the strengths and learning gaps of newcomer youth. Students reported feeling frustrated because they did not understand the social and academic expectations of the school and repeated failures in core academic classes affected the students' abilities to remain hopeful and engaged in school (Kanu, 2008; Stewart, 2007).

A number of former refugee parents felt unclear about the processes and expectations of the Canadian education system. For some newcomer families, the parenting expectations and the rules and norms that govern parenting in Canada are very different from the rules, norms, and expectations that existed in their previous home country. The conflict between disparate rules and norms are sometimes intensified when issues arise at school (Kanu, 2008). There is sometimes tension between the individualistic approaches used by schools and the collectivistic approaches used by some families to support children and youth. Power relations are also disrupted in the home as children take on the roles of translators and liaisons with the school and the wider community.

These local findings suggest that newcomer youth and parents face many challenges once they enter Manitoba public schools. However what is absent in all three studies is the engagement of former refugee families in the analysis and interpretation of the data. I believe a missing component in each of the studies was the opportunity for participants who shared common experiences to make sense of the data inside a political framework. People were not able to mobilize because their contributions in the

research process were kept in text silos until the findings were shared from the perspective of the researchers. The local studies indicate that more democratic spaces are needed in Manitoba school communities so that former refugee families and educators can work in solidarity to address these constraints and barriers. To provide that space, this study offered participants the opportunity to use a theatrical commons to create a democratic space for former refugee families to work together to address some of these constraints.

### **Recent Reforms in Manitoba**

It is important to note there have been a number of recent reforms in English as an Additional educational programming in Manitoba. Many of these changes were informed by local research (Kanu, 2008; Stewart, 2007). The Winnipeg School Division opened several literacy and reception centres. Similar centres now exist in the Louis Riel School Division, the St. James School Division and the Division Scholaire Franco-Manitobaine. The department of Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth developed an English as an Additional Language curriculum and articulated the Literacy, Academics and Language phases to foster linguistic and subject area competencies for children with limited or no prior schooling (Manitoba Education Citizenship and Youth, 2009).

### **Summary**

Three recent studies in Manitoba show that immigrant and former refugee youth are marginalized from full participation in the life of the commons and in the micro commons. Many studies located beyond Manitoba borders echo the same concerns and raise new ones about the invisibility of refugee youth in educational policy and

practice. Public schools play a fundamental role in the prevention of the enclosure of the commons. To fulfill this role, schools must create and experiment with processes that will help people 'live democracy' so that the aims of public schools are directly connected with the realization of a better world. Although there have been recent improvements there remains a gap in educational policy research about the introduction and impact of these types of interventions. The theatrical and theoretical work of Boal and Diamond provide methodological and philosophical supports for the study. Critical Theory provides the philosophical foundation of the study while Ferrara's work on aesthetic judgment and exemplarity centers on human agency and allowed me to identify some of examples that had universal significance for the participants in the study. Chapter Three elaborates upon the methodology and methods which were used to address the research questions under consideration.

## CHAPTER THREE

### METHODOLOGY

#### A Qualitative Study

This study is an artistic, qualitative participatory action research project. Its ontological, epistemological, axiological, and methodological assumptions (described below) resonated with the aims and methodologies used in qualitative research, (Creswell, 2007; Denzin & Lincoln, 2005). Given the conceptualization of this study outlined in the previous two chapters, this study necessitated a commitment from me to work within the context of the participants' lives, use multiple methods to collect detailed information, and to work with participants to make aesthetic judgments about the relative 'goodness' of the study's process and product (Ferrara, 2008). I also needed to be "committed to an ethics of care and compassion, a politics of respect, and the importance of trust" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2005, p. 188). The value/s embedded in the research grew out of the spaces created by participants who analyzed their own realities and acted on those experiences.

The *Theatre of the Oppressed* arsenal pioneered by Boal (1979, 1995, 1998, 2002) informed this study's arts based methodology. Theatre of the Oppressed work consists of the engagement of community members in a series of 'critical' theatrical games to help people dissolve the separation between observation and revolutionary action. The work makes space for people to make images with their bodies that illustrate the oppressive circumstances they face. Slowly people activate the images and give language to the problems under investigation. The content of this study's workshops, the process that resulted in the creation of a Forum Theatre play were

directly connected to, and informed by his body of work. The study's arts based methodology was also strongly influenced by the work of David Diamond (2007). Diamond's theatre work is rooted in *The Theatre of the Oppressed* but he has made it more inclusive by his refusal to adopt the binary oppositions of oppressor/oppressed. Diamond's renewal of Boal's work is more fully discussed in Chapters One and Two.

My ontological assumption is that the realities of human beings are subjective and individuals can and will express ideological resonance and conflict sometimes in the same moment. As expressed by Kincheloe and McLaren (2005), a person's subjectivity is not fixed, and the relationships between individuals are constantly mediated by power relations. In order to access and reflect on such complexity, a researcher must immerse herself in the context of the participants for an extended period of time. Qualitative researchers presuppose that people are complex and that peoples' lived experiences cannot be reduced into simple cause and effect equations. I believe that it is possible and necessary to avoid the perils of postmodern futility through the articulation of moments in the study that achieved 'universal significance.' When there is agreement amongst people about the goodness of an example, its exemplarity is evident if the participants in that moment see the example as an enrichment of the human experience. It is possible to have fusions of ethical, moral, political and spiritual agreements that can move beyond chasms of difference and complexity. As Ferrara (2008) notes, "It functions - as Paul Ricoeur has nicely put it - as a *'trail of fire issuing from itself,'* that sets an entire forest on fire yet always by catching one tree after another, in a singular way" (p. 22). This inquiry attempted to ignite a trail of fire and

honor the lived experiences of the participants through the use of participatory action research principles.

### **Participatory/Action Research**

Action research is a term that was coined by Kurt Lewin in the mid nineteen forties and received concerted attention once again in the nineteen seventies (Bargal, 2008; Carr, 2006; Dick, Stringer, & Huxham, 2009; Drummond, & Themessl-Huber, 2007; Johansson & Lindhult, 2008). This body of research is comprised of a diverse body of research work (Gustavsen, 2008) that is described frequently as being contextual, focused on community dilemmas, and emancipatory (Bodorkos & Pataki, 2009). There are two main philosophical orientations in action research: one is the pragmatic scientific orientation which has early associations with Lewin, and the second is the critical orientation which is most closely associated with Paulo Freire and other critical pedagogues (Johansson & Lindhult, 2008). Action research involves partners who have a shared interest in the research topic. Research participants are co-constructors of local knowledge and theory development as they engage in cycles of dialogue, critical reflection and action (Genat, 2009). In fact, action research has been challenged and marginalized in some research institutions because it is said to lack the rigor and generalizability that is evident in purely positivistic projects. The counter argument is that participatory action research is marginalized in some institutions because it disrupts the power relations in the research process, it is critical of social, economic, and cultural conditions, it is reflexive and it seeks to privilege and make space for local knowledge. Others argue that it is also impossible to judge the

worthiness of action research in comparison to positivistic projects because their epistemological assumptions are incompatible.

Participatory action research involves the recruitment of participants who see the research topic as highly significant. It is acknowledged that the research itself is a political act. Researchers often work with participants in order to produce new knowledge and address community issues (Pyrch, 2007). Genat's (2009) participatory action research foundational principles are worth mentioning in detail here. He states that a researcher who conducts participatory action research works to: establish close and trusting relationships with the research participants; ask relevant and meaningful questions that are important to the critical reference group; privilege and respect local knowledge; encourage critical reflection; embrace resistance; and verify whether the information and representations that are analyzed by the researcher respect the integrity of the participants' contributions to and reflections about the research process.

### **Participant Involvement**

In this participatory action research study, participants were directly involved in shaping the research process. Much of the details in accessing participants, etcetera, is provided in chapter one and will not be reiterated, though a summary of the research process and its design is provided. In phase 1 the participants selected the community problem that was the focus of the workshops, and the Forum Theatre event.

In phase two participants were directly involved in the data collection process. Volunteer participants photographed many of the workshop images and provided feedback after each workshop. The feedback from the participants was gathered during a discussion circle that concluded each workshop. As we sat in a circle, each participant

had the opportunity to offer any thoughts or feelings that emerged as he/she thought about, “Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice,” or the workshop process itself. These reflections were recorded by a volunteer participant. All participants, including myself, were also invited to keep a journal throughout the workshops in order to critically reflect on the problem under investigation and the workshop process. In the photo-elicitation interviews facilitated by me, the interviewees were shown photos and then asked questions based on the contents of the photographs. The participants were shown photos of the theatrical images they built throughout the workshops. Questions like: What do you see in this photo? and What do these images mean to you? provided the framework for the semi-structured photo-elicitation interviews. The photo-elicitation interviews occurred between two and seven days after the workshops ended.

In phase 3 the participants built a Forum Theatre play entitled, *Silos of Silence* that was performed on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 in the community. The ‘script’ of the play was derived from the lived experiences and the knowledge of the participants. The event was advertised as one that would be filmed and used for research purposes. As audience members entered the performance space, a volunteer collected tickets and the signed audience consent forms that detailed the research process. After handing in their tickets and consent forms, audience members were also invited to meet one month after the performance in a focus group to provide reflections on the event. On the night of the performance the audience became participants in the study.

## **Creating the Theatrical Commons**

The creation of the commons was divided into three phases: the identification of the community problem (Phase 1), followed by the workshop series (Phase 2), which culminated in the Forum Theatre event (Phase 3). Mirroring the dynamic nature of qualitative research, the theatrical process was fluid because it needed to respond to the participants' desires and needs as well as the researcher's.

First I solicited the necessary approvals from the school division and the school administration. Next I spoke with three EAL teachers and explained the entire research process to them. I asked their permission to speak with three of their classes. I wanted to speak to as many classes as possible to elicit a potential of roughly 30 participants. During these initial meetings with the students I took the opportunity to clearly explain the entire study. After the explanation of the study was complete, I handed each student a letter of invitation to participate in the study. Additional copies of the letters of invitation were left with the EAL teachers. Students were informed that their parents/guardians were also invited to participate and those who indicated an interest were invited to take a letter of invitation home to their parents/guardians.

Approximately one week later all of the students in the EAL classes to whom I spoke were provided with phase 1 consent forms, and stamped addressed envelopes by the EAL teachers who distributed them on my behalf. These forms were signed and returned to me via regular post. It was clearly stated on the consent forms that at any point participants had the right to withdraw from the study. The consent forms also stated that participants could engage or disengage in the study at any point.

On the consent form, I wrote the date, time, and location of the meeting. The meeting took place in a private room in a public library on Saturday, June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011. It occurred on a Saturday so that students would not miss any class time. I hoped to have approximately 30 students and parents who wanted to participate in phase 1 of the study. If more than 30 students and parents attended the meeting, it would have been possible to accommodate the increase in participation.

On June 18<sup>th</sup> I arrived at the library at 11:45 am and spent the next 20 minutes, “nervously arranging and rearranging the vacant chairs. There were over 30 consent forms returned but how many people would actually come to the library on a beautiful Saturday afternoon to have the conversation?” (Sloane, Personal Journal, 2011). Three women were the first to arrive. They asked if they could speak with me before the meeting began in order to make a final decision as to whether or not they wanted to participate. We talked as a Swahili interpreter navigated our conversation. After the discussion all three women decided to stay for the meeting. By 12:30 pm there were 26 participants in the room: 6 adults (4 women, 2 men) and 20 youth (11 girls, 9 boys). The seating arrangement formed participant groups of four and five people per table. Before I discussed the research project the participants introduced themselves to one another. I shared my belief that all communities have strengths and all communities have struggles. I explained why I wanted to do this research and the steps of the research project. The participants were invited to ask questions. There was one question about the time and dates of the theatre workshops. Another participant asked if he could come late to the theatre workshops due to a conflict with a summer school class. Two other students said they wanted to participate in phase 2 but they were in the same

predicament. I reassured the participants that I was completely fine with them arriving after their classes.

The five groups were invited to talk about some of the problems in the Arundhati School community. I provided each table group with a large piece of paper and a marker. The verbal framework I offered for the discussion was as follows:

- All communities have strengths and challenges.
- We're going to spend some time talking about our community's challenges. This problem will inform the workshops and the play.
- You can write your ideas down, sketch pictures of your ideas or you can just talk.
- All of the problems are important. However we can't make plays about 26 different problems. It would be too hard. So if your idea is not chosen in the end, it doesn't mean it's not an important issue. It is a limitation of mine and the project.

The question I used to prompt discussion in the small groups was: If we could pick the most important thing to improve in our community what would it be and why? 'Improvement' was defined by me as a community that is more peaceful, more joyful and more democratic. For the next 20 minutes the participants engaged in small group discussions.

Shortly afterwards, I told the groups they were going to do something harder. They were asked to work together to name the issue that was the most important to the small group. I framed the decision-making by suggesting to the groups that they should choose a problem that, if we were to work on it, would make life significantly better for

people in the Arundhati School community. Group members talked for approximately 10 minutes.

After the small group discussion, one person from each group stood up and shared the problem on which they had reached consensus in their smaller groups. Next I posted each topic on poster paper. More markers were handed out and each participant was invited to vote for the issue that was most important to her or him. They were told that after hearing from all five groups they were free to choose their own group's idea or another group's idea. Each person had the opportunity to vote twice. The participants were asked to add their checkmarks to two different posters. The community problem with the most votes would inform the workshops and the play. Based on the largest number of check marks, the participants elected, "Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice," as the theme that would be explored during the workshops and the play.

Before the end of the meeting I invited the participants to remain involved in the workshop phase of the study. I explained what would happen during the theatre workshops through a demonstration of an Image Theatre exercise and one theatre game. The phase 2 consent forms were given to everyone and I highlighted where and when the theatre workshops would take place.

## **Phase Two: The Workshop Series**

### **The Workshops**

The workshops took place from July 4<sup>th</sup> to July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011 from 10:00 am - 3:30 pm. They were located in a private space in a public library. Each workshop started with some theatrical games to build trust and connections amongst the participants. Figure

3.1 summarizes the activities that occurred each day. The selection of games was drawn heavily from Boal’s (1992) Games for Actors and Non-Actors. Muscular, sensory, memory, imagination and emotional exercises were employed to prepare the participants to work together to utilize Image and Forum Theatre to rigorously explore, “Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice” (Boal, 1992). At the end of each workshop, a discussion circle was facilitated by me so participants could debrief and reflect on their workshop experiences. A volunteer participant was asked to record the reflections offered at the end of each workshop. It is important to note that ten of the participants who were taking summer school classes were absent from the theatre workshops in the morning and joined the large group after lunch. This occurred on each day of the workshop series.

**Table 3.1 Summary of Workshop Activities**

July 4 <sup>th</sup> – 8 <sup>th</sup> 2011	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday
Theatre Games	X’s and O’s Push Pull Hypnosis Fill the Space Cat and Mouse	Group Knot Stand and Stretch Blind Imaginary Machines Gestures Who Started This? Blind Cars	Grandmother’s Shoes Fear and Protector Party Quirks Westside Story Cat and Mouse	Electric Pulse Carrying Imaginary Objects Glass Bottle Slow Motion Boxing	Simon Says Telephone Bears and Tree Planters Black Box Bridge Tag
Image Theatre Exercises	What is an Image? Image Flip Complete the Image Sculpting	Find the Sound Magnetic Image	Blind Magnets Magnetic Image Activate Images	Cops in the Head Song of the Mermaid	How Do We Get There From Here? Image of the Struggle Inside the Play
Forum Theatre Activities				Forum Theatre / Arc of a Play Mini-lesson Make Plays	Rehearse Plays Perform Plays Do Forum on the Plays

Workshop one began with the participants sitting in a circle. I asked participants to state their names and what their hopes were for the week. We introduced ourselves, reviewed the purpose of the project, I explained some of the detailed plans for the workshops, and finally we discussed and signed a Pledge of Confidentiality. I also reminded the participants they had every right to leave or re-engage in the study at any point. Subsequent to the introductions I discussed the roots of Image and Forum Theatre. We talked about Augusto Boal and David Diamond and how they had contributed to the development of this type of theatre work.

The first workshop consisted mainly of the theatrical games. The first theatre exercise began with all of us sitting down on the floor. I asked the participants to make an X in the air with one hand. Next they were asked to make an O in the air with the other hand. Then I asked the group to make the X and O in the air at the same time. Afterward I asked for a volunteer to demonstrate the Push game. One of the adult participants volunteered. I asked him to push my shoulders as I pushed his. I told the group that our job was to find our balance. Then I asked all the participants to find a partner and push to find a balance. After the exercise I asked the participants what they were thinking and feeling during the exercise. I reminded the participants that one of the beautiful things about theatre is that there is no such thing as a right or wrong answer. Whatever they imagined or said during the exercise is important and valuable to the group. The next question I asked the participants was, how is the game Push connected to our theme? "Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice?" I explained that I would ask about the connections to our theme many times throughout the workshops.

On day one we also played Pull, Hypnosis, Fill the Space and Cat and Mouse. Just before lunch I demonstrated what an Image was. I walked to the centre of the circle and made a shape. I asked the participants, "Who am I?" Then I asked, "Where am I?" They offered many responses. Next I had the participants make some initial images in an exercise called Image Flip. In this exercise we stood in a circle with our backs to the centre of the circle. I asked the participants to think of shapes of some of the following recent memories: a time when you were mad, a time when you felt sad, and a time when you felt really happy. The first part of the exercise started with me saying, "Think of a time recently where you felt really mad. Where were you? Why were you mad? Who was there? I am going to count back from three. When I get to one, I want you to turn in to the circle and be in that shape." The participants stayed in their shapes facing one another for only a few seconds before I asked them to turn around. We made shapes of three different emotions and we ended the exercise by making a shape of someone we love.

Workshop two began with a morning circle discussion followed by the game Group Knot. We played our first blind game called Stand and Stretch Blind. Next we embarked on our first improvisation game called Imaginary Machines. We also played Gestures and Blind Cars. Our afternoon centred on the creation of theatrical images about feelings, words and experiences loosely connected to the community problem under investigation. Participants offered shapes and sculptures that took on different meanings for each of the participants. These images reflected the life experiences of the participants but were not interpreted with words (Diamond, 2007). For example, one of the participants offered a shape in which she knelt down on the floor, put her head

down and covered her eyes. If she would have announced that she was feeling depressed because she just lost her job that is all one would have been able to see in the image. All other possibilities would have been censored.

The major exercise in the afternoon was called Magnetic Image. The activity began with a request for a few volunteers to come and make a shape in the centre of the room that represented a personal struggle with language barriers or a time in their life where they felt they had no voice. Four participants offered images. Next I asked the rest of the group to look carefully at the four shapes that had been offered and to select the image that most closely resembled their own personal struggle with language barriers or having no voice. The participants were asked to go and make the same shape next to one of the four original images. Then each group was asked to find a quiet place in the room and to tell a story to their group members about what brought them to that particular image. The discussions were approximately 30 minutes long. After the groups were done sharing their stories, I asked them to think about what their stories had in common. They were instructed to make a new shape, involve everyone in the small group, and communicate what their stories had in common in one single image. I gave the participants 20 minutes to create the new image. Each group showed its image to the large group. To close the workshop we played the games, Find the Sound and Who Started This?

Workshop three focused on activating images. After the morning opening circle and the games Fear and Protector and Party Quirks, I proceeded to ask the groups one at a time to offer their magnetic images from the previous day. The participants were asked to conceive of themselves as actors and audience members during the exercise.

We talked about the fact that the 'actors' in the image were 'characters.' The images came from our lived experiences but we were not playing ourselves. We were making a beautiful fiction that closely represented real people and real, complex community problems. We talked about the notion that once an image is offered it becomes a part of the group consciousness.

Groups presented their images one at a time and I asked the audience questions like: Who is she or he? Where are they? What do you see happening here? What does he or she want? What was happening five minutes ago? What will happen one hour from now? I also worked with the actors inside the images at the same time asking them questions like: What do you want? Are you getting what you want? What is your secret thought, the thing your character would never say out loud but is actually thinking?

Throughout this process I introduced techniques like: Take One Step in the Direction of Getting What You Want, Make the Shape of the Strongest Emotion Your Character is Feeling Right Now and Internal Monologue. Later in the exercise I invited the actors in the images to keep their bodies frozen but to talk with the other characters in the image in order to try to get what they wanted. We ended each groups' activation by getting the images walking and talking, which means the characters could talk to each other and move around on the stage. Day three ended with the game Blind Magnets and a lengthy discussion in the closing circle.

After the opening circle on day four of the workshop we played the games Electric Pulse, Glass Bottle and Carrying Objects with a Partner. We finished activating the last group's image and then we proceeded to do the exercise called Cops in the Head. Succinctly, the exercise involves doing battle with the voices in our heads that

give us bad advice. It is an exercise that asks us to wrestle with our internalized oppressors. I asked the group if there was someone who would be willing to offer a recent, personal story of a time in her/his life when she/he was really struggling with language barriers or feeling like she/he had no voice. Maya offered a story from her workplace while she was still living in Sudan. In vivid detail she told us about moments where a fellow worker repeatedly bullied her, “on the meat cut line.” For weeks Maya endured this other woman’s verbal insults. I asked her to identify the moment where she felt she was being put to a decision about what to do about this verbally abusive colleague. She identified the moment and I explained to Maya and the audience that the rest of the scene would take place in that moment.

Maya was asked to make a shape of one of the voices in her head that was giving her bad advice in that moment. I asked if there were other voices and Maya made two more shapes. Then I asked Maya to give each shape one sentence that was illustrative of the voices’ characters. The three ‘voices’ were asked to stay in character and to get what they wanted from Maya. One voice passionately tried to convince her to just, “Shut up and wait for the boss to help because you will get fired if you speak.” The second voice implored Maya to punch the other woman because, “It would feel so good and some people don’t understand no other way.” The third voice encouraged Maya to think about what she had done to encourage such treatment from a colleague by saying, “You’re so bossy Maya. Now you done it for real!”

One at a time, each voice tried to persuade Maya to take a particular course of action. She debated the merits of each of the arguments, at times agreeing, and at other times vehemently disagreeing with voices’ advice. Then spontaneously Maya

placed the voices in a position where the voices faced each other and she asked them to debate each other while she listened for a while. The exercise ended with Maya making an impromptu speech about the personal perils of listening to two of the voices.

After Cops in the Head, we embarked on the exercise Song of the Mermaid. Participants were asked to lie on their backs and to visualize the images they had seen over the first three and half days of the workshop. Next I invited the group to think of a sound that represented the images they had just seen in their minds. Once they had identified the sound I asked them to put up their hands. After several hands went up I pulled one participant, still with his eyes closed to a corner of the room and asked him to make the sound. I asked the group to keep their hands up if their sounds were different than the first sound. This part of the process was repeated until we had five people in different parts of the room making their 'image sounds.' The rest of the participants were instructed to listen carefully and to get up, with their eyes closed, and move to the sound that was closest to their own sound. Once they had found the maker of the sound they were told to make the same sound. After everyone had found their place the participants opened their eyes and were told that this was their Forum play group.

In their Song of the Mermaid groups the participants were given 30 minutes to make a short, rough play that ended in a crisis. The task was to make a play with characters who honored the complexity of the issue of language barriers or experiences with having no voice in our community. They were instructed to make a fiction that truly honored the lived experiences of the people in the room. Before the end of the workshop each group performed their short plays for the large group. We ended the

workshop with the games Slow Motion Boxing, Cat and Mouse and the closing discussion circle.

Workshop five began with the opening discussion circle and participant led games. The participants elected to teach and play Black Box, Simon Says and Bridge Tag. The first theatre exercise of the morning was, How Do We Get There from Here? This game was inspired by David Diamond's Your Wildest Dreams exercise which combines Image Theatre and photography to visually depict the images of a community's struggle and the images of a community when the struggle has been eliminated.

I asked the participants to work in their play groups to make an image of the struggle inside their plays. Then I asked them to make an image where the struggle did not exist. Next I posed the question, how do we get there (the ideal) from here (the struggle)? I asked them to work with each other to answer the question by making approximately four images that exist between 'here' and 'there.' In order to help us transition to Forum, I explained that in Forum Theatre the first performance of a play was to provocatively animate the struggle of 'the here and now.' The second performance of the play is an opportunity for the audience to make interventions. Audience members would be invited to take the place of a character during the second performance of the play to try out an idea that would in this case reduce or eliminate language barriers or the experience of having no voice. We hoped the audience would collectively imagine how to build and activate the images 'in between.' The audience interventions were really about an answer to the question, how do we get 'there' from 'here?'

We rehearsed the plays until 1:30 to prepare for the mini Forum. Each play focused on some important aspect of the larger community issue: “Language barriers: What Happens When you Have No Voice?” The crises were intended to break down the barriers between the participants and the audience members. After the plays were constructed, they were performed in front of the other groups. The plays restarted and the audience members (the other actors who were not on stage) were invited to shout “Stop!” come on to the stage, replace a character and offer an intervention that aimed to improve the micro or macro situation in some way. No magical thinking was allowed (Diamond, 2007). In other words, someone could not come on stage to replace a character struggling with alcoholism and magically wish away the addiction. Community development problems are not solved with magical solutions. The actors in the play practiced working with the intervention offered by the audience member as they tried to stay true to their characters. We ended our final workshop in a closing circle and I extended an invitation to the group to participate in phase 3 of the study.

The workshops’ emphases on nonverbal communication attempted to disrupt the power wielded by the dominant languages spoken in the workshop space. The workshops were also designed to thoroughly explore the issue: “Language barriers: What Happens When you Have No Voice?” The next section explains phase 3 of the study which consisted of the creation and performance of a Forum Theatre play in the community.

### **Preparation for the Forum Theatre Event**

Thirty actors and I constructed a 27 minute play that honored and built upon the images, ideas and mini Forum plays generated in the workshops. Scenes were created

based on their potential to ignite dialogue within the community and how well the scenes reflect the tensions inherent in the problem. Using the criteria listed above, all of the participants decided what scenes would become part of the play. The decisions were made through open dialogue and when needed, a majority vote. Play construction and rehearsals occurred between July 8<sup>th</sup> and July 28<sup>th</sup>, 2011. In total the actors participated in eight rehearsals.

The actors were each given an honorarium to recompense them for their participation in the development of the play and play rehearsals. The honorarium amounted to \$10.00 for each hour a participant devoted to the above mentioned activities. The rehearsals occurred in the same space as the workshops and required approximately 16 hours of rehearsal time. The rehearsal schedule was determined with the actors.

Before the play rehearsals began, I advertised the event widely in the community. Promotion activities included: advertising via word of mouth between family and friends, putting posters up in the school, in the community centre, emailing settlement services providers so they could share the information with their clients, asking the participants to inform any groups to which they belonged about the play and sending an email poster to a settlement service network which operates in the community. Through the use of print and word of mouth, it was hoped that the Forum Theatre performance would be attended by a diverse cross section of the school community. What would make it a 'Legislative Theatre event' was if policy makers not only attended and participated in the event but also agreed to use the audience interventions and community dialogue to inform policy decisions. Policy makers in the

context of this study included people who held positions in government, senior school division administration, school administration, and school board trustees. There was no way to ensure that policy makers would attend, but I made every effort to encourage them to attend by calling them, emailing them and notifying them about the event.

### **Pull Back the Curtain**

On the night of the public performance, two volunteers collected tickets and audience consent forms. Before the first performance of the play, I greeted the audience and talked about the process which led up to the play they were about to view as well as the research aspects of its development and their potential to become research participants. In the audience consent forms I clearly explained that if audience members participated in the play it would be videotaped and used for research purposes.

The concept of Forum Theatre was explained and the audience was prepared for the second round of the play where they were asked to make interventions. I offered cautions about the potential usage of 'magical solutions' and the role of the Joker was discussed. The 27 minute play was performed. I returned to the stage and reminded the audience how to make interventions. The play restarted and the audience made a total of seven interventions. After each intervention I engaged the audience members and the actors in critically reflecting on the interventions. As the Joker I tried to help the audience move back and forth from micro to macro reflections.

### **Data Collection Methods**

Data were collected during all three phases of the study. In phase 1, I examined five lists of community problems generated during a meeting with 26 participants. In the second part of the study I recorded 28 pages of the participants' reflections that were

captured throughout the five day theatre workshop. I studied the 202 photographs taken during the theatre workshops. After the workshops I interviewed 14 of the participants about their experiences in the workshops. From July 8<sup>th</sup> to July 28<sup>th</sup> I co-created a play with 30 participants and recorded 11 pages of my own reflections during the rehearsal process. We created a Forum Theatre play that was 27 minutes long and I transcribed and studied the script of the play. The two hour Forum Theatre event on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 was videotaped and I analyzed the footage which is described below. I facilitated a focus group with five of the actors who performed in the play. I also conducted a focus group with four of the audience members who attended the performance. Finally I personally transcribed all of the interviews, the focus groups and the play. This resulted in 104 pages of single spaced text.

Diverse methods were used to gather data. In phase 1 of the research process, one large meeting was held with 26 former refugee students, parents and guardians to identify a community problem that was of great importance to them. The meeting was held in a private meeting space in a public library on June 18<sup>th</sup>, 2011. The process involved an explanation to situate the context of the conversation and an account of how the information was going to be used and why. Participants were put in small groups. In their groups they identified different community issues. Participants were informed that it was not possible to do the workshops and play on more than one issue because it would have prevented the actors from engaging in a deep exploration of the problems and the solutions to those problems. The students, parents and I worked together until consensus was reached on what community problem would be explored in the workshops. The consensus building process involved the following steps: (1) The

small groups selected one community problem to present to the large group. They were defined as problems that if, as a community we were to work on them, they would make life significantly 'better' in the community. 'Better' was defined as a community that is more peaceful, more joyful and more democratic; (2) We looked for overlap and eliminated any duplicated ideas; (3) Small groups were asked to share why they named the particular problems in their conversations; (4) The 'problems' were individually listed on large pieces of poster paper; (5) Each participant was given a marker and asked to place a checkmark on two of the posters that named problems they believed were the most important to inform the workshops and the play. The problem with the most votes or checkmarks informed the workshops and the play.

In the second phase *or the theatre workshop phase* of the study, photographs were taken of all the images offered by the actors. All participants were invited to sign photo releases so the photographs could be used for research purposes. The photographers were volunteer workshop participants. It was important to put the camera in the hands of participants so that it was the participants who chose what made each shot and what was left out of each shot. The criteria I offered to guide what pictures were taken were: (1) Capture images that reflect the tensions inherent in the community problem; (2) Capture solutions or disagreements; (3) Capture images of each major theatrical exercise undertaken by the group, and; (4) Capture moments of solidarity or fragmentation.

Semi-structured interviews were conducted with 14 workshop participants using a process called photo-elicitation. The photo-elicitation interviews aimed to capture the meaning participants made of the workshop process, any evidence of perceived

increase in agency or voice, as well as the lessons gleaned about the community problem we investigated. The photo-elicitation interviews were also used to help the participants to make meaning of the experiences throughout the workshops. The interview data provided a record of the solutions offered during the workshops that could help address the community problem that was under exploration. I facilitated the photo-elicitation interviews. The average length of the interviews was 32 minutes and they occurred in a confidential space in the community. Interview times and dates were scheduled around the wants and needs of the interviewees. All but one of the interviews took place between one and eight days after the workshops. The last interview took place six weeks after the workshops ended. The interview data were captured through audio recording. All of the workshop participants were invited to join me for an interview. In the end, fourteen participants agreed to be interviewed.

### **Photo-elicitation**

In photo-elicitation interviews the interviewees are shown photos and then asked questions based on the contents of the photo (Thomson & Gunter, 2007). Photo-elicitation offers the opportunity to freeze moments in time so that actions or fleeting emotions can be captured and discussed long after a moment has passed. The process has the potential to capture multiple meanings in a research study that would be hard for the participants and the researcher to note or see while 'in the moment' (Mason & Davies, 2009). This particular method fit very well for the purposes of the study as it privileged the interpretations of the participants and it was in itself an aesthetic inquiry (Olliffe & Bottorffe, 2007). I believe the photographs helped me to build rapport with the interviewees because of the ability of photographs to provide an accessible entry point

for people to discuss their thoughts and opinions (Oliffe & Bottorffe, 2007). The use of photos in a research project also minimizes the unequal power relations that exist between a researcher and the participants and mirrors the intent of the workshops and the Forum Theatre event as means to reinforce agency of the participants (Cappello, 2005; Carlson, Engebretson, & Chamberlain, 2006).

The interviews took place between two and eight days after the workshops were completed. I believe that if the interviews were facilitated during the workshops, people would not have the time required to deconstruct the experience in a critical way. As stated in the Limitations section in Chapter One, one should be critical of the close proximity of the interviews to the workshops. My preference would have been to have the interviews take place at least two weeks after the workshops were completed.

### **Journals and Digital Video**

I wrote detailed reflections at the end of each workshop session. The intent of my journal was to: capture reflections with regards to my role as the workshop facilitator; take note of the complexity demonstrated in the theatrical images; record my perceptions about any changes in voice or agency in the group, and; record new learning about the community problem. This journal was also used so I could account for myself in the research process. Participants were also asked to keep a journal during the five day workshop series. At the end of the workshops, I planned to invite participants to share their entries with me. I wanted to look for evidence of the complexity demonstrated in the theatrical images, the participants' perceptions about any collective or individual changes in voice or agency in the group, and any new learning about the community problem. All of the participants elected not to write in the

journals provided to them. Fortunately all of the photographs, the written records of the debriefing sessions after each workshop, the interviews and the play script provided rich data regarding the participants' voice and agency.

In the third phase of the study, data were gathered at the Forum Theatre event. It was difficult to predict how many people would be in the audience and who would attend. To get a sense of who was in the audience on the night of the performance I asked the audience questions like: How many of you go to school in this community? How many of you work in the settlement services field? This was important information to acquire so I had a sense of who was present when the interventions took place. Noteworthy groups included: those who were directly impacted by the community issue, parents, guardians, students, settlement sector workers, government officials, school trustees, senior school administrators, and community school administrators. It was also important for the audience and the actors to see how effective we were in bringing a wide cross section of the community together to publicly explore the issue of: "Language Barriers: What Happens When You Have No Voice?"

I videotaped the Forum Theatre event. All of the actors and audience members were invited to sign releases so that the video could be used during the analysis phase of the study. I used the videotape to transcribe the script of the play and to note what scenes elicited audience interventions. How the script was coded is described in the data analysis section. The videotape was used to make a record of how many and what types of interventions were offered by audience members. Before the performance, the audience was provided with consent forms. Before the play, I explained the process

which led up to the play they were about to view as well as the research aspects of its development and their potential to become research participants.

Audience members were invited to participate in a focus group to discuss their perceptions of the performance and the community problem (Appendix G). I tried to recruit members of the audience for the focus group on the evening of the performance. As the audience entered the theatre, two volunteers were there to collect tickets and to invite audience members to participate in the focus group. The volunteers wrote down the contact information of any person who indicated that he or she may be interested in being a focus group participant. A consent form as well as the date, time and location of the focus group was sent to the interested audience members via email. Participants were asked to confirm their attendance or decline the invitation through email or by phone. The focus group occurred six weeks following the performance because it was important to give people time to critically reflect on the play and deeply think about their experiences. The focus group took place in a confidential location in the school community and lasted approximately 90 minutes. Four participants attended the focus group. Finally I met with five of the actors approximately six weeks after the performance of the Forum Theatre play to debrief the performance experience. I conducted the actor focus group several weeks after the performance to give the participants some time to critically reflect on their experiences in the performance and development of the play. The process I used in the actor focus group mirrored the discussion circle debriefing sessions I conducted at the close of each workshop session. I made an audio recording of the conversation.

## **Informed Consent**

First, permission to conduct the study in this school community was obtained from the research committee in the school division, the district superintendent and the school principal. Next I sought permission from three EAL teachers in order to speak to their classes about the study. Interested students, parents and caregivers were provided with Letters of Invitation to invite participation in the study.

Informed consent from the study participants (both adult and youth) was obtained in writing on three parent/consent forms where participants determined their involvement in each separate phase of the study. Consent forms were given to all of the students with whom I spoke in the EAL classes so that the EAL teachers would be unaware of which students elected to participate in the study. All students under 18 provided assent for all involvement in the study.

The participant parent/consent forms included the following:

### 1. Acknowledgements for Phase One Involvement

- a) Consent to be a member of a group to select a community issue that would inform the workshops and the play.

### 2. Acknowledgements for Phase Two Involvement

- a) Consent to participate in the workshop series.
- b) Consent to volunteer to assist the researcher to help collect data via picture taking and recording participant comments during the debriefing circle conversations.
- c) Consent to be interviewed in the semi-structured interviews using the photos taken during the workshops.

d) Consent to use parts of the participants' journal entries recorded throughout the workshop series as data.

e) Consent to be photographed during the workshops.

### 3. Acknowledgements for Phase Three Involvement

a) Consent to help create the play.

b) Consent to act in the play at an event attended by members of the community.

c) Consent to be videotaped while performing the play so the videotape could be used as data.

d) Consent to participate in the final focus group.

e) Pledge of confidentiality to participate in the focus group after the performance of the play.

All audience members were asked to sign a consent form so they clearly understood the play was going to be videotaped for research purposes. The consent forms also indicated that audience members could become research participants on the night of the play if they made interventions during the second performance of the play. Audience members were asked to sign a consent form and a pledge of confidentiality if they participated in the audience focus group after the performance of the play.

When there was any doubt that a participant did not fully understand the consent form, an interpreter was enlisted to assist me in breaking down communication barriers. I enlisted an interpreter on three different occasions during the study. The interpreter who assisted me and the participants was qualified and bound by a signed Pledge of Confidentiality.

I emailed service providers and policy makers to inform them about the aims of the theatre event, the date, time, and location of the event, as well as provided them with a brief explanation of the research and theatrical process. Written advertisements were also posted in the community to inform people about the event. All promotional materials and invitations related to the Forum Theatre event clearly stated that the first and second performance of the play would be videotaped.

### **Risks to the Participants**

There was a possibility that participants could experience emotional stress during the workshops or the play. A qualified community therapist was present for the entire study. I also exercised the greatest of care throughout the workshops, interviews, rehearsals and focus groups in order to create and maintain a safe and respectful environment for all.

Focus group participants signed a confidentiality agreement and the data collected in the semi-structured interviews were kept confidential. Workshop participants signed the consent form to allow photographs taken during the workshop to be used for analysis purposes and the interviews. No photographs were, or will be shown publicly or used in the dissemination of the research. This study received approval from the University of Manitoba Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board.

### **Data Management**

Qualitative research involves the collection of multiple forms of data. In this study I collected the following data: a list of the community problems that 26 former refugee youth and adults deemed to be significant; photographs of the workshop exercises and images; photo-elicitation interview data from 14 of the workshop participants; personal

journal entries I recorded throughout the workshops; a written record of the discussion circle reflections captured at the end of each workshop; focus group audio taped data from four audience members who attended the Forum Theatre event; a digital video recording of the Forum Theatre event and; audio-taped focus group data with five of the actors.

It was important to have a plan to organize the information so the data could be analyzed thoroughly to identify themes, patterns, surprises, and new questions. All of the interviews and the focus groups were recorded digitally. I transcribed the interviews and the focus groups verbatim to diminish the possibility that testimonials offered by the participants were misrepresented. I completed the transcriptions within four weeks of the interviews. Interview and focus group protocols were created (Appendices A and B). All transcripts, digital recordings and photographs were password protected or locked in a file cabinet. Backup files were stored on a password protected memory stick giving me the only access to the digital files. All notes and digital files collected during the interviews and the focus groups will be destroyed in five years after the thesis has been formally granted credit by Graduate Studies. Participants were made aware of this in the consent forms they signed before the interviews and the focus group occurred.

### **Data Analysis**

The intent of the data analyses is to “capture the participants’ perspectives and to focus on the significant features that shape their actions and behaviors” (Stringer, 2008, p. 88). A significant component to the analysis of the research was to identify critical incidents (Stringer, 2008). These critical incidents are features of the research experience that participants deem as critical or important. There were four levels of

analysis that assisted me in the interpretation of the study: (1) The meaning participants ascribed to the workshops and the Forum Theatre play; (2) The new thoughts or perspectives participants gleaned with regards to the community issue under investigation; (3) The ways in which the workshops and play developed or suppressed agency and voice, and; (4) The value of using theatre as a participatory action research methodology and as a vehicle to promote social discourse and social justice.

As previously articulated, there were three phases in this study: (1) Participant recruitment and the definition of the community problem; (2) The theatre workshop series, and (3) The Forum Theatre event. In phase one of the study I intended to examine the types of community problems that were articulated by the participants in order to identify what constitutes a community problem. I analyzed the 'brainstorming posters' that were utilized by the participants during the small and large group discussions.

In the second and third phase of the study, I analyzed the data from the photographs, the photo-elicitation interviews, the discussion circle reflections, the video of the Forum Theatre event, the audience focus group and the actors' focus group. In the photo-elicitation interviews, the discussion circle reflections, and the audience focus group data, I sought to identify any illuminative moments that were recalled as significant to the participants (Stringer, 2008). Illuminative moments are important events, learnings or interactions that people might describe as transformational. It was important to engage in member checking at this stage to avoid coding something as 'transformational' that was actually insignificant to the participants. I critically reflected on these illuminative moments to understand why and how some of the features of

these moments gained prominence over others. I used these features to build individual, joint and collective accounts about the community problem under investigation and the introduction of a theatrical commons in one school community (Stringer, 2008).

From these joint, individual and collective accounts, I organized the data using four a priori critical tensions in a heuristic that I designed (discussed further in chapter 4), that allowed me to begin to understand the relationships between different data sets in different phases of the project. The first tension lies between *What Is* and *What Could Be*. It manifests as participants deconstruct social inequities and imagine new possibilities for social change. This tension comes from the work of Paulo Freire (2008), Augusto Boal (1979, 1995, 1998, 2002), and David Diamond (2007). These individuals worked with communities to unravel the causes of social inequities and to raise collective critical consciousness about social disparities. Boal, Diamond and Freire believed the solutions to social problems could and should be generated by those who were oppressed or most impacted by social injustice. The tension is animated as people begin to question what was once taken for granted. These are moments when 'common sense' becomes absurd.

The second tension exists between the role of the *Observer* and the actions of the *Spect-actor*. The Observer is an individual who sees what is present on stage or in her/his community. The Spect-actor is someone who acts on what she/he sees. Boal defined the term Spect-actor to describe an audience member who would come on stage and 'act on the actors' (1979, 1995). He/she could impact a character's world or the outcome of a scene through audience interventions. Boal used Forum Theatre plays

as opportunities to dream about and practice for revolutionary social change. The tension between Observer and Spect-actor is intensified as individuals decide whether or not to act and how to act in the face of social injustice.

The third tension lives between *Silence* and *Voice*. This tension comes from my lived experiences as a theatre facilitator, educational consultant, and a classroom teacher. Silences are periods when individuals or groups are unable to voice their truths to their oppressors or within oppressive societal structures. Boal wrote about the theatre as a sacred space that revealed who was and who was not authorized to speak (1995). The theatre also reveals who is authorized to speak on particular matters. The tension between Silence and Voice is dramatized when individuals speak out against injustice. These are moments when an individual's or group's challenge to an oppressive situation carries risk. Courage and sacrifice are required to move within this tension.

The final tension in the heuristic is between *Rules* and *Freedom*. The theatre allows us to see what novel ideas are born when people resist social 'norms' and the consequences for individuals or groups when a community is in a perpetual state of creation. The tension comes from Diamond's thesis that Image and Forum Theatre magnify and unsettle the rules that govern a social ecosystem (2007). This tension is exacerbated within mechanistic social structures and in spaces of prolonged silences.

The tensions were used to analyze the data from the photo-elicitation interviews, the focus groups, and the play script. Each transcript was coded to see if, when, and under what circumstances the tensions manifested. The heuristic was also used to critically reflect on the role of the Joker and to analyze the 202 photographs taken during the theatre workshop. The heuristic is described in more detail in chapter four.

To enhance the referential adequacy of the study I used verbatim quotations articulated by the participants to discuss the tensions. I identified similarities and differences between the accounts and experiences of the participants in the workshops and in the Forum Theatre event.

### **Coding**

The photo-elicitation interview data, the discussion circle reflections, the play script and the audience and actor focus group data were first coded using the a priori critical tensions. I assigned each of the four critical theatrical tensions a colour. Next I colour coded the transcripts by hand into smaller components by identifying phrases and sentences that were illustrative of each of the four tensions. On the left sides of the pages I tracked how frequently the tensions presented in the transcripts. I assigned a colour code to power and coded all of the transcripts to identify evidence of the deconstruction of power relations in the participants' reflections.

On the right hand side of the play script and the transcripts I created codes that denoted when, and under what circumstances the tensions occurred. The codes were grouped into 12 emergent themes. Next I analyzed the 202 workshop photographs to look for repetitive 'images in images.' There were ten shapes that were repeatedly offered by multiple participants. I juxtaposed the twelve transcript themes with the eight repeating images from the workshops to elicit the nine thematic areas that addressed the research questions in chapter four. These analyses were complimented by my journal entries. I triangulated the written interview data with the visual data and the journal entries (Patton, 2002).

## Research Rigour

There were four different mechanisms I used to demonstrate the validity and credibility of my findings: (1) I conducted member checks; (2) Participants were given the opportunity to eliminate anything from their transcripts they wanted excluded from the study; (3) I employed methodological triangulation to ensure that my analyses were credible and valid, and; (4) I conducted participant debriefing sessions (discussion circles) at the end of each workshop and after the performance of the play (Stringer, 2008) to validate and extend my developing findings.

Member checks occurred throughout the study. Member checks were designed to give participants several opportunities to review the raw data to ensure my interpretations accurately reflected the participants' perceptions (Stringer, 2008).

Participants were invited to meet with me to review their transcripts from the photo-elicitation interviews, the notes of the debriefing sessions and the transcript of the final focus group interview for member-checking purposes. Participants had two weeks to verify their comments and add/change or augment the material they provided. If I did not receive any requests from the participants within those two weeks I assumed they were satisfied with the information they provided and proceeded with analysis.

I endeavored to ensure that the interpretations of the data were described using the terminology and language used by the participants (Stringer, 2008). This was to ensure "referential adequacy" (Stringer, p. 50, 2008). The photo-elicitation interviews, the discussion circle reflections, the audience focus group and the actors' focus group were transcribed verbatim. Participants had the opportunity to exclude any of their

individual comments from the transcripts. The transcripts were written verbatim to enrich the referential adequacy of the data.

Methodological triangulation (Stringer, 2008) was used to corroborate the study's findings and to critically reflect on the introduction of a theatrical commons in one school community. The photo-elicitation interviews, photographs from the workshops, recorded reflections from the discussion circles, my journal entries, the video recording from the Forum Theatre event, the audience focus group data and the final actor focus group combined to provide a resonant and textured account of the study's findings.

Confirmability was achieved by providing opportunities for the study participants to assess whether the findings accurately represent the perspectives of the participants and the actual events that took place during the study.

I included a description of the school community, the participants, the research process, the workshops, and the Forum Theatre event in my thesis in order to allow other interested community members, educators and policy makers to make use of any knowledge produced in the study. I hope the study's findings will be transferable to similar contexts and that important lessons that arose may be applicable to researchers and practitioners who are interested in policy development in education. Butler-Kisber (2010) states in, *Qualitative Inquiry: Thematic, Narrative and Arts-Informed Perspectives*, "A rigorous or trustworthy study indicates its persuasiveness by including a coherent and transparent research process and illustrating an adherence to researcher reflexivity and reflection, or a clear statement of how the researcher accounts for assumptions and biases," (p.14).

To provide the opportunity for interested people to assess the dependability of my research, I will make the details of the research process public to all of the participants and to other audiences. In all public discussions about the research whether they are in person or in written accounts, the details of the data collection and analyses processes will be articulated.

### **Assumptions of the Researcher**

Qualitative researchers must account for themselves throughout the research process. I made six assumptions in relation to the research. In the first place, I assumed the study's methodology could support a multidisciplinary research project. Secondly, I assumed that Image and Forum Theatre could be utilized in the context of community development and school change. School renewal efforts require and cause intellectual collisions. I believe that Forum and Image Theatre have the potential to support this difficult work. Another assumption of mine was that the participants gave honest reflections in regards to what they learned about language barriers and/or no voice. I also believed the voices of former refugee youth and adults are at times marginalized in school communities. There was also an assumption made that life in the commons can be more peaceful and joyful if school communities are more inclusive of diverse perspectives and voices. Finally I assumed that schools can be sites to create and sustain necessary intellectual collisions. Intellectual collisions are the moments when people confront their differences in pursuit of mutual respect and shared understanding.

### **Troubling the Role of the Joker**

A theatre Joker is the embodiment of a wild card in a poker game (Boal, 2002). S/He introduces difficult questions and troubles the assumptions of the actors and

spect-actors in his facilitation of Image and Forum Theatre work. Her/His job is to unsettle what is often considered to be 'common sense.' The Joker is also responsible for the maintenance of workshop space so that it is conducive to truth telling and risk taking. The Joker holds a position of power in the theatre. This power must be deconstructed on a continuous basis. The Joker can make space for certain questions and silence others. It is the Joker who works with the audience during a Forum Theatre play to reflect on the interventions. This can shape and influence what meaning/s people make from the workshops and the play. As much as possible the Joker must encourage the audience and actors to challenge their perceptions of the Images and interventions. Throughout the research project I attempted to trouble my role as the Joker and invite intellectual collisions in the workshop and theatre space. I did this by refusing to mandate consensus whenever there was a disagreement. I valued multiple interpretations and encouraged lively debate.

There were three main strategies I used to trouble my role as the Joker. The first strategy I used was to not offer praise or criticism of the participants' efforts during the workshop or the play rehearsals. Praise and criticism will censor some ideas and elevate others. This allowed the participants to offer multiple interpretations of the same image or scene without being shackled to the pursuit of 'the right answer.' It also created an environment where it was difficult for the facilitator to be an 'all knowing authority.' Another strategy I used was to conduct an analysis of how many times the participants challenged me when I reframed their ideas. I repeatedly checked with the participants to ensure that I had interpreted their words or actions accurately. There were a number of instances when I was corrected if I reframed a comment or physical

action in a way that contradicted a participant's intentions. A third strategy I used to trouble my role as the Joker was to demonstrate my confidence in the participants' ability to work through disagreements with one another. My confidence was exemplified in my refusal to take ownership for intellectual collisions in the workshop, rehearsals or play. When participants vehemently disagreed I did not demand they reach consensus, nor did I try to micromanage how messages were delivered or how those messages were received.

### **Troubling the Role of the Researcher**

It is important for 'critical' qualitative researchers to name the privilege they hold inside and outside of the research process. I am a white woman, middle class, and Canadian born. At times these descriptors afford me opportunities and privileges that I know are denied to others. I acknowledge there are tensions that exist in my study because I am a white middle class woman who facilitated a 'critical' action research project that involved former refugee youth and adults. My aims as a researcher are grounded in solidarity and not in a romanticized and disrespectful need to solve problems for others. I work in the community where I conducted the study. As a member of the community I care deeply about the revitalization of the commons. Throughout the research process I troubled how my privilege may have impacted the participants and the study's methodology.

One method I used to trouble my privilege was to critically reflect on the access I had to the participants. In the school community where the study was conducted a research committee had the power to decide whether my study proceeded in this particular school. My study received approval from this research committee. I decided to

submit my proposal to the superintendent and the school principal even though it was not required in terms of school division policy. I was committed to conducting the study in a different school division if the principal or superintendent did not endorse the proposal.

The most important strategy I used to deconstruct my privilege in the study was to invite discussion and debate in the workshop and rehearsal space about power relations in the Arundhati school community as well as in the study. The participants discussed how privilege intersected with wealth, race and professional roles. They discussed how race exacerbated power relations. I asked the participants to deconstruct the power relations embedded in my role as the Joker during one Image Theatre exercise and after one of the theatre games. The participants named two sources of my privilege; (1) “You have white skin and (2) You are a teacher.” The public deconstruction of my white privilege further increased my consciousness about how the invisibility of ‘white culture’ is a hegemonic force that fuels structural violence. The research forced me to further confront some of my ‘socialized patterns of whiteness’ that maintain racial inequality.

### **Summary**

The methodology section began with a description of some of the tenets of qualitative research and participatory/action research and a description of the three phases of the research project: identification of community problem/participant recruitment, the theatre workshop series and the Forum Theatre event. The delimitations of the study were outlined along with the methods that were used to address the research questions. Risks to the participants were considered as well as the lenses that were used to analyze the data. The chapter ends with my assumptions

that impacted the research and an account of how my privilege may have impacted the research.

The next chapter begins with a description of the school community and the participants. In the second section I present the findings in relation to the research questions. In the third part of the chapter I discuss a heuristic called *Critical Theatrical Tensions* which explores the findings in relation to four a priori tensions informed by the work of Augusto Boal (1979, 1995, 1998, 2002), David Diamond (2007), and critical theory (Apple, 2009; Denzin, 2009; Kinceloe & McLaren, 2005; McLaren, 2001).

## **CHAPTER 4**

### **RESEARCH FINDINGS AND TENSIONS IN THREE ACTS**

This chapter is divided into two Acts: Act One sets the interpretative stage for the chapter in its description of the participants and the school community. Act Two presents the findings in relation to the first set of research questions, and Act Three delves into the findings in connection to four theatrical tensions developed from the work of Boal, Diamond, and critical theory. It is important for a qualitative researcher to acknowledge the a priori assumptions that informed her methodological choices in the study. The four a priori critical tensions were informed by the theatrical imaginations of Augusto Boal, David Diamond and the critical theorists cited in chapters one and two. The heuristic is used to address the findings in the study in relation to the theatrical tensions embedded in the research. Qualitative research necessitates that a researcher allow the organic nature of the process to influence the articulation of her findings in response to the research questions and the methodological principles. Therefore the interpretation of the data occurred in all three phases of the study.

Act One sets the stage for the articulation of the findings. In this section the 'cast' and the 'setting' are described in order to provide the context for the research.

#### **Act One**

##### **The Arundhati School Community**

The school community is located in an urban centre in Manitoba, Canada. Concrete layers, siren songs, car exhaust, chain link fences, and traffic lights dominate the sensory landscape. The 779 students who attend the school represent 57 different cultural groups. Each day, a microcosm of many of the world's people gather under one

school roof. Youth can attend Arundhati School from grade 7 to grade 12. The most recent demographic data published by the school division for the years 2009/2010 states that 19% of the students are former refugees and 24% of the student population speaks English as an Additional Language. The school principal reports that 65% of the students live in a single parent family. The school division 2009/2010 demographic report also states that 51% of the families in this school community live below the Low Income Cut Off and the median annual family income is \$31,251.00 according to Statistics Canada.

The Arundhati School provides some targeted programs to support newcomer youth. There is an English as an Additional Language (EAL) reception centre, an afterschool homework program, EAL classes for beginners, and two cross cultural support workers. Many of these resources were allocated as a direct result of the recent Manitoba studies that investigated the constraints that impact newcomer youth in school communities (Kanu, 2008, MacKay & Tavares, 2005; Sloane 2009; Stewart, 2007).

### **The Cast**

All of the participants in all three phases of the study identified themselves as former refugees who had been living in Canada for at least two years. Ninety percent of the participants came to Canada from war affected countries. All of the participants shared a strong desire to succeed in their new communities. Approximately half of the participants had little difficulty conversing in English. In phase one of the study, 26 participants were involved in the meeting that determined the community issue for the workshops and the play. Out of the 26 participants, six were adults (four women, two men) and 20 of the participants were youth between the ages of 12 and 19 (11 girls, 9

boys). The adults and youth came to Canada from the following countries: Burma, South Sudan, Afghanistan, Iraq, Kenya and the Democratic Republic of the Congo.

There were 33 participants involved in the theatre workshops that took place from July 4<sup>th</sup>, to July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011. Out of the 33 participants, 26 were youth (10 boys and 16 girls) and seven were adults (four men, three women). The adults and youth came to Canada from the following countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Somalia and South Sudan. There were variations in the attendance over the five days and variations between the morning and the afternoon sessions. Ten out of the 33 participants were involved only in the afternoon portion of the workshops because they attended summer school classes in the morning. Table 4.1 summarizes what percentage of the total group participants attended each theatre workshop.

**Table 4.1 Theatre Workshop Attendance**

<b>DATE</b>	<b>July 4<sup>th</sup>, 2011</b>	<b>July 5<sup>th</sup>, 2011</b>	<b>July 6<sup>th</sup>, 2011</b>	<b>July 7<sup>th</sup>, 2011</b>	<b>July 8<sup>th</sup>, 2011</b>
Morning Attendance	100%	96%	78%	91%	69%
Afternoon Attendance	91%	94%	82%	91%	82%

At the end of the workshop, I invited all of the participants to join me for a semi-structured interview to better understand their experiences in the theatre workshops. There were 14 people who agreed to be interviewed. Seven of the interview participants were male, seven were female, six were adults, and eight were under the age of 18.

Table 4.2 lists some of the descriptors of the interviewees: name, gender, age, and country of origin. Pseudonyms were used to protect the anonymity of the participants.

**Table 4.2 Interviewees**

<b>Name</b>	<b>Gender</b>	<b>Age</b>	<b>Country of Origin</b>	<b>Date of Interview</b>
Achala	Female	14	Nepal	July 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Beulah	Female	14	South Sudan	July 9 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Roya	Female	19	Afghanistan	July 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Farrah	Female	15	Iraq	July 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Naw Kay	Female	15	Burma	July 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Zubia	Female	17	Nepal	July 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Nalin	Male	45	Pakistan	July 10 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Rajul	Male	18	Nepal	July 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Ali	Male	50	Iraq	July 11 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Himmat	Male	17	Nepal	July 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Nirmal	Male	18	Nepal	July 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Barak	Male	46	South Sudan	July 12 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Nafeeza	Female	38	Kenya	July 18 <sup>th</sup> , 2011
Jabir	Male	14	South Sudan	August 31 <sup>st</sup> , 2011

In phase 3 there were 30 participants involved in the study. Out of the 30 participants, 27 were youth (18 girls, 9 boys) and three were adults (two women, one man). The participants came to Canada from the following countries: Afghanistan, Bhutan, Burma, Democratic Republic of the Congo, Iraq, Kenya, Nepal, Somalia and South Sudan.

Charts and demographic data do little to capture the humanity of the people who were involved in the study. Throughout the project, I reflected on the strengths and

vulnerabilities revealed during the workshop and play creation process. My hope is that the intellect, resilience, kindness and humor displayed by the participants are revealed in Acts Two and Three of this chapter.

In Act Two I report on the findings in relation to the following research questions:

1. Can a theatrical commons create space for diverse voices to be heard in a school community?

- a) What potential is there in Image and Forum Theatre to connect the aims, method and matter of public education to the pursuit of more joyful, peaceful and democratic communities?
- b) How might Image, Forum and Legislative Theatre inform the cycles of planning and reflection across school systems?
- c) How might a theatrical commons create space for marginalized voices to influence decisions made at an individual, community and policy level?

2. What is learned about the community issue under investigation?

3. What meaning(s) do participants give to the Image Theatre exercises, the development of the play and the interventions offered by the audience?

### **Act Two: Findings**

A central question in this research project was, “Can a theatrical commons create space for diverse voices to be heard in a school community?” Evidence of this ‘space’ was found in all three phases of the project. I first observed the opened space in the invitation to select the community issue that would inform the theatre workshops and the play. Diverse actors were able to name several community issues they wanted addressed. Some of those issues included language barriers, crime, addiction and

limited employment opportunities. Spaces for multiple voices were also opened in the workshops by troubling the oppressiveness of the English Language by using Images, and valuing and encouraging multiple interpretations. Throughout the play creation and performance, the participants' voices were raised in the development of the 'script of the play,' and the incitement of the audience interventions. Act Two begins with the ways in which the voices of the participants were exercised as they named community problems.

### **Naming the Problem**

As previously stated, the purpose of the meeting with 26 participants on June 18th, 2011 was to select a community problem that would inform the workshops and the Forum Theatre play. In the first part of the meeting the participants analyzed the present struggles that impacted the Arundhati School community. Figures 4.1 to 4.5 are photographs of the posters the participants used to record the community issues. Any potentially identifying information has been blocked out.

After the examination of the participants' lists, I summarized the data under three broad themes: (1) Systemic barriers (poverty, housing, language barriers, lack of employment, biased media); (2) How People Treat One Another (help each other, respect, speaking out, sharing knowledge, taking care of environment, racism); (3) Unhealthy ecosystem symptoms (crime, gangs, sexual abuse, murder, addiction, drugs)

Figure 4.1 Community Struggles in the Arundhati School Community Group #1

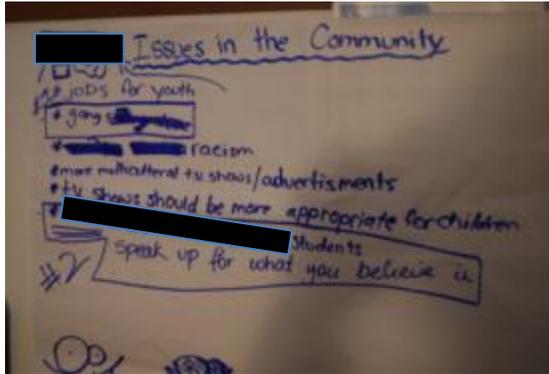


Figure 4.2 Community Struggles in the Arundhati School Community Group #2

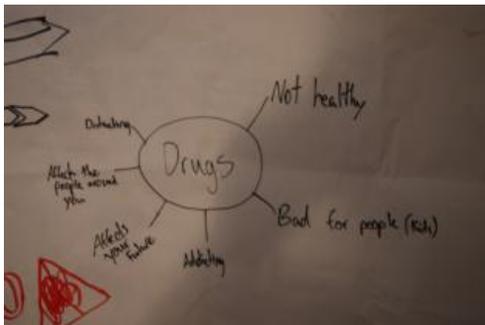
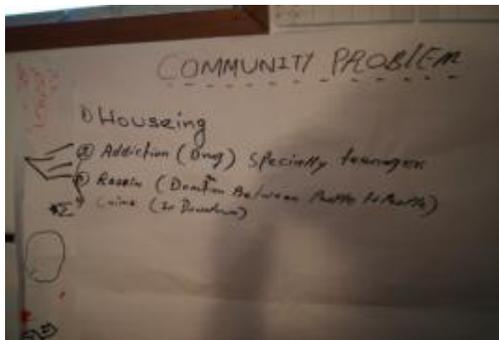
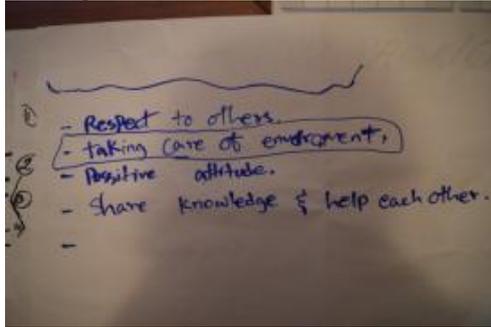


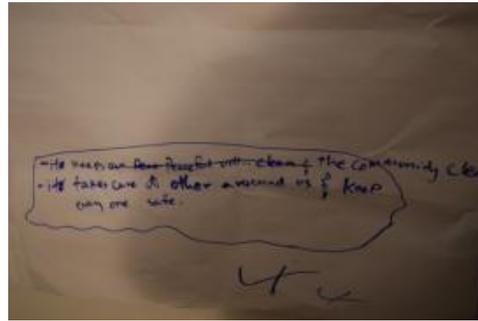
Figure 4.3 Community Struggles in the Arundhati School Community Group #3



**Figure 4.4a and 4.4b Community Struggles in the Arundhati School Community Group #4**

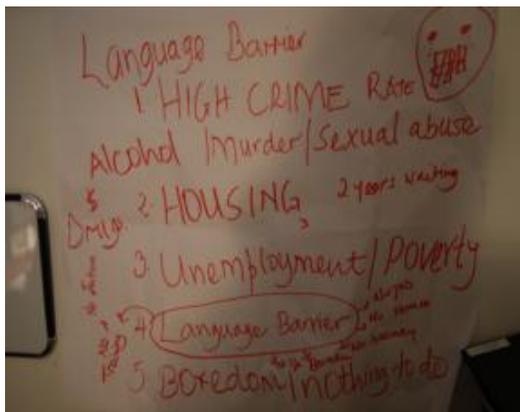


a



b

**Figure 4.5 Community Struggles in the Arundhati School Community Group #5**



In the second half of the meeting the participants worked to build consensus on which issue should inform the content of the workshop and the play. Each small group selected one issue they thought was the most important struggle in which to engage during the upcoming theatre work. Groups presented their rationales to the large group. Each issue was listed on a separate poster and participants were given two votes. The problems named by the five small groups and the corresponding votes are listed in table 4.3.

**Table 4.3 Five Important Struggles in the Arundhati School Community**

<b>Issue</b>	<b>Number of Votes</b>
Taking Care of our Environment	6
Drugs	10
People Need to Speak Up for What They Believe in	10
Crime	12
Language Barriers: Some People In Our Community Have No Voice	14

The issue of “Language Barriers: Some People in Our Community Have No Voice,” was the struggle selected to inform the theatre workshops and the play. Participants exercised their voices in terms of what they wanted to learn more about and what they wanted others in their community to think about in the Forum Theatre play. It was provocative that the aim of the overall research project also became the specific content of the workshops and play.

However the meeting was not without tensions or silences. In the section entitled *Silence and Voice* in Act Three, I discuss how one of the participants was silenced during the meeting. Inside the workshops we also attempted to make space for diverse voices to be heard. The Image Theatre exercises appeared to trouble the hegemony of the English language to make this space possible.

## **The Power of an Image**

Several of the participants described how the English language created multiple barriers in their lives. In school, at work and in the community, English was the dominant language. Those who could speak English proficiently possessed and exchanged valuable social currency; those who could not were sometimes marginalized. As Roya examined a photograph of one of the workshop images she stated:

This one is mostly in my school you know. When I was in school and they were like laughing at me when I was new and they don't know my problems or the things I go through. And they just say, "They are from Afghanistan, there is war and there is things." So I think I am here in the middle and crying and the other people are like laughing at me and pointing at me like, "See her, she doesn't have any English, she doesn't like have friends and anything." Just picking. And the other thing, the other one she is coming to stop them and say, "No don't do it!" You know? She is trying to help me and like stop pointing at me.

Roya described the emotional impact and the social isolation created by the dominance of the English language. Her perceived inability to speak English makes her feel unknowable as an individual person and a target for verbal abuse.

The Image Theatre exercises appeared to alleviate some of the oppression exerted by the English language and make space for individual and collective 'voices' to be heard. This happened when participants recognized and validated alternative methods of communication in the workshop. Dancing, images and gestures were cited as effective and alternative means of communication. Rajul commented:

Lots of times it happens for myself. Lots of times I've seen two other guys are studying or something and I want to make a connection with another guy so I use that one, (Here Rajul referenced a workshop photograph of an image of five people. In the photo four of the characters sit cross legged in a circle. The fifth character sits in the middle of the circle with his head down. His right arm is extends in the air to block his face. One of the characters who sits in the circle extends his right hand to the character in the centre. The gesture Rajul references is the extended hand towards the character in the centre of the circle.). I think that would be a good way when you can't say your voice to another.

*What does that picture mean to you?*

It means when you have a language barrier, if you can't use your voice to make a communication, there are other ways to make it.

Many of the participants said the theatrical Images powerfully communicated complicated feelings. It is as if the elimination of words provided communicative clarity as participants 'articulated' the essence of their personal struggles with language barriers/no voice. Nalin explained:

I can see clearly for the first day I came to tears when I saw those images that our fellows were making. And they were saying that all of us have gone through it, or degrees of it, or a variance varying degree of hardships.

One of the adult participants Barak 'heard the voices of youth' as he referenced a photograph of an image created by five youth in the workshop:

Some of the things I've seen from the kids helped me really to see what is going on in their minds before. Some of the things they are trying to show us, yes maybe we've heard about it but when they act like that (The image Barak referenced shows two characters whispering about a third character who is curled up in a ball on the floor. A fourth character points and laughs at the character on the floor. The fifth character stands, bent over, with her arms stretched out between the character on the floor and the two whispering characters. Barak gestured to the character who points in the photo as he commented.), it struck me. I can say that I have learned how difficult sometimes things are with the kids sometimes with the language barriers, especially with some of the people who shared their stories. They showed me a lot about what people go through some difficulties in a very real life way. Because all of us we have the same problems. But that day, or the time we spent in the workshops it showed me a lot.

Along with alternative forms of communication with the body, the rich interpretive possibilities inherent in the theatrical Images appeared to create space for diverse voices to be heard.

### **There is No 'Right' Interpretation**

When an Image was offered by an individual or by a group in the workshop, there were multiple interpretations solicited for that Image. A group would come to the center of the room and make a frozen shape that connected to their personal struggles with language barriers/no voice. The people who made the offer did not explain the image. As the Joker I would ask the rest of the participants some of the following questions:

What do you see happening here? Who is she/he? Where are they? What does he or she want? What happened five minutes ago? What happens five minutes from now?

This questioning process was utilized repeatedly in the workshop. By the end of the first day of workshop, the participants ceased to ask me if they had the right answers. Barak explained:

The confidence started coming out. Then the more you tell them there is no wrong, there is no right, this makes them say, "Ok I can do or say mine even if I think it's wrong, but this is what I'm going to do." It helps. It helps a lot.

As the requests for validation decreased, the accessibility of the stage appeared to increase. Many of the participants offered multiple interpretations of the same Image.

Naw Kay said:

We did like the freeze pose. It's like one person get up and then like everyone can go there. We make a lot of things. And it make you think a lot. Like oh, it's right when he said. And then he's pointing there! And then you get a lot of ideas and I really, really like that.

The participants' Images created the capacity for the group to hold multiple interpretations about the same Image at the same time. Images that were very evocative elicited high levels of engagement from the participants. Rajul's comments provide evidence for the rich interpretive possibilities in the workshop Images:

So here I see five people with five different ways of thinking. Actually there is one more down there. Ya and every six of them has a reason to be there and I think it's a really amazing that six ideas are in at the same time. You see one is

making them stop that she is a leader as a character. And this guy, I am really related to this character.

During the Image Theatre exercises people spoke out frequently, openly agreed and disagreed with one another, and offered rich rationales for their opinions about the contents of the images. Roya described the raising of her voice in the workshop very powerfully:

I wanted to be like someone more like other people and talk and have fun. But there was another voice like telling me, “No you can’t do it. Don’t go. You are like... don’t sign up for it. You can’t do it. Just stay home. Just do your work that’s it. You’re not enough to be in community, to be with other people. Like their English is better, they’re smarter.” So ya I feel that I’m not enough to go anywhere and do something, my dreams or anything. But here you can do it. You can say, “Stop!” You can do it. You can live your life.

In the interview, Roya informed me that before the theatre workshop she did not go out ‘in community’ without her mother or one of her siblings. She was paralyzed by her belief that she did not speak English well enough to communicate with others.

Two questions that both excited and troubled Roya and a number of the other workshop participants were, Would the audience members who attended the performance understand and really hear their stories? Would the richness of the dialogue from the five day workshop be sufficiently honored in the play creation and performance? The ‘script of the play,’ the incitement of seven audience interventions, and the awareness generated about the struggles facing former refugee families, are

indicators that multiple spaces were created for diverse actors to be heard through the performance of the play.

### **Script the Struggle/s**

The script of the play was written without a computer, a pen or paper. It was generated from the lived experiences of the actors who decided to create and perform in the Forum play. Figure 4.6 is a setting slide designed by one of the participants. It provided the backdrop for scene one in the play and it is another example of participant ownership and voice. All of the actors' improvised scenes formed the essence of the Forum play. For example, in the first rehearsal the actors situated all of their scenes inside a school even though they had received no direction on where the scenes could occur. When asked why all of the struggles in their scenes took place in schools seven participants responded:

Most people has trouble at school.

All troubles happen at school.

Everything starts from school.

It's realistic because most of us are in school.

Adults can relate to all of this. They do not understand the rules that govern them in school and in Canada.

At school when you are the new girl it is hard.

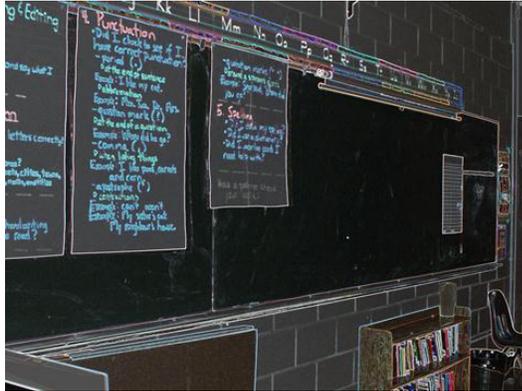
Everyday my child comes home crying from the school.

Therefore it was inevitable that our play, *Silos of Silence*, would be situated in a school.

The characters' words came from the lived experiences of the actors. The script was developed as I asked the 'characters' a myriad of questions. The actors' responses to

the questions as well as the decisions the actors' made during the improvised scenes were rehearsed repeatedly until the improvisations became a memorized script.

**Figure 4.6 Silos of Silence Backdrop for Scene One**



The Silos of Silence script generated a Forum Theatre performance but it was also a statement about the actors' personal struggles with language barriers/no voice in the Arundhati school community. What follows are excerpts from three different scenes in the Silos of Silence Forum Theatre play that demonstrate how participants' voices were translated into the text of the play.

### **Scene 1: The Introduction**

*The school principal marches six new students to the front of Mr. Wiseman's class. The students are asked to introduce themselves to the class.*

*Mr. Wiseman: Yes miss...*

*Tonya: (said quickly) My name is Tonya. I'm from Afghanistan.*

*Natasha: Uh, Tonya can you slow down? You're speaking too fast.*

*Tonya: (quieter, but slower) My name is Tonya and I'm from Afghanistan.*

*Toby: Were you sad when Osama died?*

*(class laughs loudly)*

*Mr. Wiseman: Class, class! Please show respect. Please show some respect!*

## **Scene 2 – Gossip**

*Salina just finds out that her friend Ruby has been talking behind her back. She goes to confront her about spreading rumors about her in the school.*

*Salina: Don't give me that fake smile. I heard what you said!*

*Ruby: Excuse me?*

*Salina: You're excused. All day people've been comin up to my face and tellin me, didn't you hear Salina's skipping Mr. Wiseman's class? Like honestly you're not my parents so I don't even know why you give a shit or anything.*

*Ruby: Maybe cause we've been like best friends for like five years and you're gonna come here and ask me these questions?*

*Sara: Best friends do not go behind each other's backs.*

## **Scene 6 – Are You Gonna Do This or What?**

*Chris pulls a gun on Ita who has refused to deliver a package to Mr. Michaels. Zura and Toby are shocked and try desperately to convince Chris to lay the gun down.*

*Chris: (even louder to Ita) You too! Sit down! (throws his hat down on the ground)*

*I gotta a question for you. Are you going to do this shit or what? Don't make me repeat myself! Are you gonna do this or what!*

*Ita: (nods head slowly and looks down)*

*Chris: All right then hold the shit...*

*Toby: Yo dude there is no need for a gun. Come on just calm down!*

*Chris: I have this thing for protection.*

*Zura: I didn't know you was having gun.*

*Chris: I just got it that's why you don't know about it that's all.*

*Zura: Put the gun down before the cops come yo.*

*Toby: Dude I can't be part of this if there's a gun involved, seriously.*

*Chris: Just relax.*

*Toby: Put it down. Dude the cops will be here any minute. Come on just drop it!*

*Zura: Put it down!*

*Toby: Yo man, how's your sister and mom gonna feel if the cops take you away?*

*Your sister she's gonna be on her own. How you gonna help them then?*

*Seriously put it down.*

Several of the participants' struggles with language barriers/no voice are reflected in these excerpts. What is also embedded is the dialogue from the theatre workshops. Issues such as racism, addiction, disrespect for cultures and place, and the desire to appease the more established members of a community in order to survive are woven throughout the play.

The five actors who engaged in the focus group expressed a belief that they were 'given a voice' in the performance to communicate important concepts to others. Ellie talked about using her voice and the play as an opportunity to teach others. She said:

I learn in a different way and I like teaching many ways also. And acting like this is a way of teaching. I would do it again because it teaches about life and other peoples' lives and also about life in general.

When I asked the actors in the focus group if they would ever participate in a project like this again, Zeeni's positive response also contained a statement about the acquisition of voice:

Ya, because it's so fun and it lets you express yourself and not let yourself down, and make new friends, and make new opportunities.

Later in the focus group Zeeni also talked about her growth in self-confidence throughout the project as she learned to use her voice to stand up for herself. She explained:

If you don't stand up for yourself people are just going to keep stepping on you. You're going to be the easiest victim to make fun of and stuff. So if you don't stand up for yourself you're just going to get like stepped all over.

The four audience members in the focus group noted how well the actors were able to 'express their voices' during the performance of the play. Chiri expressed her belief that the play was a chance to not only hear from youth but to really see them and understand the struggles:

These children, these kids, the immigrants. If nobody, if you don't contact them we couldn't even see them. We couldn't even know them.

In Chiri's comments it is evident the stories of the actors in the play were resonating with the audience. Tanya explained that many of the scenes had universal appeal:

So some of the issues in the play I can understand are that they would just be newcomer issues but a lot are universal as well. We've had reference to the dance. And I loved that one, the dance I thought was so important. But I think it's good to normalize that. That is a part of being a young person. Mary was referring to the aboriginal culture. They talk of the young people as being contraires. That is their life mission, to look at our upcoming, our way of life and say, is that the best way or are there other ways that we can change it? That is

their mission in life to be contraires. So I don't find that negative I think that's a universal theme. And unfortunately the gossip and the discrimination is universal as well. So I think even though the play was *Silos of Silence*, it can be people within the general population as well not just newcomers. The themes were so well thought out and so great.

### **From Audience Member to Spect-actor**

On the night of the performance, the audience became participants in the Forum Theatre event. It was incumbent upon the Joker as well as the actors to make a play that would incite members of the audience to come on stage to make interventions. It was important for us to hear their voices that night. After each intervention I asked the audience member if that person was getting what s/he wanted. S/he was also given the opportunity to speak to the larger audience about the aim and impact of his/her intervention. Three interventions occurred in scene one, three in scene four and one in scene five.

Out of the four audience focus group participants, two thought the audience was 'given a voice' in the Forum Theatre event. Layla explained why she decided to come on stage that night:

That night the play itself and some scenes maybe it was the first scene that I got involved with. A student in the canteen but the other students doesn't want her to sit so I feel for her at that time. So I said that I should come up. But prior to that the first scenes I know that I wanted to come up and do something but maybe I am hesitant at first but at that time I said, "No I should stand up and I should go in front and do something." The change was happening in there because I felt for

that lady and I know that I could do something when I'm in there. And in the school system it happens a lot. Maybe when we're students it happened to us. I think seeing through the lens of the actors when you are there it's very different and you're feeling what they're feeling and you're thinking what they're thinking but can you change that? I felt how strong the attitude of the character of those two persons so at first I got intimidated but still I stood up and still fought for that thing that I need to do. I know that in real life it's hard to do but we have to do the right thing even if it's hard.

Evident in Layla's testimonial are some of the reasons why she decided to offer an intervention. She had empathy for the character, she believed she could do something to improve the situation, and she believes that people are morally obligated to do the right thing, even when the situations are intimidating and conflictual. Maya, one of the actors in the play, also explained why she felt the audience was given a voice that night:

Because we do it, it's our idea. And then they bring their idea too to put it where we put our ideas and then we put it together. Like when the lady come and she replaced me and then that lady she need the girl to come in to her culture. And then another lady she decides to go in our culture. That is the idea. Like we say we will keep our culture and then they come and they need to join two cultures together. And their ideas give us ideas too.

Maya's comments are illustrative of Forum Theatre's capacity to mix the actors' fidelity to the characters with the solutions presented by the audience members. There was also evidence that space was created for diverse voices to be heard in the

audience's and the actors' statements that the play 'created awareness' about some of the participants' struggles with language barriers/no voice.

Two of the audience focus group members felt that some of the audience members did not have a voice or chose not to exercise their voices on performance night. Tanya believed seven audience interventions were inadequate. She attributed this problem to a lack of sophistication in the audience and insufficient audience preparation. She noted:

And because some of the issues are very complex it's not something that I could do spontaneously like Layla did. Like I know there should be changes but I have to kind of let it percolate and mellow a bit. So I think you've prepared your students very well to act out themes that were universal. But I think you have to prepare your audience.

Layla had the courage to go up and then when she went up it stimulates other people to think and feel braver and to go up. But I think the audience wasn't at a level of sophistication to feel comfortable going up on the stage.

A second audience member from the focus group stated that some of the audience members did not participate because the audience was not truly representative of the 'community.' Mary believed the community was artificially constructed on the performance night:

When you get that kind of perfect community where we are all together there are those communities. That was artificially constructed on the 29<sup>th</sup> but what if it was really a community where there was adults and kids who worked together all the time. There I could see anyone could jump up and get involved. And so I don't

think it only has to be just young people with young people. But I think real community theatre would be where you really do come with a sense of I am part of your, we're all together. And I don't feel that that was the case that night.

Mary's comments indicate she believes that to generate more audience engagement and to make the theatre experience more authentic, people need to be involved in a working relationship. She framed some of her subsequent comments within the context of teachers working with youth in schools as a more viable option.

Mary and Tanya cited the creation of targeted groups of audience members as a means to increase audience voice and authenticity. Tanya goes further in suggesting the usage of targeted themes with targeted groups:

But I think you could take some of those themes and use it with a special group. For example the gossiping girls, if you put that in a classroom, you had teenage girls present that and had them come up with solutions.

Mary suggested that Forum Theatre could target educational professionals at professional development conferences.

I was thinking about the opportunity to bring your work forward to one of the in-services, looking to showcase it. But there I think is a different purpose. It would be a demonstration of popular theatre or Forum Theatre that if we believe the solutions are with the young people it will help us by doing this.

Mary's comments create an interesting tension between her descriptor of the audience on July 29<sup>th</sup> as being inauthentic and her desire to have 'a demonstration' of Forum Theatre at a future professional development event. The suggestions of both of these participants argue for theatre to be "designed" by an "authority" who wishes to control

the “scripts” for pre-determined purposes. The notion of community also becomes less diverse and less reflective of the wider societal context. In effect, the theatre is produced for “special groups” which could arguably demonstrate a “missionizing” tendency in schools to “normalize” and control the messages we want certain groups to learn, which in fact is the reverse of the intent of Forum Theatre. The next section of the chapter reports the findings in relation to the research question, “What was learned about the community issue under investigation?”

### **Impact of Language Barriers/No Voice**

In all three phases of the research there were individual and collective lessons learned about the impacts of language barriers/no voice in the Arundhati School community. In part one of the research project the participants named several impacts connected to their struggles with language barriers/no voice. These impacts are listed in the words of the participants in Figures 4.1 to 4.5. A deeper analysis of the impacts of language barriers/no voice was evident in the theatre workshops and throughout the play creation. During the workshops and in the play creation process, racism and social isolation were named as the most profound consequences of language barriers/no voice. While the participants engaged in the theatre activities and discussions, they generated strategies to more effectively engage in their personal and collective struggles with language barriers/no voice. Evident in the critical reflections were lessons learned about the way power disrupts or maintains racism and social isolation.

### **Racism**

The participants made multiple references to their personal experiences with racism. As participants reflected on these incidents during the workshops and throughout the play creation process, many indicated that when they had difficulty

speaking English they became visible targets for racist behavior. In his interview, Barak talked about an encounter he had with an angry customer two years ago:

I used to drive a taxi a while ago and there are some people who can just walk to you and say whatever they want to say.

His character tells me of how things and people sometimes get really... and they can make life very hard for some other people. Ya, cause I know that one day a guy, I don't know why he was just mad with me. And he just came and walked up to me and he said, "You!" and all this "N words" and wow this is not good. I just went to myself and said, "You know what? This is how it is."

Maya said her daughter came home crying every day from school. During the workshop on Thursday she described a terrible incident that occurred between her daughter and a man on the playground:

My child was climbing outside. The man is asking my child, "Are you a monkey? Are you a monkey? You climb like a monkey."

My child she ask me, "Mom what is a monkey? What is this man say?"

I say that I will tell her what a monkey is in grade four because she don't know what monkey is. (Maya starts to cry)

Then... we went for a tour of the Assiniboine Park. We is walking by the monkeys and she said, "Mom this is monkey? This is animal. I am not animal."

Several of the participants nodded in affirmation as Maya shared the story. As she finished her story Maya shook her head and repeated the phrase, "I don't know," until her voice became a whisper.

Later in his interview Barak moved from wondering why the customer might be mad at him to locating the deficit in the man who shouted the racist slurs:

He just want to maybe...he finds it a way of making himself happy by hurting some other people maybe.

There were a number of other instances in the workshops when participants deconstructed the root cause of some of their experiences as racism. Four of the young women in the workshop told stories about how their hijabs and 'accents' were referenced in racist verbal attacks. They said a "lack of intelligence" was a root cause of racist remarks. All of the participants who wore hijabs were asked if they were terrorists on multiple occasions. Sabina said this type of racist language was the reason she transferred from the first school she attended in Canada to her new school.

Some of the strategies the participants used to deal with racism included using physical force. Zeeni said she often had to physically fight her verbal attackers in order for the racist comments to subside. Three other participants said they also had to fight at school in order to make the racist comments stop. Another strategy some of participants used to deal with racist behavior was humor. Farrah explained:

At my other school they sometimes call me a terrorist. But then I play along and say, "Just shut up then or I will bomb you!"

I use humor until I make them look so stupid until they stop talking. It usually works.

Maya used affirmations and her faith as a way to deal with racism at school. After many of her stories, Maya told the rest of the participants they should use their faith to "rise above" the comments of the racist:

One kid asked my daughter if she take a shower because of her skin colour. I told my daughter to tell that kid that God gave her that skin colour.

Mary, one of the audience focus groups participants, cited Forum Theatre as a strategy that could be used to address racism in the community. However her comments also referenced how power could potentially be used destructively by an audience member who came on stage to make an intervention:

We can't ignore there is a mainstream. There is a dominant and there's people struggling against that to change. So I guess you could leave yourself open to having some, even well meaning... Sort of the whiteness, the whiteness is there. And so someone could get up and it could be fairly damaging because even your skills... I wondered even with your skills if you got somebody up there who had some crazy way of introducing kids in to a classroom but who thought it really was going to work, and that was up there. I know that you have lots of skills but it may even surmount your...so I guess there's that piece. How can you ignore that there is dominance that there is power relations that need to be changed and then invite...It's like inviting the oppressor to play with the oppressed and hope they'll play nice just because you've got forum theatre going on.

In her comments Mary places the responsibility for managing the actors' and audience's reaction to potentially racist interventions squarely in the hands of the Joker. She asks, "How can you ignore that there is power relations?" The content of her question reveals it is impossible to ignore the power relations. She also assumes that the expectation of the Joker is that people should "play nice," as the participants confront power relations that reinforce systemic racism. Racism divides people into 'us and them' categories.

Those categories also create social isolation which was another intense impact felt by those who struggled to overcome language barriers/no voice in the Arundhati School community.

### **Social Isolation**

All but two of the participants who were interviewed after the workshops referenced how language barriers/no voice led to the social isolation in many locations in their lives. The social isolation was most acutely felt in school. Ali described the isolation felt by many former refugee youth in his school through one of the workshops images:

This kid looks like he is supposed to come from Africa and the other kids in the class they didn't want him to come with them. They didn't want to talk with him.

They think that he didn't shower or something. He can't speak English so he sat all alone by himself. I think he was crying or he wanted to cry just because he cannot talk with other people.

Ali conveys the emotional toll experienced by those in the community who are socially isolated by language barriers.

As previously stated I used the photographs from the workshops in the photo-elicitation interviews. There were 202 photographs taken by 5 different volunteer photographers during the 5 day workshop. To protect the anonymity of the participants I did not include any workshop photographs in my research document. However I am disconcerted by the subordination of the visual arts to the written word in the description of the findings. To trouble this I created some 'images of images' of the major themes cited in the interviews. I used manikins and shaped them to recreate some of the workshop photographs.

In the recreated images I tried to account for the proximity between the actors, the body positions of the actors, as well as the angle and proximity of the photographer who took the actual photographs. The larger manikins were assigned to the adults in the images and the smaller manikins were positioned as youth participants. However the 'images of the images' are problematic because they are expressionless. Much of the emotional content of the image existed in the faces of the participants. Figure 4.7 is representative of many of the Images of isolation offered during the workshops.

**Figure 4.7 Alone in the Presence of Others**



During the audience focus group, Chiri referenced a personal family experience. She believed her language barriers and her daughter's language barriers prevented her from challenging inappropriate school assessments, understanding her rights as a parent, and the acquisition of crucial academic and social supports for her daughter.

She can't even keep up with other kids because she came when she was 12.

She has to place to grade 8 when she is not even equal to by grade 2. Then this is so much gap for her. She has to go sit down and then for special education right when she is grade 8. Because she is not sitting down and she doesn't hear anything. She doesn't really have that knowledge when she's grade 8. So completely that's the case for her. And I also don't know what to do. There was

no any tools for parents and plus of course education when they go to the school sometimes there is some. But I don't think real Canadian who grows in here and lives in here understanding the immigration the immigrants come through in here. These 20 years I am living in the suburb area and I am alone and not still integrated but I am alone.

Chiri's daughter's isolation in special education and her own personal isolation at home when her daughter ran away from home are connected to the dance scene in *Silos of Silence*. In the dance scene seven of the actors artfully dance to communicate what it feels like to be alone in the world as one's child pulls away from the family, culture and language, assimilating with the dominant culture to the extent that the parent culture is minimized, if not overtly resented.

Figure 4.8 is an image of an image Nalin sculpted to communicate his feelings as he struggled with language barriers/no voice in the community:

He's not angry. He's not bitter but he is displaying that he has something to say. He needs to be heard and he feels like people have sealed his lips or something. He is kind of showing passion even you might say he is struggling and he wants to come through and be heard, to be seen. He doesn't want any more to be invisible in the society.

**Figure 4.8 Here I Am**



Several of the other participants referenced positive ways to become 'more visible' in order to overcome language barriers in social situations. Many of the youth participants named the theatre workshop games or exercises as a means to connect with others in a school community. Naw Kay talked about the theatre work as a way for people to be themselves:

It help us not to be shy and act. You don't have to act like other people. You have to act like how you feel which is good.

Rajul saw the theatre exercises and games as tools to build community in the workshop space. He noted the capacity of the theatre work to overcome barriers to understanding:

So it was really fun and good because there were lots of fun practices you choose. They were actually making people together and making a connection between all of the persons. Maybe they wasn't understanding what was going on they are just becoming familiar with each other. But those exercises were the key to making them together.

Himmat echoed Rajul's comments about the theatre's capacity to connect people and their stories amidst brutal displacements of entire villages. In Himmat's interview he discussed his experiences using theatre to communicate 'lost histories' with those he lived with in the refugee camps in Nepal:

The small kids they don't know what happened in Bhutan. They know Nepal but...But they don't know the story about Bhutan. If we play the drama they will know something about Bhutan.

After we completed the theatre exercise called, How Do We Get There from Here? The participants generated several other strategies besides theatre to help them overcome language barriers in social situations. Some of the strategies included: practice talking to safe people, use non-verbal communication, learn sign language, join clubs in the community, engage in sports, take music or other classes that do not depend so much on the English language, and use humor.

Some of the power relations embedded in social isolation emerged as participants referenced moments when they bullied others in order to hold on to fragile friendships. Figure 4.9 is an image of an image that was created during the workshop. It elicited a discussion about why victims sometimes deal with their pain by victimizing others who are vulnerable.

**Figure 4.9 The Anti-circle of Care**



Rajul described the phenomena in this way:

So here you can see what happened mostly when people see a newcomer, they start to make other things for a laugh. It really happens everywhere. But when you see someone is exactly in the basement, she doesn't know what to choose. She will choose where there is the most people because she wants to get the most she can to have a friend.

In several of the interviews participants compared their first friend in Canada to a language and social lifeline. Rajul compared not having a friend in school to being in the basement.

The next section of the chapter shares the findings in relation to the research question, "What meaning/s do the participants make of the Image Theatre exercises, the development of the play and the interventions offered by the audience?"

### **Making Meaning**

In this section I detail the findings related to the participants' critical reflections on the theatre work that have not already been discussed. The themes related to these findings include those of agency and resistance.

## Agency

Agency for the purposes of this research project is defined to be the power gained and asserted by a human being in order to act in the world. Roya said her experiences in the theatre workshop made her feel more confident and worthy. She practiced talking with other people she did not know and she traveled to and from the workshops unaccompanied which was a first for her. Roya describes her new found agency in the following passage:

I want to learn more and go to university be with someone with other people. In my community and in other communities people say, "Your sister is so good, she is intelligent, she is smart, she is going to University of Manitoba and you are sitting at home. It's not good you have to go and do something in your life."

I feel like, oh no I can't do it you know. I'm not enough I'm not smart. But now I will just try. I will like, k, I'm going to apply to university and try and if they will give me a chance then I will keep going in my studies, finish and be something. And in my future like no one else will tell me you're not enough, you can't do it.

I can do it.

Similar to Roya, Nalin felt he had acquired more confidence through his participation in the theatre workshops. During one of the lunch breaks, he giggled as he described the sense that he was a Lotus flower in the process of opening to the world:

I think that I was a self-proclaimed or at least I was self-labeling myself and I was selling myself short that I'm a very shy person. So maybe I will try to break this shell because sometimes maybe I'm not getting what I deserve because of my shyness? And maybe I'm not sometimes reaching out to somebody new because

of my shyness. Both ways if I am more, you know open and more relaxed then maybe I can serve our community, our society and our world, generally the citizenry in a better way. I should be more proactive and humble and kind and I should transpire and I should communicate it.

Like his metaphor of the Lotus flower in bloom the analysis he provides of himself is 'in bloom.' Self-labeling or more specifically the label of being 'shy,' is referred to in the past tense. He wonders aloud whether he will be able to 'break the shell' in the future.

Maya described the theatre work as an opportunity to build her capacity as an advocate for all of her children in the school system. She said she would feel more comfortable asking questions in the school and talking with the teachers:

But then when I come here it showed me everything and I love it. Now I learn about the school, and when my kids go to school, or grade 7, grade 8, and I know when they go there what is going to happen. From nursery to grade 6 I am going to know what happens to them. That's what I learned I learned the different things in school.

During the focus group with the actors Maya also referenced her role as the school principal in the play and how impressed her children were that she played that particular role. One of her daughters said:

Wow mom, you are the boss in the school. Wow, wow.

The theatre is a dichotomic space in that it is a space within a space. So in this context Maya inferred she was able to develop her agency as she tried on the role of the formal leader in the school. She also suggested during one of the rehearsals that this experience was supporting the reassertion of her leadership in the family.

Thirty of the participants demonstrated 'agency' when they created and performed in a play about the community's struggles with language barriers/no voice. Zeeni described her agency in a reference to what she learned by acting in the Silos of Silence play:

I learned a lot about myself and about a lot of other people. And kind of like I'm more to who I am going to become when I grow up. So like in the gossip scene, like I said before don't be afraid to stick up for yourself you know? And I think that really stuck to me. So I think that's going to be one of the parts that's going to make me who I am.

Zeeni took the mistakes made by her character, analyzed them, and as a consequence articulated a new way of acting in the world.

Barak believed the workshop participants developed 'collective agency.' This feeling was echoed by several other workshop participants. He described the potential in all of the participants to use their new found knowledge and theatrical skills to make their community stronger:

We just are going to be finished on the 29<sup>th</sup>. Still these 30 people will still be together. Like they can still maybe meet somewhere and share the same stories and maybe pass the same stories, maybe pass their experiences to some other people, how they spent all this week here. So it has an impact. It has an impact on the people and the society. It is something great. Something big.

Many of the participants talked about the theatre exercises and the games as an opportunity to try out different ways of being in the world. They reflected on multiple ways of 'acting' that could assist or hinder them in their pursuit of individual and

community oriented goals. The participants demonstrated and talked about agency while they deconstructed and participated in the theatre work. Resistance was also an important theme embedded in the meanings given to the Images and the Forum Theatre play. The next section explores the meanings given to Image Theatre work and the play in relation to resistance.

## **Resistance**

When we 'resist' we try to stop something from happening with our actions or with convincing arguments. The image of the yellow manikin in Figure 4.10 reappeared over and over again in the workshop Images. Eight out of 12 of the interviewees referenced a shape like this one in their interviews. Farrah looked at a photo that included an Image with a similar shape and said,

It looks like Ellie is trying to stop. Well you can't see the bottom it looks like someone is lying down. But Ellie is trying to stop Sabina this girl from bullying the girl on the floor.

**Figure 4.10 Stop!**



Barak and Roya used the actual photograph of the Image represented in Figure 4.10 in their interviews. They also connected resistance to the Image Theatre work. Barak said:

One seems to be hurt really and then one of the characters is also trying to stop something from happening and the other character was standing. I think he is pointing at something or threatening something one of these kids here. So that what's happening here.

Using the same photograph during her interview Roya explained:

I see like he's trying to stop people. I know his hand is like he is not enough. But like everyone is picking on him. So he was trying to like say, "Stop! That's enough! I can do whatever I want. And I will learn to be a better person. So stop."

Roya locates the resistance in the hands of the 'oppressed' figure while Barak locates the resistance in the hands of the 'ally to the oppressed.' One of the audience members saw a similar resistance enacted live on stage as some of the characters in *Silos of Silence* resisted the oppression exerted by systemic racism. Mary observed,

They were actually being able to sort of act that out to show that was wrong. That poor behavior that racist and unacceptable behavior. So to me their level of consciousness as the actors was really a key piece that I saw that I'm not so certain was... There seemed to be an understanding of that this was wrong and here's how we can act it out but we're going to change this.

All of the participants who discussed or 'acted out' resistance said how difficult it was to resist in the face of pressure to conform. Layla described feeling this pressure as she deliberated about making an intervention:

I felt how strong the attitude of the character of those two persons. So at first I got intimidated but still I stood up and still fought for that thing that I need to do.

One of the most beautiful moments of resistance occurred during the Tuesday theatre workshop. During the morning exercise Magnetic Image four of the participants were invited to offer an Image of one of their own personal struggles with language barriers/no voice. Ellie was the last person to offer an Image. She chose to dance in place and she refused to freeze the Image. This incited a variety of reactions from the rest of the participants. Some of the youth participants laughed and two of the adult participants kept whispering, "Stop Ellie, you're not supposed to move." These audible reactions of disapproval lasted for about three minutes as Ellie danced.

The next step in Magnetic Image is for the rest of the participants to select one of the four Images on stage that most closely resonates with their own struggle. Ellie danced. The next step in the process asked the participants to go to that Image and make the same frozen Image. Two of participants elected to join Ellie and they too began to dance. The new dancers incited a resurgence of disapproving comments. As more caustic whispers were uttered the dancers danced bigger and more flamboyantly.

After five minutes I asked everyone to shake out of their Images and join me in a circle. I asked the participants to help me understand the reaction to Ellie's dancing. Before I even finished the question, one of the participants burst out:

But you said frozen! Dancing is not frozen!

Another participant yelled:

When she dances, she smiles! That doesn't make sense.

Several of the participants seemed to resent that Ellie 'dismissed' my instructions and others were frustrated that Ellie smiled inside of the struggle. The dance was an ironic reminder that within this aesthetic and creative space the group had already begun to construct strict rules and norms for permissible behaviour.

Ellie`s dance provoked one of the richest discussions in the workshops. It was also a moment of resistance. One of the participants who danced with Ellie said,

I think to dance is showing bravery and courage. She is brave. Dancing is a kind of language and some people don't understand this language.

After lunch we continued with the Magnetic Image exercise. The task given to the group was to come up with a new Image that reflected their collective struggles with language barriers/no voice. Ellie was not present for the afternoon session because she was at a doctor's appointment. The two participants who joined her group looked lost as they attempted to build a new Image. There were several sighs and at one point they just sat down on the ground. A participant from one of the other groups walked by and asked them why they were sitting and not working. The question appeared to move them off the ground and all three began to dance together. Over the next three minutes, one by one, all but three of the remaining participants joined a large circle. They danced, yelled, sang and clapped. When the dancers became exhausted the circle dissolved and the participants moved back to their original groups to finish the exercise.

I was highly curious about what the impact of the dance was on Ellie and the rest of the participants. Ali referred to the dance in his interview:

Like I'm 50 and I've never danced in front of people but I feel myself the other day, I'm doing it. And there's lots of fun. I spend most of my days between books

and numbers in math and design. I missed that fun part. I wish I was 20 now and I could start again and do something not practical like what I used to do. And the reason that in my life I wasn't able to get involved in this is because back home when you do scientific things you are way far from the arts and this kind of stuff. Even they are in different cities. They put them, engineering in here and the language and arts in the other sides so you never get contact with them. They don't! And I don't know what they do. But I know that they love the things that they do. But I didn't know why they love it. Now I do.

Ellie's dance opened up a new world for Ali and it also inspired a scene in *Silos of Silence*. The scene was recalled as 'the most powerful scene in the play' by a number of the audience members who spoke with me after the show. It also provoked three audience interventions on the night of the performance. Ellie talked about dance with the assistance of a Swahili interpreter in the actor focus group. The interpreter said,

So for her she is saying the acting, this is what I'm getting. She said in acting although there is sad parts but they also have happy moments. So in her life too when she was dancing, it was a way of, there was sadness but also there was dancing. And that meant..."furaha." ("happy/happiness")

There were a number of Images in the workshops and scenes in the *Silos of Silence* play that provoked discussion or acts of resistance. The participants often used the words 'fear', 'furaha/happiness', 'courage', 'bravery', 'help', 'Stop!', 'work', 'enough', 'hard,' 'right' and 'wrong' when they reflected on moments of resistance.

The previous section reported the findings of the research related to three research questions. The first research question dealt with in this section was, "Can a

theatrical commons create space for diverse voices to be heard in a school community?” The findings suggest space for diverse voices was created through the following ways; opportunities were given to name community problems, the Image theatre exercises broke through language and social barriers, the Images and the Forum play elicited multiple interpretations, the community struggles were scripted, and some of the audience members became spect-actors. The second research question addressed in this section was, “What is learned about the community issue under investigation?” The findings suggest the participants deepened their understanding/s about the connections between language barriers/no voice, racism and social isolation. The final research question addressed in this section was, “What meaning/s do the participants give to the Image Theatre exercises, the play and the interventions offered by the audience?” The findings suggest the participants in their words and actions emphasized resistance and agency as they deconstructed the theatre work. The next section illustrates the existence of four theatrical tensions in the study. A heuristic is presented that may provide a useful lens for readers of this research to deconstruct this study and future research projects that apply a similar methodology.

### **Act Three: Critical Theatre Tensions**

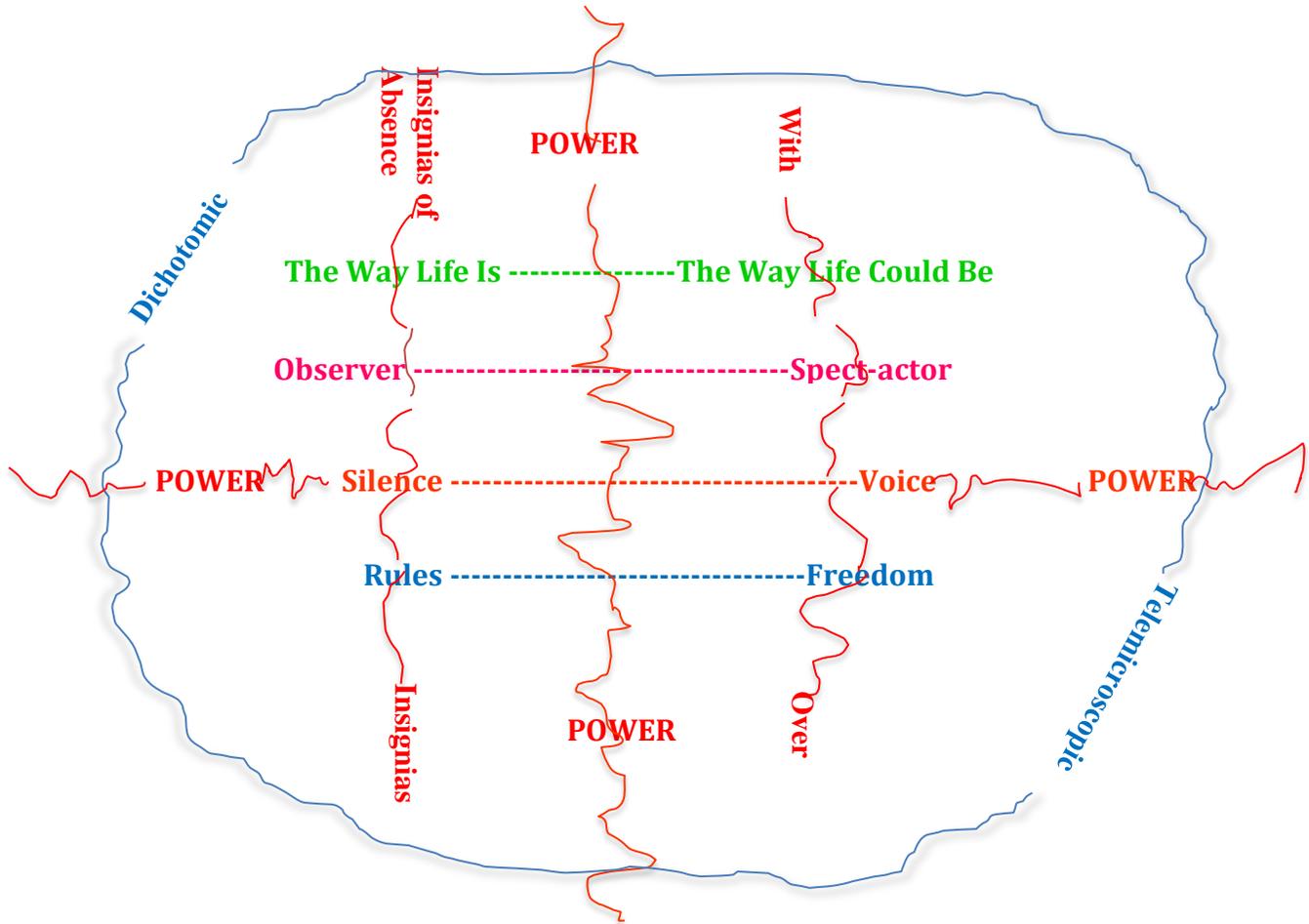
This inquiry aimed to assess the impact of a theatrical commons in one school community. To be reflexive in a way that respected the methodological choices and the philosophical tenets underpinning the work, a heuristic device was created and used to trouble the findings and discussion. The heuristic is grounded in the theatrical imaginations of Augusto Boal, David Diamond and the critical theorists cited in Chapter

Two. This next section provides an explanation of the heuristic called Critical Theatrical Tensions. The tensions are highlighted using this symbol  .

In every space within the commons there are remarkable tensions that are diminished or exacerbated by the power relations in a given community. These power relations are not static  and can be made visible in a theatrical setting. The tensions are accentuated by the capacity of the theatre to be both dichotomic and telemicroscopic at the same time (Boal, 1995). The following explanation of the components of the heuristic in Figure 4.4 will hopefully provide a useful lens to critique this project and future research projects that utilize a similar methodology. These a priori assumptions trouble the strengths and weaknesses that emerged throughout the construction of a theatrical commons that aimed to create an aesthetic space for members of a community to analyze and address a community problem.

The outer ring of the figure symbolizes the intentional cycle in Forum or Image Theatre work to deeply explore the personal and the universal simultaneously. The dichotomic capacity of Forum and Image Theatre creates a, “space within a space,” (Boal, 1995, p. 23). The audience is able to occupy the theatre space while at the same time be in the classroom for the introduction of the new students at Arundhati School, (Silos of Silence, 2011). In the Images and by examining the decisions made by the actors, audiences can see themselves reflected in the metaphors on stage. In the Forum, individuals are able to hear their struggles manifested in the living scripts spoken by the actors.

**Figure 4.11 Critical Theatrical Tensions**



The intricacies of the personal testimonials as well as the noticeable patterns evident in the Images and the Forum provoke critical reflection and reveal the complexities in specific problems that have universal significance. The powerful dance in a dichotomic space is first experienced through the adoption of an individual's Image by his or her workshop community. The lived experience of the individual actor's struggle is honored within the physical shape while the metaphorical significance of the Image belongs to the group. Through a person's specific struggle it becomes possible to discuss and debate what it means to live a good life.

The theatre can also be telemicroscopic in that it magnifies the issue and makes everything present. It brings what is far away near and constructs a space where human behavior can be studied up close (Boal, p. 27, 1995). The physical distance between two actors in an Image or a scene can reveal important things about the relationships between characters engaged in a struggle. A prop in a Forum play can be analyzed as an insignia of power. The character who plays an ambitious corporate executive who never puts her Blackberry down may beg the audience to consider some of the following questions: What are the Blackberries in our lives? Who are the Blackberries in our lives? What forces are at work in our community that make it so difficult for us to put our Blackberries down?

Power continuously moves through a theatrical space to reveal tensions and magnify particular power relations between people and systems. Images of actors, the proximity between the actors' bodies, props, sets and the actors' locations on stage expose power insignias and images of absence in a theatrical commons (Boal, 2006). Insignias of power are the symbols in the theatre and in our communities that identify the possessors of the insignias as persons who are elevated above others in the commons. Insignias of power reify the possessors' power and status. A CEO's diamond ring reveals that he is 'worth more' in a given social ecosystem (Boal, 2006, p. 31). The stage also magnifies images of absence (Boal, 2006). Images of absence turn human beings into power ciphers. Bare hands are relegated to serve within the ideological prisons of a neoliberal doctrine. The theatre is a sacred space within a community that can assist community members in the deconstruction of the powerful forces that impact their lives.

In the theatre the audience and the actors can observe when power is used with others or over others. Power relations in Image and Forum Theatre are organic and it becomes possible to trace how power moves between individuals and groups. And because the theatre is a space within a space, the audience is given the opportunity to come on stage to obstruct, modify, or invigorate the power relations in a given social setting. Power is a key component of analysis because it is the energy that maneuvers theatrical tensions.

### **Critical Theatrical Tensions**

Critical tensions in the theatre are essential and ethically charged by the actors' desires to manifest a more socially just world. As stated in chapter one, I believe schools should be places where children and adults analyze the world as it is and imagine a better one. The first theatrical tension exists between *The Way Life Is* and *The Way Life Could Be*. In Image Theatre, participants construct living photographs of individual and collective struggles. In the Image the actors are able to see the world as it is in a given time and in a particular place. A Forum play also stages stories that tell the truth about the lived experiences of the actors who live in a particular time and place. Animating Images and interventions in a Forum play can create opportunities for actors and audience members to imagine alternative ways to solve complex community problems in the pursuit of a better world. An investigation of this tension may offer rich complex descriptions of community struggles and alternative visions of a more equitable and just world.

The second theatrical tension lives between the role of the Observer and the Spect-actor (Boal, 1995). When we are observers we can see the world and its

struggles but we are not actively engaged in the struggle. The Spect-actor changes a scene or an image on stage and through this change becomes an active participant in solving the community challenge. He or she can leave the audience and physically and emotionally become an actor in the play (Boal, 1995). The exploration of this tension can provoke the examination of the circumstances in which observers become actors and actors become observers in the theatre and in the larger community. What are the reasons why people remain observers? What forces are at work to keep people immobilized?

The critical theatrical tension between Silence and Voice illuminate the moments where individuals and communities voice their concerns and speak their own truths in the face of oppression. In the theatre we discover who is silenced, why they are silenced and the consequences of the silence (Boal, 1995). Voices of power are analyzed in terms of who speaks, for how long, and what they speak about in the play. This tension provokes people to raise their voices and analyze why it is that people become silenced in a variety of circumstances both inside and outside the theatre.

Finally there exists another tension between the Rules and Freedom in the theatre. When do people follow societal rules and norms and when are people liberated from social expectations? The theatre allows us to see what novel ideas are born when people refuse to cooperatively dance and what chaos ensues when people are in a perpetual state of creation and novelty. The tensions between the rules and freedom are rich with possibilities for social change. There are a myriad of moments in the Image and Forum Theatre creation process where actors and spect-actors manifest stringent societal norms and other unbridled moments where novelty and freedom present as

solutions for complex challenges. An exploration of this tension may unsettle beliefs about what unites and divides human beings in a given ecosystem.

I chose to discuss each tension in reference to the experiences of one of the participants in order to think about the tensions as a reflective embodiment of one person's experience. This decision resonates strongly with my belief that universal significance in the theatre is born out of specific stories. The negative impact of exploring the tensions through one participant's experience is that it may privilege one participant's voice over others and his experience will not reflect the experiences of all the other participants. Jabir's experiences are representative of most of the other participants' challenges in the following ways: he lived in a war affected area prior to coming to Canada; his prior schooling experiences were interrupted; and he experienced many language/no voice barriers in his new Canadian school. I selected the participant using the following criteria: (1) The participant was involved in all three phases of the research; (2) The participant was interviewed after the workshops; (3). The participant was involved in the actors' focus group after the performance of the play, and (4) The participant was not quoted in the previous sections of the paper at all or was quoted less than all the other participants who fit the above mentioned criteria.

The participant who I traced through the tensions is Jabir. Jabir is a 14 year old male. He was born in South Sudan and he came to Canada as a refugee almost four years ago:

I was walking in the areas and I found the houses all empty. Some of them don't have doors and I said these people are just gone like magic now. I didn't know what happened to them I was worried for them.

The Sudanese people that lived in the refugee camp where I used to live, they were there for 10 years some of them 11, some of them 12. So they stayed there for 12 years. They ran from their country they were refugees and when there was peace in Sudan they had to go back. But they don't know if it's safe cause the bombs are still under the ground. And the United Nations was trying very hard to get rid of the bombs and getting professional people to come in a get rid of the bombs. My uncle was also working, trying to you know, save these people from getting injured or lose their lives. So I was also helping cause every time I'm out there I'm trying to help do something or make a difference

Jabir is bright, thoughtful and a person who wants to “do something and make a difference.” He lives with his mother and two brothers in a small apartment in the inner city. He describes himself as a student leader who is “good at drumming and making things happen.” He says that he has trouble dealing with his emotions and said the theatre:

was almost like taking an anger management class, cause I grew up in a place where I can't control my anger.

He attended 80% of the workshops and he played a central character in the final scene of *Silos of Silence*. The next section discusses some of Jabir's experiences in the study through the lens of four Critical Theatrical Tensions. The first tension referenced is the tension between Silence and Voice. It revealed itself through Jabir's participation in the meeting on June 18<sup>th</sup> to determine the issue that would inform the workshop and play.

## Silence Voice

As I moved about the meeting room I made several observations about which participants spoke and which participants were silent. Four out of the five groups seemed to have created enough space for the members who wanted to speak to voice their concerns. The discussion in group two, Jabir's group, was quite different. Jabir expressed he was frustrated that his group decided that drugs were a problem in the school community. He felt his ideas were not being taken seriously. When one looks at the poster from group two in Figure 4.2, one can see that no other issues are listed on the poster. Whatever his initial ideas were, they were silenced at this stage of the process. Group two had decided that if four out of five participants believed drugs was the most important issue than all other problems could not or should not be listed on the poster. It also called into question Jabir's membership in the group. This was contrary to the instructions I provided at the outset of the meeting.

Jabir seethed in silence until the large group voting process. As the participants voted, the manner in which their votes were cast became more and more theatrical. For example several participants jumped up and down or cheered after they voted. Three of the participants danced between posters which incited table pounding, clapping and laughter. Jabir walked past his group's poster and yelled:

You see that! I put my checks another way. Can't keep me down. Can't lock me down!

Jabir used his two check marks to raise his voice and ‘unlock’ himself from the oppressive silence imposed by his group. The next tension traced through Jabir’s experience in the workshops and the play is the tension between Observer and Spect-actor.

### **Observer Spect-actor**

During his interview, Jabir described how people who want to help others sometimes leave damage in their wake if they push too hard or too fast. As he reflected on his scene in *Silos of Silence* he situated the helper and himself within the tension:

When you watch something like this you see that if you try to run in to something and fix it, it’s not going to work. But if you talk and get closer and then maybe add another step, and then add another step, maybe go tap them on the shoulder. I don’t know whatever it is you know. You start from the lower level and go up. I think that explains that. That’s how you need to face the problem.

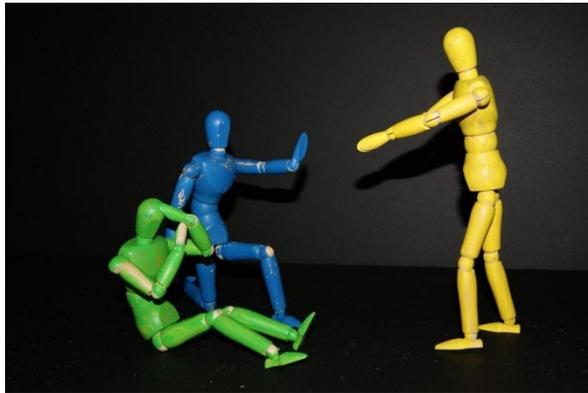
Jabir described a way to move from the position of observer to spect-actor in a way that respects the people impacted by the problem and the complexity of the problem. There is a time to observe and a time to act, and often multiple steps in between. He was able to describe the movement within this tension. The third tension explored through Jabir’s experience in the study is the tension between The Way Life Is and The Way Life Could Be.

### **The Way Life Is The Way Life Could Be**

To trace Jabir’s experience in the theatre inside the tension between The Way Life Is and The Way Life Could Be, I examined all of the photographs from the workshop that included Jabir. I created a new Image that represented the three main

Images offered by Jabir during the workshop. A 'summary' of the shapes he frequently offered are reflected in the green, blue and yellow manikins in Figure 4.11.

**Figure 4.12 Are You Gonna Do This Or What?**



In his interview Jabir discussed what the audience may have learned from his performance. He also commented on the way power moves through this tension as he described the potential impact of the scene:

Even I was in the play right, it showed me that in real life this does happen and in real life people do have powers and then they're down, somebody else has the power and then you're back down there. You can't do anything but you wish you had the power. Or you wish it never happened. It makes you... Let's say we did the play outside where the crime was happening and we showed them what would happen before it happens. I don't think they would even go there. They would not even start or anything. So ya it explains more about the life where it could be at.

And it also helps the community become safe cause when you see that you'd be like maybe somebody's planning to do something you don't know. They come to the theatre they watch you. Maybe they were planning... They could be lucky cause they're carrying a gun and they got the power and then at the end of the

play they see I'm the one in danger. The guy with the gun is now trying to run for his life. So they're going to be like so, what's going to happen to me? You know never mind, they're going to change their mind. Or somebody was trying to make their life better in there. Maybe somebody in there was trying to make their life better in there.

Jabir's reflections are indicative of the tension embedded in theatrical space as members of a community analyze the way life is and the way life could be. The final theatrical tension examined through Jabir's experience is the tension between Rules and Freedom.

### **Rules Freedom**

The workshops took place in a private space in a public library. There were conflicts between the security guards, special services, and a few of the youth participants. After rehearsal on July 18th, 2011, the head of Special Services spoke with me. I wrote about our conversation in my journal. She began with:

The security guards complained all last week about your kids.

Thankfully there were no complaints about the group on Saturday!

I responded,

On Saturday? Do you mean the adults from a different program who participate in an EAL conversation class?

She was silent for a minute and then she said,

Security has been more than patient with you and this group.

I replied,

Yes there were some minor instances, running on Monday and jumping in the elevator, and once someone screamed – and I addressed those things. But I've also witnessed security approaching some of the youth with disrespect.

I informed her that one of the security guards entered the workshop space last week (even though the door was closed) and admonished Jabir for sitting on a table.

Her response was,

Some of the security guards have more people skills than others but it is common sense not to put your feet on a table because the legs are fragile. And it's common sense to not sit on a table because the legs will break. These things do happen and things do break you know. We can't put everything people shouldn't do on paper. The list would be infinite.

The head of library services seemed grateful that I had finally realized I had no common sense. Later I spoke with Jabir about my conversation with the head of Special Services. He smiled.

After our last rehearsal I had to run to the photocopier on the second floor and make a copy of some directions to the Ellice Café Theatre for two of the actors. When I returned to the rehearsal space, all of the tables had been placed in new positions. Some were set on their sides, others were balanced on chairs and some were upside down. Jabir had challenged the rules that governed the usage of tables in the library and how those rules were enforced. I smiled.

## **Summary**

Chapter four began with a description of the participants and the Arundhati school community. A substantial part of the chapter articulated the findings in relation to the three research questions. The chapter ended with an explanation of four theatrical tensions inherent within the data and the lived experiences of the participants. The next chapter concludes the study. It begins with a discussion of three themes that were derived out of the findings as they related to the research questions and literature. An examination of the Critical Theatrical Tensions theoretical frame work is provided and recommendations for practice are included. The chapter ends with recommendations for further research.

## **CHAPTER 5**

### **SUMMARY, DISCUSSION AND RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FURTHER RESEARCH AND PRACTICE**

This study attempted to create an aesthetic space within the research process where very diverse actors in a community could engage one another about important community problems. There is little research on the use of Image Theatre or Forum Theatre as strategies for community development. I was also unable to find any studies that utilized Image or Forum Theatre principles and practices as a part of the planning and reflection process at any level of the public school system in Manitoba. Some of the lessons learned in the study may provide support for the introduction of alternative ways in Manitoba for school communities to link their promises and practices to the pursuit of more joyful, peaceful and democratic communities.

Chapter five discusses three themes that were derived out of the findings as they related to the research questions and literature: (1) the potential of Image and Forum Theatre to connect public education to the pursuit of democratic community; (2) using Image and Forum Theatre to inform system planning and reflection, and; (3) the value of a theatrical commons for creating space for marginalized voices to influence decision-making. The themes are designed to take what was learned in the study and articulate it through the philosophical underpinnings of the study's methodology. My aim is to take what was learned in this small study and magnify it within the larger Manitoba educational landscape. An examination of the Critical Theatrical Tensions theoretical frame work is detailed, and the chapter ends with recommendations for practice and further research.

This participatory action research project drew heavily on the theatrical imaginations of Augusto Boal and David Diamond. The aims of this work were grounded in critical theory. The study was divided into three phases: the participants' identification of a community problem that was of great importance to them (phase 1); a workshop series that sought to explore the tensions and complexities embedded in the community dilemma (phase 2), and a performance by the participants in a Forum Theatre event (phase 3) that invited members of a school community to imagine new possibilities for addressing the issue of language barriers/no voice in the Arundhati school community. Participants reflected critically on the ability of Image and Forum Theatre to ignite critical dialogue in a diverse school community. The study took place over a four month period from June 2011 to September 2011.

### **The Potential of Image and Forum Theatre to Connect Public Education to the Pursuit of Transformative Democracy**

This section considers the potential of Image and Forum Theatre to connect the aims, method and matter of public education to the pursuit of more joyful, peaceful and democratic communities.

#### **Aims**

Above the office door in most Manitoba schools and division offices one is likely to find a mission statement that contains the phrase, 'lifelong learning.' This vacuous phrase mimics other consumption practices in North American society that have no definitive end in mind. Students are prodded to become consumers of information in order to be prepared to participate in a 'knowledge driven economy.' I believe the narrow focus on 'student success' and all its promises for social mobility leave some of

the words in school and division missions like 'sustainable,' 'social justice,' and 'democratic' anchorless. Manitoba Education declares its mission to be:

To ensure that all Manitoba's children and youth have access to an array of educational opportunities such that every learner experiences success through relevant, engaging and high quality education that prepares them for lifelong learning and citizenship in a democratic, socially just and sustainable society, (<http://www.edu.gov.mb.ca/edu/mandate.html>).

Noble words like 'justice' and 'democracy' are glittery promises that someone in the public school ecosystem, *hopefully the grade 9 Social Studies teacher next door*, will be an architect who reorients the students to fulfill these promises. There is a noticeable gap between our professed hopes for our communities and the daily activities of the school, most of which are narrowly focused on the mastery of discrete pieces of information called curricula doled out to increase the social mobility of individual learners. What is missing from many mission statements is the declaration that schools create 'publics.' This means what is learned in school is deeply connected to community renewal as well as to community problems. Manitoba schools require a large scale reorientation towards the pursuits of justice, democracy and sustainability, and these pursuits should be deeply connected to the daily work that happens in Manitoba classrooms.

This study created an aesthetic space that focused on one of the major issues impeding the realization of justice, democracy and sustainability - the issue of language barriers/no voice. The participants worked together to actively solve some of the problems related to their individual and collective struggles because language barriers

in the Arundhati school community are not 'theoretical,' but are part of the every-day, unexamined lived realities of people within that community. The findings suggest that Image and Forum Theatre can deepen the connections between the aims of schooling and the creation of more peaceful, joyful, democratic communities. The study troubled the hegemony of the English language and made space for the voices of those who felt silenced. Participants were able to name the struggle/s, deconstruct the power relations embedded in the struggles and generate individual and collective strategies to overcome the struggles.

The testimonials from the actors and audience members suggest that the injection of Image and Forum theatre work in classrooms, school board meetings and government offices may help connect social justice, peace, and democracy more concretely to the daily work of the school. The task is daunting as aesthetic spaces are often ghettoized in drama classrooms and English Language Arts unit plans. One could easily imagine the initial resistance after a group of superintendents was asked to make an Image of their individual and collective struggles as community leaders. However the possibilities inherent in disrupting some of the bastions of strategic planning could enlarge the space for voices which are at times marginalized from the centers of decision making power.

The elimination of oppression, challenging dominant ways of thinking, and introducing alternative, more peaceful ways of acting the world, ought to be the aims of public education. The participants in this study named their oppression/s, demonstrated an increase in agency, raised their voices and challenged others in their school community to do the same. As Rajul stated:

Ya definitely I've changed. Ya now I kind of know what are those barriers. Ya I could find some of them and I am thinking about how to solve them or how to make a new way to communicate which I've never used that before. So ya I changed. I changed.

Forum and Image Theatre is focused on real community dilemmas that require radical new approaches in order to address them. But it does so in a way that builds community, blurs the dichotomy of oppressor/oppressed, and promotes agency, resistance and change at both the individual and collective levels.

### **Method**

The study began with the participants' analyses of the challenges facing their own school community. They set priorities to determine which issue was the most important for the workshops and the play. The lived experiences of the participants became the 'curriculum' of the workshops and the play challenged the participants to go public with what they learned in hopes that the audience would engage with them intellectually, ethically and emotionally. The purpose was not to manufacture engagement for the sake of engagement but to actually reduce or eliminate some of the language barriers/no voice in the Arundhati school community. Forum and Image Theatre work perpetuates a cycle of questioning, deconstruction, analysis, debate, action, and doubt. This method or cycle is a provocative way to consider how children might be engaged to learn in classrooms.

The study's findings indicate the process of the Image and Forum Theatre work honored and encouraged multiple interpretations about the same Image or issue. It appeared to me throughout the study that as the theatrical space grew to include

diverse opinions, it provided less space for dogmatic speeches that lacked nuance or sensitivity.

The methodology of the study also highlighted some of the challenges in Image and Forum Theatre work. In order to build the necessary trust and confidence in the workshops, we required five days of complete immersion in the process. Total immersion in the work would put it in direct conflict with the current structure of most junior high and high schools. The theatre work requires a large, open and secure space. Timetables, bells, discrete subject areas, imposed curricula, and same age groupings would challenge its viability in a school. However the injection of this work would help trouble those same systemic barriers.

Forum and Image Theatre can be taxing emotionally on the participants. The participants have chosen to work on an issue that connects deeply to their personal struggles in their new country. The process by its very nature challenges the oppressive forces in their lives. The emotional nature of the work is conveyed in Nalin's comments:

This character is very emotional and I think is showing that he's on his knees and that like he's on a verge of breakdown. So he had enough or something. He feels like he is over burdened by circumstance and his situation and all the hurdles in front of him. So then he is kind of giving in but then there are a few elements in the society who are trying to console him and some people are just kind of unconcerned and not doing anything.

Throughout the study I employed a qualified community therapist who attended every meeting, workshop, rehearsal and focus group. There were two participants who met with her during the workshops and one of those participants continued to meet with

her for four sessions after the workshops. The Joker must provide access to emotional supports for the participants and he or she must feel prepared to work with others skillfully and respectfully in an emotionally charged context.

### **Matter**

What is taught to students in classrooms is determined by Manitoba Education classroom teachers and others. There is disagreement about who really has the most powerful influence on what young people learn in classrooms and the extent to which students should be allowed to direct their own learning. Some curricular or outcome documents in Manitoba are very prescriptive in terms of what content should be 'covered' in classes. I have often heard science and math teachers lament there is no time for 'extras' because there is barely enough time to 'teach the required materials.' The English Language Arts teachers have a different dilemma. The English Language Arts outcome documents prescribe virtually no content but list many skills and competencies that children and youth need to demonstrate. One can write an essay about The Occupy Wall Street Movement or Justin Bieber to demonstrate the requisite skills and competencies.

The findings indicate in this study that the high level of engagement from the participants was initially roused at the meeting where they selected the community problem that would inform the workshops and the play. As Nafeeza, the community therapist involved in the project noted:

It allowed the participants to say yes it is a problem because I think they all agreed it was because they chose it. They chose the topic so they all knew it was

a problem. To be given the opportunity to talk about it I think it's healing in itself to be able to do it.

And they were happy I think all of them. Like the ones I have spoken with want to do it again. They know it was draining and they know that, but it was something great. There was pride. Pride of finishing.

I believe there are not enough opportunities for youth to decide about what they want to learn about in school. There is also limited space for cross-cultural questions and knowledge/s to influence the learning content in classrooms. The study's findings demonstrate that Image and Forum Theatre work can provide youth with the opportunity to influence some of what is learned in schools. It would also make the content politically charged because, though Forum and Image Theatre work is anchored to community development and peace building, it does so in ways that encourage critique, resistance, and agency.

### **Using Image and Forum Theatre to Inform System Planning and Reflection**

Forum and Image Theatre work could enrich school planning and reflection processes. Forum Theatre creates a tension between the role of the observer and the spect-actor. A Forum play is performed once and it ends in a crisis. Then the play turns around and asks the audience to consider what should be done about the "mess." The play is performed a second time and the audience members are prevented from solving any of the problems from their seats. The Joker insists they come on stage and try their ideas out with the other characters.

Five years ago I worked in a school division as a school improvement consultant. One of my responsibilities was to review and provide feedback to school administrators

on strategic plans. I often wondered what would happen if teachers and administrators tried to enact some of the outcome scenarios to test the “impact” of the strategies they listed. For example, based on one outcome strategy that was written, the scene would open with a student arriving late to class. To address the issue, the teacher would get out the “strategy” which was a revised late policy to fix the problem. By any stretch of the imagination, how meaningful is this strategy for “fixing” student attendance problems? Forum Theatre is a viable option that can help interrogate the strategies we employ to make changes in schools. As radical as it might seem to facilitate school planning in the theatre, such an opportunity may help educators imagine more nuanced possibilities and foster shared responsibility for change.

The second contribution Forum and Image Theatre could make to the cycles of school planning and reflection is to move school planning and reflection beyond the perimeters of the school. Forum and Image Theatre begins with the community problem and then the subsequent theatre work is related to the generation of solutions for the problem. Currently school planning is driven by initiatives that make the school ‘better,’ but generally do not focus on the broader social context in which education occurs, yet which shapes the lives of those entering the school building every day. If, for example, violence is a problem in a community, then issues related to violence should inform at least some of *what* is taught in the school, *how* things are taught in the school, and *why* they are relevant to, and might improve, the local community context.

## **The Value of a Theatrical Commons for Creating Space for Marginalized Voices to Influence Educational Decisions**

In Chapter Four the findings related to the capacity of Forum and Image Theatre to make space for diverse voices to be heard is thoroughly discussed. The study's findings indicate that spaces for diverse voices were created because participants: had the opportunity to name community struggles; trouble the oppressiveness of the English language in the Image Theatre exercises; offer multiple interpretations of the same Images or scenes; script and share their struggles; and incite audience interventions in the second performance of the play. By extension, I believe that Forum Theatre has the potential to inform policy decisions by providing the means for multiple and diverse voices at the individual and community levels to be expressed.

Augusto Boal experimented with what he called Legislative Theatre (Boal, 1998). In 1992 he ran for city council in Rio de Janeiro as part of a theatrical piece, and much to his surprise, he was elected (Boal, 1998). Boal linked performance with politics. He would go in to the streets, joke Forum plays and bring the peoples' ideas back to the legislature. Out of the 40 bills he put forward, 10 of them became laws (Boal, 1998). A Legislative Theatre performance is essentially a Forum Theatre event, but the audience interventions and the dialogue that surrounds those interventions is shared with and acted upon by those who have the power to make policy decisions or laws.

I hoped the Forum Theatre play we performed on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 would evolve in to a Legislative Theatre event. I invited several educational leaders, politicians and policy makers from across the province to attend *Silos of Silence*. Unfortunately, only two policy makers came. It did not help that the play was performed on a hot Friday

night during the long weekend in July. Even though July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 was not a Legislative Theatre event, I think that policy conversations in education and in other sectors need to be brought 'in to the streets.' Audience interventions are often ripe with innovative ideas generated by the people who are most impacted by the problems. It is these people, representing the "public," who should be served by our governing officials. Through the characters' stories the play revealed some of the ways in which language barriers were systemically perpetuated and how they negatively impacted the social ecosystem. The actors challenged some of the myths that schools are 'safe havens' for former refugee youth. In fact the play confronted the audience with the idea that schools are sites where power relations and language barriers merge to create a social toxicity. The study's findings affirmed the play created a reciprocal knowledge exchange between the actors and the spect-actors. Both the actors and the audience members offered and then debated the interventions offered during the second performance of the play. The performance effectively troubled Bowers (2006) lamentation about the correlation between the reduction of the commons and individual empowerment (2006).

*Silos of Silence* generated rich data that would have been valuable to educational policy makers, the department of Labour and Immigration, school staff and settlement service providers. The audience interventions and the actors' scripts contained strategies that could have informed school and government policy. For example, one of the audience interventions in scene one provided creative alternatives to traditional classroom placements of newcomer youth. Additionally the dance scene forced the audience to utilize nonverbal communication strategies to understand the struggles of the characters. The dance scene challenged the hegemony exerted by the

English language. It did this through the exhibition of a 'universal parenting moment.' A daughter adopted the 'rhythm' of her peers which was in direct conflict with the rhythm of her parents. The audience could only intervene if members submitted to conversing with the actors through dance. And most notably, the play provided an opportunity for newcomer youth and adults to critique the ways in which schools intensify the impacts of language barriers/no voice. The play provoked audience interventions and inherent in the intervention process was a challenge to the role schools play in the assimilation of the newest members of their communities.

The study was not able to show that Legislative Theatre provided space for community members to influence educational policy decisions. Only two policy actors attended the play on July 29<sup>th</sup>, 2011 and there were no formal commitments made by the policy makers to use the information from the play to inform future decisions. However one of the policy makers recently asked me to facilitate a workshop with other educational leaders using Forum Theatre. I was also asked to share some of the study's findings with other policy actors. This promising work is in its infancy and further studies are required to investigate its potential to develop educational policy. If several policy makers had attended the play they would have learned more about: (1) How language barriers/no voice perpetuate racism in schools; (2) Strategies to combat social isolation in school communities; (3) How theatre can create space for marginalized voices, and; (4) How policy can be generated through interactive democracy. 'Theatre as politics' could potentially become a powerful tool in the citizenry's social change arsenal.

Strategic plans, elections, opinion polls and surveys are antiquated tools in a representative democracy that has too much representation and not enough

democracy. Legislative Theatre may hold great promise for government officials, senior administrators, teachers, parents and youth who seriously want to create intellectual collisions that will lead to the development of more peaceful and joyful communities.

The next section of the chapter assesses the value of the heuristic Critical Theatrical Tensions as a framework to conceptualize the study and the methodology. I discuss the strengths and limitations of the theoretical framework and how the framework should be revised to inform future research and in practice.

### **Critical Theatrical Tensions: A Theoretical Framework**

The theoretical framework illustrates four theatrical tensions, recognizes how power circulates within those tensions and comments on how theatre creates and reveals tensions through its capacity to be both dichotomic and telemicroscopic. I will not discuss the framework's utility in the world of theatre although I do believe there are some important contributions the framework can make to the Theatre of the Oppressed community and the larger theatre community. I will focus here on the value of the framework in an educational context. My intent is not to sever ties with multidisciplinary study but to creatively apply the framework in the educational context given the purposes of this study. I begin with a discussion of the usefulness of the heuristic as a means to conceptualize the study and the methodology. Then I propose how the framework could be used to activate citizens to design or influence policy. Finally, I use the framework to suggest how it may be useful as a tool to evaluate policy creation and policy impacts.

The heuristic was effective in the conceptualization of the study and for refining the study's methodology. Developing the heuristic deepened my understanding of the

tenets of critical participatory action research. To begin I immediately decided the tenets of my research needed to be articulated as tensions. Tensions are organic, mobile and communicate that problems, solutions and people cannot be sorted into binary worlds. A tension suggests that the *Observer*  *Spect-actor* for example, can exist in the same person at the same time. I had to frame my research in relation to the literature in terms of what I believed were the essential components of critical action research. Therefore the study needed to: (1) Allow the participants to decide what issue would inform the workshops and play; (2) Create space for the participants to deconstruct the community issue; (3) Take the critique into the streets; (4) Provoke dialogue about how power relations maintain social inequities, and; (5) Move from anger and critique to spaces of agency and hope. I believe that transitive democratic spaces are riddled with tensions that are mobilized by power relations. Once these tensions are revealed they can mobilize an actor's agency.

To create space for voice in the study was important to frame a methodology that would allow people to critique social inequities, but it was equally important for the participants to take their knowledge into the commons and invite new solutions for persistent community dilemmas. There is a great deal of research in education that has researchers speaking to researchers, teachers to teachers and policy makers to policy makers. This study needed to disrupt the pattern of speaking truths to ourselves. This is embedded in the *What Is*  *What Could Be* tension. It is insufficient to merely critique the deficits in public schools. I believe the most intellectually challenging work for researchers lies in working with people who are most impacted by the deficits in our educational system to decrease or eliminate systemic barriers that create social

injustice in school communities. Like the dichotomic potential inherent in the theatre, the study needed to build a commons within the larger commons. The study's methodology constructed a democratic space within a democratic space in the Arundhati school community. It became even more dichotomic given that the theatrical commons created space for marginalized voices to problematize language barriers/no voice.

I used the framework tensions to be reflexive about who had voice in the meeting to decide the community problem, the theatre workshops, the play rehearsals, and the performance of the play. I troubled my role as the Joker so that I promoted dialogue and debate and disconnected myself from a preoccupation with the study's final 'products.' I used the tension between Silence  Voice to be reflexive about who spoke and for how long in the interviews, focus groups, workshops and the Forum Theatre play. It forced me to conceptualize the study so that I understood how the theatre games, the Image Theatre exercises and the Forum Theatre play could potentially create space for the participants' voices, inspire the participants to move from the role of observer to spect-actor and to critique the rules and norms that governed the theatre space.

The Critical Theatrical Tensions framework is a lens that could be used by citizens in a school community to deconstruct and design policy decisions made at the school, division or provincial level. It could provoke questions regarding how power relations exacerbate tensions in an emergent transformational democratic space. Power is fluid, and from that fluidity hope can emerge from the fissures in oppressive circumstances. Citizens could use the tensions as measures to deconstruct the evolution and impact of harmful policies and use the framework themselves as an evaluative tool for generating policy alternatives. They could demand that policy makers

in schools, divisions and the government answer questions that were informed by the framework and hold them accountable for their answers. Some exemplars of framework questions for citizens are included in Table 5.1.

Table 5.1 Critical Theatrical Tension Framework: Educational Policy Questions for Citizens

Heuristic Component	Sample Questions
What is  What Could Be	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What are the systemic issues this policy tries to fix?</li> <li>b) Does this policy impact the school/community ecosystem or just some of the symptoms of the problem? How do you know?</li> <li>c) What are the intended positive impacts of the policy?</li> <li>d) What are the negative impacts of the policy?</li> <li>e) Who is negatively or positively impacted by the policy?</li> <li>f) Describe the policy's externalities.</li> <li>g) What other policies or ideas were offered?</li> <li>h) How will this policy contribute to the pursuit of more equitable and peaceful communities?</li> </ul>
Observer  Spect-actor	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What was seen that made you/the decision making body think the policy was needed?</li> <li>b) Who were the observers?</li> <li>c) What did they observe?</li> <li>d) Were the people who are most impacted by the policy actors in the design of the policy?</li> <li>e) Are people still 'observing' as the policy is enacted? Who are the new observers?</li> <li>f) What strategies were used to imagine or act out the impact of this policy as well as alternatives to this policy?</li> <li>g) Who is responsible for the enactment of the policy?</li> <li>h) What mechanisms are in place to</li> </ul>

	revise or eliminate the policy?
Silence  Voice	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) Who was authorized to speak and on what matters during each phase of the policy's evolution?</li> <li>b) Who had voice in this matter? Who did not?</li> <li>c) Who exerted their powers of influence?</li> <li>d) Who will get to speak about the negative and positive impacts of the policy?</li> </ul>
Rules  Freedom	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What rules and norms informed the policy?</li> <li>b) What cultural knowledge/s were included in the policy's formation? Which ones were excluded? Why?</li> </ul>
Power	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>a) What power relations were at work during the creation of the policy?</li> <li>b) Who does the policy give power to?</li> <li>c) Who is disempowered by the policy?</li> <li>d) How did those who had positional or influential power exert their influence during the decision making process?</li> </ul>

The Critical Theatrical Tensions framework would also assist policy makers to critically deconstruct and account for the evolution of educational policy. The tension between *What is*  *What Could Be* demands that policy architects articulate the systemic issues the policies try to ameliorate. Policy-makers could measure those policies against the adverse impacts of policy enactments. Such a framework would invite discussions about educational policy externalities. For example, if the government

enacts a policy that fines parent and guardians if their children do not attend school, one would first be forced to ask questions such as, “What are the systemic issues that result in poor attendance rates and how will this policy address those systemic issues? What are the projected undesirable impacts of such a policy?”

The tension between Silence  Voice should be used as a critical lens to assess who is authorized to speak during various policy development phases. This reflexivity would force a space to be opened for citizens to speak their own truths to those who have the most decision making power in school systems. This tension is deeply connected to the *Rules*  *Freedom* tension. Policy makers could use this element of the framework to account for which rules, norms and cultural knowledges were privileged during policy development and how these privileges intersected with tension between *Silence*  *Voice*.

Teachers, as well as school and divisional administrators could use the Critical Theatrical Tensions Framework to critique how decisions and policies are constructed in their schools and divisions. Many of the questions articulated in Table 5.1 would assist educational leaders to ensure the best judgments were made regarding the rules and policies that govern schools and the lives of youth, teachers and administrators in school communities. Teachers would be served well to substitute the word ‘policy’ for the word ‘curriculum’ in Table 5.1 as a means to deconstruct what and how subject matter is taught to youth and children in schools. In the next section I discuss some of the limitations of the framework and what could be changed to make it more useful for action researchers and practitioners.

### **Limitations of and Changes to the Critical Theatrical Tensions Theoretical Framework**

A limitation in the framework is that it does not yet account for the connection between the dichotomic capacity of the theatre and the liminal spaces in classrooms. How can classrooms be further conceptualized as a community within a community? I am not referring to notions of 'belonging' and 'positive social behavior' when I talk about community. Here I am referring to what is learned and for what purposes in the classroom. I suggest the framework could be used to analyze the social injustices that face a community and the resulting responsibility the school has in fighting those injustices. How can the framework be used to create learning environments in schools where youth, teachers, and administrators are conscious of the tensions and power relations embedded in the disconnection between community issues and school curricula?

In another study, I would extend the Critical Theatrical Tensions theoretical framework in two ways: (1) By adding the notion of *resistance* to the outer circle of the heuristic, and; (2) By investigating the addition of a fifth theatrical tension between *agency and victimization*. The findings of the study clearly show the need to further examine resistance in theatres and classrooms. The participants created several Images and demonstrated resistance throughout the workshops and the play. Resistance was also referenced numerous times throughout the interviews and the focus groups. A study of resistance would help educational researchers and practitioners better understand how and why individuals and communities become mobile along the various tensions after prolonged periods of immobility. The findings of this study suggest that active resistance plays a key role in making space for voice and revolutionary change in the theatre and in the classroom.

It would be premature to state that *agency and victimhood* should immediately be added to the framework. However there is enough evidence in this study to suggest that a new study ought to be conducted that examines this tension and its relationship to the theatre's telemicroscopic capacity. The findings in this study revealed that some of the participants located the causes and impacts of language barriers/no voice in the social ecosystem of the community while others appeared to assume the social barriers were more connect to personal deficits. I believe a thorough consideration of this tension could add rich information about how and why some actors in a school community locate 'deficits' in the ecosystem while others locate the same deficits inside themselves. The next two sections offer recommendations for practice and further research.

### **Recommendations for Practice**

This study was rooted in educational administration and policy studies. It was inspired by the theatre work of Augusto Boal and David Diamond and situated firmly within a critical participatory action research framework. This section offers five recommendations for practice based on the study's findings that will be useful to teachers, school and divisional administrators and other educational policy makers.

1. Community problems should inform what is taught in school and how the subject matter is taught. The findings of the study indicate there is a strong relationship between a young person's ownership of community challenges and his/her engagement in learning about those problems. Youth come to school with their own lived experiences that should underpin their growing understandings of curricula and the larger world. Youth should spend school time working in the community to learn

about complex social justice dilemmas and use time in school to work towards addressing those challenges. This would help the reorientation of schools towards the development of more peaceful joyful and just communities.

2. Forum Theatre should be incorporated as an important community development strategy in high schools to engage youth, parents and educators in critically reflecting on social justice issues in the community. The findings indicate that Forum Theatre should be used to develop alternative solutions for complex community and school problems. Forum Theatre work should not be ghettoized in drama and English classrooms. Educational policy makers and administrators should attend Forum Theatre events and use the process and audience interventions to inform and 'legislate' new policies and practices in schools.
3. There needs to be multiple opportunities for parents, guardians and members of the wider community to critique the school's engagement in the pursuit of a more socially just community. Space needs to be created in school and divisional planning processes for youth, parents/guardians and teachers to influence and make important decisions in schools. The findings of the study suggest that Image and Forum Theatre creates a theatrical commons that makes space for voices which are at times marginalized in school communities.
4. Classroom teachers should role model active resistance in the face of oppressive educational policies and practices that marginalize certain voices. This could take the form of 'professional disobedience,' that is, ignoring or actively working against policies that marginalize members of a school community. The findings of the study

indicate that resistance in the presence of others, creates space for others to challenge social injustices.

5. Community members should mobilize against unjust educational policies. The Critical Theatrical Tension Framework and the suggested Policy Questions for Citizens may challenge school community members to learn more about how educational/school policies are created and the resultant impacts of those policies.

### **Recommendations for Further Research**

In addition to recommendations for practice, a number of recommendations for further research developed:

1. The topic the participants selected to inform the workshops and the play was language barriers/no voice. This created an intense dichotomic research space. One of my primary research questions asked if Forum and Image Theatre created space for diverse 'voices' to be heard. It would be important to employ the same methodology but use it to study a different community problem.
2. This study was confined to one school community. It should be replicated in and/or across other school communities.
3. Research should be conducted that juxtaposes the role of the school principal and the Joker within the context of school change. A Joker is characterized as someone who synchronizes the actors and performances. He/she is a transitive democratic pedagogue who provokes intellectual collisions. She/he sees agency in perceived handicaps and knows the actors are brilliant creators, deconstructionists and that they can and will generate the best solutions to the problems that impact them. The findings of this study suggest it would be a worthy contribution to research and

provide means for current school and divisional administrators to conceive of their leadership roles in relation to some of the most noble characteristics of the Joker.

4. A study should be conducted to investigate how the framework could be used to analyze what social injustices impact communities and the corresponding responsibilities the school has in fighting those injustices. How can the framework be used to create learning environments in schools where youth, teachers, and administrators are conscious of the tensions and power relations embedded in the disconnect between community issues and school curricula?
5. A new study should replicate the methodology and examine the tension between *agency and victimization* and its relationship to the theatre's telemicroscopic capacity. The study revealed that some of the participants located the causes and impacts of language barriers/no voice in the community ecosystem while others assumed the barriers were the result of personal deficits. I believe a thorough consideration of this tension would elicit rich information about how and why some actors in school communities locate 'deficits' in the ecosystem while others locate the same deficits inside themselves.

### **Summary and Conclusion**

The study examined the creation of a theatrical commons that aimed to broaden and deepen democratic engagement between diverse citizens in one public school community. The research also studied how Image and Forum Theatre helped people to name and invent different possibilities to address challenges related to language barriers/no voice. The study involved former refugee youth, guardians, parents and the general public as they critiqued the potential of a theatrical commons as voices which

are at times, marginalized from decisions made at the community and policy level. The chapter began with a discussion of three themes that derived from the research questions, literature, and study findings. The heuristic Critical Theatrical Tensions was developed to conceptualize the study, its methodology and frame the findings. The strengths and limitations of the theoretical framework were discussed as well as how the framework could be revised to inform future research and practice. The chapter concluded with recommendations for practice and further research.

There were countless moments where the participants demonstrated fierceness in their attempts to take risks and to love the other participants in the room. In fact, it may be that the primary learning/s and implications of this study will be situated within the lived experiences of the participants themselves and the development of their own senses of personal agency. Several participants described their experiences in the workshops and the play as 'life changing.' The study's results show that powerful change occurred within individuals. After the study was completed one of the participants visited me at my office to let me know the theatre work gave her the confidence to register for college courses. Another youth participant saw me four weeks later at a community event and informed me that all of the participants who acted in the play formed a social media group. I learned the participants continued to communicate and support one another long after the play. I believe more research needs to be done to investigate the long term impacts of Image and Forum Theatre work on individual and collective agency. The potential of this work to legitimize 'unauthorized' school community leaders is in its infancy and needs to be further researched.

The study was an evocative and politically charged research experience. Amidst the theatrical tensions, language barriers and cultural differences, participants built a robust site of social justice that fostered and embraced intellectual collisions. We developed a collective consciousness that surmounted power relations, created agency, and one that envisioned and enacted our desire to respect and hear all voices. As Ellie stated eloquently:

I learned a lot about love. About love from another country to another country.

Because this play was with people from many, many cultures. So to play together is not easy. But it was easy to play. It is love. I say it is love to communicate. I see love from a person to another person. You see she's from Sudan, she's from Congo, she's from Somalia. So together I see love between and together.

To conclude, I provide the “audience” of this text with recreated images of hands gathered from the workshop photographs and the video of the play that strongly signify the notion of resilience that so firmly underpinned the hopefulness of the participants in their work to create more peaceful, joyful communities. The photographs and video represented the love, knowledge and confidence displayed by the participants throughout the study. I provide these images in a small attempt to honor the methodological ethos of the study and the myriad of intellectual and emotional gifts the participants shared throughout the research project. I am indebted to them for all that I have learned.

Figure 5.1: Hands of Resilience



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## Appendix A

### Photo-elicitation Interview Protocol

#### What is the purpose of the interview?

- To understand the impact of the workshops on the individual workshop participants and the group.

#### Who is the information for and how will it be used?

- All of the study's participants. (no names will be attached to specific comments)
- The information will be used to understand the impact of the workshops and the Forum/Legislative Theatre Event on all of the participants.
- The University of Manitoba (I am completing a master's thesis)

#### What will be asked in the interview?

- I will ask you to tell me a little bit about yourself.
- I will ask you to select 5 pictures from the workshop series that will help us to have our conversation.
- I will ask you to tell me: why you picked the pictures, what you see in the pictures and what the pictures mean to you.
- You do not have to say anything you don't want to in the interview.
- At any time we can stop the interview.

#### How will we manage the information?

- I will record the interview.
- Your responses will be kept confidential.
- You will have the opportunity to delete or erase anything you said in your interview transcripts.
- I will keep the information secured on my computer and in a safe place.
- I will destroy the transcripts in 5 years.

**Interview Questions (Interviews will Approximately 25 minutes in length)**

1. Please tell me a little about yourself.

2. Pick 5 photographs that were taken during the workshops.

For each picture the following beginning questions will be asked:

- a) Tell me about this picture.
- b) Why did you choose this picture?
- c) What do you see happening in this picture?
- d) What does this picture mean to you?

3. What do you remember from the workshops?

4. What did you learn about the issue of \_\_\_\_\_?

5. Do you feel you've changed in any way as a result of your participation in the workshops?

6. I really want to understand your experiences in the workshops. Is there anything else you want to tell me about the workshops?

## Appendix B

### Audience Focus Group Protocol

**(The Focus Group will be Approximately 60 minutes in Length)**

What is the purpose of the focus group?

- To understand the impact of the Forum/Legislative Theatre event on the audience members.

Who is the information for and how will it be used?

- All of the study's participants. (no names will be attached to specific comments)
- The information will be used to understand the impact of the Forum/Legislative Theatre Event on all of the participants.
- The University of Manitoba (I am completing a master's thesis)

What will be asked in the focus group?

- I will ask you to tell me what brought you to the theatre.
- I will ask you about your experiences in the Theatre.
- You do not have to say anything you don't want to in the interview.
- At any time we can stop your participation in the interview.

How will I manage the information?

- I will record the focus group.
- Your responses will be kept confidential.
- I will keep the information secured on my computer and in a safe place.
- I will destroy the transcripts in 5 years.

### Interview Questions

1. Please tell me a little bit about what brought you to the theatre that night.
2. What was the play about?
3. Describe some of the characters' struggles in the play.
4. Could you relate to any of the characters in any way? Who? In what way?
5. What were some of your thoughts and feelings about the community issue as you watched the play and the interventions?
6. What were some of your thoughts and feelings about the process of the Forum Theatre event?
7. I really want to understand what you experienced at the Forum Theatre event. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

## Appendix C

### Actor Focus Group Protocol

(The Focus Group will be Approximately 60 minutes in Length)

What is the purpose of the focus group?

- To understand the impact of the Forum/Legislative Theatre event on the actors.

Who is the information for and how will it be used?

- The study's participants. (no names will be attached to specific comments)
- The information will be used to understand the impact of the Forum/Legislative Theatre Event on all of the participants.
- The University of Manitoba, Faculty of Education (I am completing a master's thesis)

What will be asked in the focus group?

- I will ask you to tell me about your experiences creating and performing the play.
- You do not have to say anything you don't want to in the interview.
- At any time you can stop your participation in the interview. You may withdraw from the study at any point without penalty or prejudice.

How will I manage the information?

- I will record the focus group.
- Your responses will be kept confidential.
- I will keep the information secured on my computer and in a safe place.
- I will destroy the transcripts in 5 years.

### **Actor Focus Group Questions**

1. Describe your experiences creating the play.
2. Describe your experiences acting in the play.
3. What were some of your thoughts and feelings about the community issue as you acted in the play and responded to the interventions?
4. What's changed as a result of your participation in the play?
5. What kind of impact do you think the play had on the audience?
6. How effective do you think Forum Theatre is in helping communities to better understand/solve community problems?
7. I really want to understand what you experienced at the Forum/Legislative Theatre event. Is there anything else you want to tell me?

## Appendix D

### On University of Manitoba Letterhead

#### Participant Consent Form – Phase 1

Research Project Title: Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities

Researcher(s): Alysha Sloane

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin, [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

Date:

#### Dear Study Participant:

My name is Alysha Sloane and I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba working on my thesis entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of the study is to introduce theatre activities in one school community to encourage people to talk about important community issues. I want to study if theatre can help people to make positive changes in their communities.

#### Description of Phase 1 of the Study

At this time I would like to invite you to participate in the first part of a three part study. The first part of the study will involve a group of approximately 30 former refugee youth, parents and caregivers who have lived in Canada for at least 2 years. The group will pick a community issue that will inform the content of the theatre workshops in part two of the study. The group meeting will take place on Saturday, \_\_\_\_\_ (date), from 10:00 am to 11:00 am at \_\_\_\_\_ (name of location and address).

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can remove yourself or get involved again in the study at any time without penalty. If you would like to participate in part one of the study, please sign your name beside each activity that you would be willing to participate in for the purposes of this research project. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please throw away the rest of this consent form.

#### Procedures Involving Participants

##### Part 1 – Choosing the Community Issue

Time Commitment = 1 hour

### **Selection of the Community Issue**

At the group meeting where we will pick the community issue that will inform the workshop and the play I will put people into small groups of four to five people. I will explain the research project. Next I will give people a few questions to get people talking in their small groups

I will take the group through a process so we can agree on what issue or problem should be used to inform the workshops and the Forum/Legislative Theatre play. The process will involve the following steps: 1. All of the small groups will report back to the large group and say the community problems they believe to be the most important. 2. Small groups will be asked to share why they named each problem. 3. The 'problems' will be listed on long slips of paper. 4. You will be given a sticker to place on the slip of paper that lists the problem you believe would be the most important one to inform the workshops and the play. The problem with the most votes will decide what the workshops and the play will be about in the second and third part of the study.

### **Data Storage**

All data will be stored in a locked file cabinet under the supervision of Alysha Sloane All electronic files will be encrypted in password-protected files on Alysha Sloane's computer and will be destroyed five years after the study has been completed. The only person who will have access to the data will be Alysha Sloane.

### **Risks and Benefits**

There are no physical or emotional risks to participants in this part of the study.

The study hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of how theatre helps people to make positive changes in their communities. I hope it will also get people to talk to one another and encourage people to think about their rights and responsibilities within a safe and creative space.

### **Feedback about the Study**

Please check this box if you would like to receive a copy of the summary of the study.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please Send the Summary to the Following Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Or

Please send the summary to the following Address \_\_\_\_\_

### **Voluntariness and Withdrawal from the Study**

Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, please throw away the information. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or to stop answering any questions you prefer not to answer, without prejudice or consequence simply by contacting me at the contact information listed below or by telling me during the group meeting. However, because this is a group conversation, answers from individuals may be erased from the research assistant's notes should you choose to withdraw, but the community issue will remain because it was chosen by many people in the group.

Your signatures on this form indicate that you understand the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask questions or to get new information throughout your participation. At any time if you require more information please contact:

Alysha Sloane  
Tel: (204) 995-4715  
7 Brebeuf Road  
Winnipeg, MB  
R2J 1Z4  
E-mail: [alyshasloane@shaw.ca](mailto:alyshasloane@shaw.ca)

OR

Dr. Dawn Wallin  
Tel: (204) 474-6069  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3T 2N2  
E-mail: [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

**The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management/Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.**

**This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alysha Sloane

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN THIS PART OF THE STUDY, PLEASE SIGN THE CONSENT**

## Consent Signatures for Part 1 of the Study

### Consent Signature for Large Group Meeting to Determine the Community Issue

I have read the consent form above and I am providing consent for me and/or my child to participate in the large group meeting to decide the community issue that will inform the workshops and the play portion of the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities led by Alysha Sloane from the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba.

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Youth Participant (print) if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**(For Youth Participants)** I assent to participate in the large group meeting to select the community issues for the workshops and the play.

Signature of Youth Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix E

### On University of Manitoba Letterhead

#### Participant Consent Form – Phase 2

Research Project Title: Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities

Researcher(s): Alysha Sloane

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin, [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

Date:

#### Dear Study Participant:

My name is Alysha Sloane and I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba working on my thesis entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of the study is to introduce theatre activities in one school community to encourage people to talk about important community issues. I want to study if theatre can help people to make positive changes in their communities.

#### Description of Phase 2 of the Study

In part two of the study approximately 20 participants will be invited to participate in theatre games in a five day workshop to explore the issue \_\_\_\_\_ (community issue) during the \_\_\_\_\_ break. The dates of the workshops will be \_\_\_\_\_. The workshops will take place at \_\_\_\_\_ located at \_\_\_\_\_. You do not have to be an actor to participate in the theatre workshops. You will be provided with bus tickets to cover the cost of traveling to and from the workshops. You will also be provided with healthy snacks, drinks and lunches on each day of the workshop.

Your participation is entirely voluntary and you can remove yourself or get involved again in the study at any time without penalty. If you would like to participate in part two of the study, please sign your name beside each activity that you would be willing to participate in for the purposes of this research project. If you do not wish to participate in this study, please throw away the rest of this consent form.

#### Procedures Involving Participants

##### Part 2 - The Theatre Workshops

**Time Commitment = 5 days (28 hours)**

In part two of the study, you will be invited to take part in a 5 day theatre workshop to explore \_\_\_\_\_ (community issue).

The workshops will begin with many theatre games to build trust in the group. We will use our bodies to create pictures that connect to the issue of \_\_\_\_\_. At the end of each day there will be a chance for everyone to talk about what happened in the workshops. You will be given a journal so you can write down your thoughts and feelings about what you experience in the workshops. In workshops two and three we will play some games but we will spend more of our time making shapes with our bodies that show our thoughts and feelings about \_\_\_\_\_ (community issue).

In workshop four we will get people to talk when they are in the shapes. In workshop five we will make and perform short plays. The plays will be created in small groups by the actors. Each play will focus on some important part of the issue \_\_\_\_\_(community issue). The plays will end when the characters are having a hard time. Once a play has been created, it will be performed in front of the other groups. The plays will be performed a second time. During the second performance, the other participants will be invited to shout "Stop!" if they want to come on stage to replace a character in a play. When you replace a character in these kinds of plays, you try to offer an idea that will make a bad situation better for the character.

### ***Digital Photographs***

Volunteer participants from the study will be photographing the theatre images and exercises with a digital camera throughout the workshop. These photographs will be used for the interviews that will take place after the workshops end. Other participants in the workshop may see and discuss a photograph of you during their interviews.

The photographs will be destroyed right after the discussions about them have been transcribed.

### ***Discussion Circles***

At the end of each workshop we will sit in a circle so you have the chance to share your thoughts and feelings about what we did in the workshops. Each discussion will take between 30 and 60 minutes. A research assistant will record the comments on a laptop computer. I will make sure that individuals can not be identified by their comments when I am writing or talking about my research paper.

### ***Interview***

After the workshops you will be invited to participate in one interview to talk about the workshops. We will use the pictures taken during the workshops in the interviews. I will ask questions to understand your thoughts and feelings about the workshop and the community issue. The interviews will take approximately 45 minutes. The date and time of the interview will be decided by you. Your interview transcripts will not be shared with anyone and care will be taken to make sure that all identifying information is erased from the study. The verbal transcripts will be mailed to you for feedback, additions, deletions and changes. You will have two weeks to provide feedback on the transcripts, after that time I will think you are comfortable with the information.

### ***Journals***

Each participant will be given a journal. You will be invited to write down thoughts, feelings, or pictures during the workshops. At the end of the workshops you will be invited to share your journal entries with me for research purposes. The journal entries will not be shared with anyone, and care will be taken to make sure that a comment that would identify you is erased from the study.

## Data Storage

All data and the digital cameras will be stored in a locked file cabinet under the supervision of Alysha Sloane. The written transcripts of the discussion circles, interviews and focus groups will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the study as anticipated to be September, 2011. All electronic files will be encrypted and on password-protected files on Alysha Sloane's computer and will be erased five years after the completion of the study. The journal entries shared by participants will either be returned to them or destroyed depending on the wishes of individual participants at the end of the study. The only person who will have access to the data will be Alysha Sloane.

## Risks and Benefits

Some of the theatre exercises may cause strong feelings during the workshops. There will be a qualified therapist from the community who will attend all of the workshops to provide emotional support to any participant who may want these services.

Most of the theatre exercises we will use in the workshops are physical. Different ways of doing the exercises will be shown to you in case an exercise is too hard.

You should also be aware that the theatre images we make during the workshops will be photographed for research purposes. The photographs will be used during the interviews after the workshops have been completed. Other participants in the workshop may see and discuss a photograph of you during their interviews.

The photographs will be destroyed right after the discussions about them have been transcribed.

The study hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of how theatre helps people to make positive changes in their communities. I hope it will also get people to talk to one another and encourage people to think about their rights and responsibilities within a safe and creative space.

## Feedback about the Study

After the interviews participants will be given their written transcript as so they can check, erase, add, or change the content of their remarks. After each workshop, participants will have the opportunity to provide feedback on the workshop.

- Please check this box if you would like to receive a copy of the summary of the study.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please Send the Summary to the Following Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Or

Please send the summary to the following Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Dissemination

The final research may be used for presentation and publication purposes.

### **Voluntariness and Withdrawal from the Study**

Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, please throw away the information. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or stop answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence simply by contacting me at the contact information listed below.

Your signatures on this form indicate that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. At any time if you require more information please contact:

Alysha Sloane  
Tel: (204) 995-4715  
7 Brebeuf Road  
Winnipeg, MB  
R2J 1Z4  
E-mail: [alyshasloane@shaw.ca](mailto:alyshasloane@shaw.ca)

OR

Dr. Dawn Wallin  
Tel: (204) 474-6069  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3T 2N2  
E-mail: [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

**The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management/Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.**

**This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alysha Sloane

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN SOME PARTS OR ALL PARTS OF THIS STUDY,  
PLEASE SIGN EACH CONSENT SEPERATELY**

## Consent Signatures for Part 2 of the Study

### Consent to Participate in the Theatre Workshops

I have read the consent form above and I am providing consent for me and/or my child to participate in the five day long theatre workshops to explore the community issue \_\_\_\_\_ of the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities led by Alysha Sloane from the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

\_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Youth Participant (print) if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**(For Youth Participants)** I assent to participate in the five day long theatre workshops to explore the community issue.

Signature of Youth Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Consent Signature to be Photographed During the Theatre Workshops

I have read the consent form above and I consent for me and/or my child to be photographed during the workshops in the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities led by Alysha Sloane from the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba. The photographs will be destroyed after the discussions about them have been transcribed.

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Youth Participant (print) if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**(For Youth Participants)** I assent to be photographed during the workshops and during the performance of the play.

Signature of Youth Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### Consent to be a Volunteer Photographer During the Theatre Workshops

I have read the consent form above and I am providing consent for me and/or my child to be a volunteer photographer who will take pictures during the workshops portion of the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities led by Alysha Sloane from the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Youth Participant (print) if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**(For Youth Participants)** I assent to be a volunteer photographer during the workshops.

Signature of Youth Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent to Use Parts of Personal Journal**

I have read the consent form above and I am providing consent for me and/or my child to share a part of my personal journal records from the workshop portion of the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities led by Alysha Sloane from the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Youth Participant (print) if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**(For Youth Participants)** I assent to have parts of my journal shared from the workshops.

Signature of Youth Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent Signature for Interview**

I have read the consent form above and I am providing consent for me and/or my child to participate in the interview portion of the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities led by Alysha Sloane from the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Youth Participant (print) if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**(For Youth Participants)** I assent to be interviewed after the workshops.

Signature of Youth Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix F

### On University of Manitoba Letterhead

#### Participant Consent Form – Phase 3

Research Project Title: Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities

Researcher(s): Alysha Sloane

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin, [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

Date:

#### Dear Study Participant:

My name is Alysha Sloane and I am a Masters student in the Faculty of Education at the University of Manitoba working on my thesis entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities.

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of the study is to introduce theatre activities in one school community to encourage people to talk about important community issues. I want to study if theatre can help people to make positive changes in their communities.

#### Description of Phase 3 of the Study

In part three of the study, participants will create and perform a 20 minute play about the community problem in front of a small audience in the community. On the night of the performance the play will be performed a second time and audience members will be invited to come on stage and act out different ideas to create better situations for the characters in the play. You do not have to be an actor to participate in the play.

#### Procedures Involving Participants

##### Part 3 - The Making of a Play

**Time Commitment = Approximately 30 hours**

##### Part 3 – The Play

After the workshops are done, you will be invited to create and be in a play that will be performed in the school community. We will use what we learned in the workshops to create a 20-30 minute play that ends

in a difficult moment for the characters. We will try to use the images, ideas, and mini plays we made in the workshops. Scenes will be chosen based on: the chance they will get people talking in the community and how well the scenes show the challenges in the community problem. The actors will decide what scenes will be in the play. The decision will be made by talking it through and if needed, a having vote. We will make the play and practice the play over two weeks.

The actors will be given an honorarium to recognize their work in making the play, and coming to play rehearsals. The honorarium will amount to \$10.00 for each hour of time a participant shares. Play rehearsals will happen after school or on a weekend so students will not miss any class time. The rehearsals will be in the same place as the workshops. The rehearsal schedule will be made with the actors.

The play will be performed in front of an audience in the school community and it will be digitally videotaped.

On the night of the performance the play will be performed twice and the audience will be invited to come on stage during the second performance of the play to stage and act out different ideas to create better situations for the characters in the play. A research assistant will come to the performance to record the audience participation.

### ***Actor Focus Group***

In order to learn about what you thought and felt as you made and performed in the play, you will be invited to participate in a one-hour focus group. The focus group will take place in the same place we had the play rehearsals. The time and date of the focus group will be decided by the focus group participants. I will ask questions with about creating the play, performing in the play, audience participation and the community issue.

All responses will be anonymous. All responses will be collected so no one individual or organization will be identified in the results. Individual names or the name of organizations will not appear anywhere in the results. All results will be reported and/or shared in a general format and any comments that may identify a person or organization will be erased from the results. You will also be asked to sign a Pledge of Confidentiality before the focus group starts.

### ***Video Taping of Forum Theatre Performance***

The play will be videotaped and used for research analysis purposes by Alysha Sloane. If you choose to act in the public performance of the play you will also be asked to sign a video data release form. The video will be used for research purposes only and will not be made available to the public. The digital video will be encrypted and on password-protected file on Alysha Sloane's computer and will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the study. The only person who will have access to the data will be Alysha Sloane.

### ***Data Storage***

All data and the digital cameras will be stored in a locked file cabinet under the supervision of Alysha Sloane. The written transcripts of the focus group will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the study as anticipated to be September, 2011. All electronic files will be encrypted and on password-protected files on Alysha Sloane's computer and will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the study. The only person who will have access to the data will be Alysha Sloane.

## Risks and Benefits

The audience's participation or performing in the play may cause you to feel strong emotions. There will be a qualified psychotherapist from the community who will attend the performance to provide emotional support to any person who may require these services.

Another potential risk of this study is that if you choose to perform in the play the audience will know who you are and that you were a participant in the study called: Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities. Audience members may also talk about the contents of the play after the performance.

## Please note there is a limitation of withdrawal from this study.

**The performance of the play will be videotaped. The performance of a play is a complex series of interdependent interactions between the actors and the audience. Therefore your character's lines in the play as well your interactions with any of the audience members who come on stage during the second performance of the play will become a valuable part of the study.**

**It will not be possible to remove your image or voice from the videotape when the principal researcher Alysha Sloane analyzes and interprets the data from the videotape.**

The study hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of how theatre helps people to make positive changes in their communities. I hope it will also get people to talk to one another and encourage people to think about their rights and responsibilities within a safe and creative space.

## Feedback about the Study

Please check this box if you would like to receive a copy of the summary of the study.

Name \_\_\_\_\_

Please Send the Summary to the Following Email Address \_\_\_\_\_

Or

Please send the summary to the following Address \_\_\_\_\_

## Dissemination

The final research information may be used for presentation and publication purposes.

## Voluntariness and Withdrawal from the Study

Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, please discard the information. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence simply by contacting me at the contact information listed below. However because the focus group responses are socially constructed settings, participant responses from individuals may be stricken from the focus group record should participants choose to withdraw, but the general themes from the group will be used if there are contribution from more than one member of the group.

Your signatures on this form indicate that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation. At any time if you require more information please contact:

Alysha Sloane  
Tel: (204) 995-4715  
7 Brebeuf Road  
Winnipeg, MB  
R2J 1Z4  
E-mail: [alyshasloane@shaw.ca](mailto:alyshasloane@shaw.ca)

OR

Dr. Dawn Wallin  
Tel: (204) 474-6069  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3T 2N2  
E-mail: [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

**The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management/Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.**

**This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Thank you very much for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alysha Sloane

**IF YOU WOULD LIKE TO PARTICIPATE IN SOME PARTS OR ALL PARTS OF THIS STUDY,  
PLEASE SIGN EACH CONSENT SEPERATELY**

## Consent Signatures for Part 3 of the Study

### **Consent Signature for Participation in the Creation of the Forum Theatre Play**

I have read the consent form above and I am providing consent for me and/or my child to participate in the creation and performance of the Forum Theatre play part of the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities led by Alysha Sloane from the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Youth Participant (print) if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**(For Youth Participants)** I assent to participate in the creation and performance of a play to be performed in the community.

Signature of Youth Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent Signature to be Video-taped During the Performance of the Forum Theatre Play in the Community**

I have read the consent form above and I am providing consent for me and/or my child to be video-taped during the performance of the Forum Theatre play portion of the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities led by Alysha Sloane from the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Youth Participant (print) if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**(For Youth Participants)** I assent to be video-taped during the performance of the Forum Theatre play.

Signature of Youth Participant \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

### **Consent to Participate in the Final Actors' Focus Group**

I have read the consent form above and I am providing consent for me and/or my child to participate in the final actors' focus group to reflect on the creation and the performance of the Forum Theatre play portion of the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities led by Alysha Sloane from the Faculty of Education, University of Manitoba.

Signature of Participant or Parent/Guardian \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Name of Youth Participant (print) if applicable \_\_\_\_\_

**(For Youth Participants)** I assent to participate in the actors' focus group.  
\_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix G

On University of Manitoba Letterhead

Consent Form  
Audience Focus Group

Research Project Title: Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities

Researcher(s): Alysha Sloane

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin, [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Date:

### Dear Participant:

This consent form, a copy of which will be left with you for your records and reference, is only part of the process of informed consent. It should give you the basic idea of what the research is about and what your participation will involve. If you would like more detail about something mentioned here, or information not included here, you should feel free to ask. Please take the time to read this carefully and to understand any accompanying information.

The purpose of the study is to introduce theatre activities in one school community in order to get people thinking and talking about an important community issue. The study also hopes to contribute to a greater understanding about how theatre may help people to make positive changes in their communities.

At this time I would like to invite you to participate in an audience focus group related to the play you witnessed. The audience focus group will offer you the opportunity to talk about what you thought of the play, share any new understandings about the community issue, give feedback on the interventions that were contributed by fellow audience members, feelings of readiness to take action on the issues with which you were confronted throughout the play, and your reflections on the use of theatre to promote positive change in communities. The focus group will take approximately one hour of your time.

This focus group is entirely voluntary, and individuals have the right to withhold information or withdraw from the study if they choose without prejudice and without penalty.

The focus groups will take place in a confidential location at \_\_\_\_\_(location). The exact time of the focus group will be based on a time and date that is convenient for focus group participants, approximately one week after the performance of the play.

All responses will be afforded anonymity. No one individual or organization will be identifiable or identified in the results. Individual names or the name of organizations will not appear anywhere in the results. All results will be reported and/or disseminated in a general format, and any quotations that may identify any particular individual or organization will be erased from the results.

The data will be destroyed after five years after the completion of the study, which is anticipated to be September, 2011. The data from the focus group will be stored in a locked file cabinet by Alysha Sloane in her home (as required by the University of Manitoba guidelines), and will not allow for the identification of any individual. All encrypted electronic files will be stored on a password protected computer. The only people who will have access to the data will be the principal researcher Alysha Sloane.

Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, please discard the information. You are free to withdraw from the study at any time, and /or refrain from answering any questions you prefer to omit, without prejudice or consequence.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding participation in the research project and agree to participate as a subject. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities. Your continued participation should be as informed as your initial consent, so you should feel free to ask for clarification or new information throughout your participation.

Alysha Sloane  
Tel: (204) 995-4715  
7 Brebeuf Road  
Winnipeg, MB  
R2J 1Z4  
E-mail: [alyshasloane@shaw.ca](mailto:alyshasloane@shaw.ca)

OR

Dr. Dawn Wallin  
Tel: (204) 474-6069  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3T 2N2  
E-mail: [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

**The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management/Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.**

**This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alysha Sloane

Signature of Participant \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix H

On University of Manitoba Letterhead

### Audience Participation in the Forum Theatre Event Consent Form

Research Project Title: Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities

Researcher(s): Alysha Sloane

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin, [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Date:

Dear Participant:

At this time I would like to invite you to be an audience member at an upcoming play that will be videotaped for research purposes. Being an audience member will offer you the opportunity to: experience a Forum/Legislative Theatre performance, critically reflect on the issue presented on stage, reflect on the interventions that were contributed by fellow audience members and to reflect on the use of theatre to promote positive change in communities. The event will take approximately two and a half hours.

The Forum/Legislative Theatre performance will occur on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) at \_\_\_\_\_ (location). This performance is part of a larger study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities

The purpose of the study is to introduce theatre activities in one school community in order to get people thinking and talking about an important community issue. The study also hopes to contribute to a greater understanding about how theatre may help people to make positive changes in their communities.

Forum Theatre involves the performance of a twenty to thirty minute play that will end in a crisis. This play is focused on the issue of \_\_\_\_\_. On performance night the play will be performed a second time and willing audience members will be invited to come on stage. They can take the place of a character to make the situation better for the characters in the play. The decision to make an intervention on stage is completely voluntary.

Interventions will be recorded by a research assistant who will be supervised by the researcher, Alysha Sloane. The play will also be digitally videotaped to be used for research purposes.

Being an audience member is entirely voluntary, and individuals have the right to attend the performance or not to attend the performance without prejudice and without penalty. Audience members also have the right to not make interventions on the night of the play.

During the audience interventions that occur during the second performance of the play, another audience member or an actor may share a personal story. Please sign the Pledge of Confidentiality below to indicate that you are aware that you should not discuss or provide identifying information about any person who shares a personal story during the second performance of the play.

The video from the event will not be released publicly and it will be destroyed five years after the completion of the study, which is anticipated to be September, 2011. The videotape of the performance and the research assistant's notes on the audience interventions will be encrypted and in a password-protected file on Alysha Sloane's computer (as required by the University of Manitoba guidelines). The only person who will have access to the data will be the principal researcher Alysha Sloane. The videotape of the performance and the research assistant's record of the audience interventions will be used for research purposes only.

### **Note the following Limitation of Withdrawal from the Study:**

**The performance of a play is a complex series of interdependent interactions between the actors and the audience. If you choose to come on stage during the second performance of the play, your interventions will become a valuable part of the study.**

**If you choose to attend the performance of the play it will not be possible to remove your image or voice from the analysis and interpretation phase of the study.**

Your participation is voluntary. If you do not wish to participate, please discard the information.

Your signature on this form indicates that you have understood to your satisfaction the information regarding your attendance at the theatre performance and are aware that the event will be video-taped for research purposes. Therefore, any involvement in the event that you contribute towards an intervention will be captured on the video-tape and can be used to inform the research study. In no way does this waive your legal rights nor release the researchers, sponsors, or involved institutions from their legal and professional responsibilities.

Alysha Sloane  
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7 Brebeuf Road  
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R2J 1Z4  
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Dr. Dawn Wallin  
Tel: (204) 474-6069  
University of Manitoba  
Winnipeg, MB  
R3T 2N2  
E-mail: [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

**The University of Manitoba Research Ethics Board(s) and a representative(s) of the University of Manitoba Research Quality Management/Assurance office may also require access to your research records for safety and quality assurance purposes.**

**This research has been approved by the Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board. If you have any concerns or complaints about this project you may contact any of the above-named persons or the Human Ethics Coordinator (HEC) at 474-7122. A copy of this consent form has been given to you to keep for your records and reference.**

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Alysha Sloane

Signature of Attendee \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

Researcher's Signature \_\_\_\_\_ Date \_\_\_\_\_

## Appendix I

On University of Manitoba Letterhead

### Letter of Consent for Superintendent of School Division

Research Project Title: Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities

Researcher(s): Alysha Sloane

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin, [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Date:

Dear Ms or Mr.

I am a Masters student at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education working on my thesis entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities. I am writing to you to request permission to work in one of your high school communities to conduct this study.

The purpose of the study is to create an aesthetic space within the research process where very diverse actors in a community engage one another in rigorous debate about issues that are of paramount importance to those who live in the community. It is within this aesthetic space where I hope to gather examples of the ways in which different 'actors' in school communities rehearse for community change. There is little research on the use of Forum Theatre as a strategy to reinvigorate the commons and to make changes in school communities. I want to assess whether or not this type of theatrical work can provide a sound foundation to introduce alternative ways in Manitoba for school communities to link their promises and practices to the pursuit of more joyful, peaceful and democratic communities.

This study will be divided into three phases and located in one community. It will begin with an invitation to 30 former refugee youth and parents to name and select a community problem that is of great importance to them. Twenty participants will then be invited to participate in an Image and Forum Theatre workshop to deeply explore the roots and impact of the community problem as well as possible solutions. The workshop participants will be asked to make a Forum Theatre play using the content of the workshops in order to inspire dialogue and problem solving during a public performance of the play in which the general audience will be invited to participate. The research process will essentially be divided into three phases: identification of the community issue and participant recruitment (phase 1), the workshop series (phase 2), and the Forum Theatre event (phase 3). Please note that the research activities mentioned above will not take place within the school.

Attached is a research consent form that provides the information for participants about the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection and the strategies to ensure confidentiality.

Your signature on the Superintendent's Consent Form will authorize your approval for participants from the \_\_\_\_\_ school community to participate in this study.

If at any time the purpose of this study changes, you will be notified before any alteration takes place.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ms Alysha Sloane

## Appendix J

On University of Manitoba Letterhead

### Letter of Consent for Principal of School

Research Project Title: Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities

Researcher(s): Alysha Sloane

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin, [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Date:

Dear Ms or Mr. \_\_\_\_\_

I am a Masters student at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education working on my thesis entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities. I am writing to you to request permission to work in your high school community to conduct this study. Your superintendent has granted me permission to conduct this study within the school division.

The purpose of the study is to create an aesthetic space within the research process where very diverse actors in a community engage one another in rigorous debate about issues that are of paramount importance to those who live in the community. It is within this aesthetic space where I hope to gather examples of the ways in which different 'actors' in school communities rehearse for community change. There is little research on the use of Forum Theatre as a strategy to reinvigorate the commons and to make changes in school communities. I want to assess whether or not this type of theatrical work can provide a sound foundation to introduce alternative ways in Manitoba for school communities to link their promises and practices to the pursuit of more joyful, peaceful and democratic communities.

This study will be divided into three phases and located in one community. It will begin with an invitation to 30 former refugee youth and parents to name and select a community problem that is of great importance to them. Twenty participants will then be invited to participate in an Image and Forum Theatre workshop to deeply explore the roots and impact of the community problem as well as possible solutions. The workshop participants will be asked to make a Forum Theatre play using the content of the workshops in order to inspire dialogue and problem solving during a public performance of the play in which the general audience will be invited to participate. The research process will essentially be divided into three phases: identification of the community issue and participant recruitment (phase 1), the workshop series (phase 2), and the Forum Theatre event (phase 3). Please note that the research activities noted above will not take place within the school.

Attached is a research consent form that provides the information for participants about the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection and the strategies to ensure confidentiality.

Your signature on the Principal's Consent Form will authorize your approval for participants from the \_\_\_\_\_ school community to participate in this study.

If at any time the purpose of this study changes, you will be notified before any alteration takes place.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ms Alysha Sloane

## Appendix K

On University of Manitoba Letterhead

### Letter of Consent for Teachers

Research Project Title: Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities

Researcher(s): Alysha Sloane

Thesis Advisor: Dr. Dawn Wallin, [wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca](mailto:wallin@ms.umanitoba.ca)

Sponsoring Institution: University of Manitoba

Date:

Dear Ms or Mr.

I am a Masters student at the University of Manitoba in the Faculty of Education working on my thesis entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities. I am writing to you to request your permission to come into your classroom in order to invite students from your English as an Additional Language class to participate in this study. Your superintendent and principal have granted me permission to conduct this study.

The purpose of the study is to create an aesthetic space within the research process where very diverse actors in a community engage one another in rigorous debate about issues that are of paramount importance to those who live in the community. It is within this aesthetic space where I hope to gather examples of the ways in which different 'actors' in school communities rehearse for community change. There is little research on the use of Forum Theatre as a strategy to reinvigorate the commons and to make changes in school communities. I want to assess whether or not this type of theatrical work can provide a sound foundation to introduce alternative ways in Manitoba for school communities to link their promises and practices to the pursuit of more joyful, peaceful and democratic communities.

This study will be divided into three phases and located in one community. It will begin with an invitation to 30 former refugee youth and parents to name and select a community problem that is of great importance to them. Twenty participants will then be invited to participate in an Image and Forum Theatre workshop to deeply explore the roots and impact of the community problem as well as possible solutions. The workshop participants will be asked to make a Forum Theatre play using the content of the workshops in order to inspire dialogue and problem solving during a public performance of the play in which the general audience will be invited to participate. The research process will essentially be divided into three phases: identification of the community issue and participant recruitment (phase 1), the workshop series (phase 2), and the Forum Theatre event (phase 3). Please note that the research activities noted above will not take place within the school.

Below is a research consent form that provides the information for participants about the purpose of the study, the methods of data collection and the strategies to ensure confidentiality.

Your signature on the Teacher's Consent Form will authorize your approval for participants from the \_\_\_\_\_ school community to participate in this study.

If at any time the purpose of this study changes, you will be notified before any alteration takes place. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Ms Alysha Sloane

Appendix L  
Letter of Invitation to Youth & Parents/Guardians

**Are you interested in participating in a study that involves  
theatre games, a play, and talking about important  
community issues?**

**I am Looking for 30 Former Refugee Youth and Adults who  
have Lived in Canada for At Least 2 Years**

This study is divided into 3 parts. You can participate in one, two or all three parts of the study.

***What will happen in part 1 of the study?***

- You will come together with 29 other people for one hour and talk about a community issue that is important you!
- This community issue will help inform part 2 and 3 of the study.
- At the end of the hour you will find out more about part 2 and 3 of the study.
- You will also be offered a chance to participate in part 2 of the study.

***Sound Interesting?***

***When will the meeting take place?***

**Part 1** of the study will take place on \_\_\_\_\_ (date) from (time) at \_\_\_\_\_(location).

If you are interested in participating in this study, please sign and return the consent form that will be given to you one week from now. If you choose to participate in the study you should mail the consent form back to me in the self-addressed stamped envelope before \_\_\_\_\_ (date).

If you think your parent or guardian might like to participate, please take this letter and a consent form home to them. Your EAL teacher will provide all students with a copy of the consent forms. Please note that if you are under 18 years of age your parent or guardian will have to sign the consent form too.

**Please note that the first part of the study would require one hour of your time.**

**If you choose to participate in the second part of the study it would involve your participation in a five day theatre workshop. (28 hours of your time)**

**If you choose to participate in the third part of the study it would involve the creation and performance of a play. (30 hours of your time)**

**You can change your mind and leave the study or join the study at any point!**

If you would like more information about this study, please contact Alysha Sloane at:

204-995-4715

[alyshasloane@shaw.ca](mailto:alyshasloane@shaw.ca)

Sincerely,

Alysha Sloane

**Appendix M**  
**Pledge of Confidentiality for Focus Group Members**  
**To be placed on U of M Letterhead**

I understand the commentary within this focus group for the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities undertaken by Alysha Sloane from the University of Manitoba is confidential, and I will not breach its anonymous and confidential nature. I have read, understood and signed the informed consent form for participation in this focus group and I am willing to participate in this confidential focus group experience.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix N**  
**Pledge of Confidentiality for Translators or Interpreters**

**To be placed on U of M Letterhead**

I understand the commentary within the situations where I will provide translation services for a participant in the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities undertaken by Alysha Sloane from the University of Manitoba is confidential, and I will not breach its anonymous and confidential nature. I am willing to provide confidential translation services to assist my client to fully understand the study's consent form.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix O**  
**Pledge of Confidentiality for Psychotherapist**

I understand the commentary during the theatre workshops and during any individual conversations I have with participants in the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities undertaken by Alysha Sloane from the University of Manitoba is confidential, and I will not breach its anonymous and confidential nature. I am willing to provide confidential psychosocial supports to any participants in the study who may request my assistance for the duration of the study.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

**Appendix P**  
**E-mail to Community Organizations and Individuals to Invite Them to Attend the Forum Theatre Event**

Dear \_\_\_\_\_,

My name is Alysha Sloane and I am working on a research project called Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities. As part of this research project I have been working with a number of individuals to create and perform a Forum Theatre play in our community about the issue of \_\_\_\_\_.

The purpose of the study is to introduce a theatrical process to broaden and deepen democratic engagement between diverse citizens in one public school community. The study also hopes to contribute to a greater understanding of how Forum and Legislative Theatre help people to name and invent different possibilities that address complex community challenges.

Many of the actors who created this play participated in a 5 day workshop experience to deeply explore the issue of \_\_\_\_\_. Out of the theatre games, ideas and images generated during the workshops – this play emerged.

I would like to invite you to be a part of this artistic research experience.

**Please join us for the performance of the play:**

**(Title of Play)**

**Date:**

**Time:**

**Location:**

**Cost: FREE**

**This is a Forum Theatre Event to Explore the Issue \_\_\_\_\_ in our Community**

***What is Forum Theatre?***

Forum Theatre begins with a performance of a 20-30 minute play that ends in a crisis. The play is performed a second time. During the second run of the play, audience members will be invited to come on stage to make interventions to generate solutions for \_\_\_\_\_.

( insert community issue)

***Note: This performance is part of a research project. It will be videotaped. Audience consent forms will be available and must be signed if you choose to attend the performance as Forum Theatre audience members can become involved in the second run of the play. I have attached an audience consent form for your information and consideration. If you do not want to attend the performance please delete this email and the attached audience consent form.***

**For tickets contact Alysha Sloane at [alyshasloane@shaw.ca](mailto:alyshasloane@shaw.ca) or 995-4715.**

**You are invited to be a part of an artistic research project!**

**Please join us for the public performance of the play:**

**(Title of Play)**

**Date:**

**Time:**

**Location:**

**Cost: FREE**

**This is a Forum Theatre Event to Explore the Issue \_\_\_\_\_ in our Community**

Forum Theatre begins with a performance of a 20-30 minute play that ends in a crisis. The play is performed a second time. During the second run of the play, audience members will be invited to come on stage to make interventions to generate solutions for \_\_\_\_\_.  
( insert community issue)

***Note: This performance is part of a research project. It will be videotaped. Audience consent forms will be provided to you when you get your free ticket.***

***For tickets contact Alysha Sloane at [alysahasloane@shaw.ca](mailto:alysahasloane@shaw.ca) or 995-4715.***

**Appendix R**  
**Video Data Release Form**  
**To be Placed on U of M Letterhead**

I hereby acknowledge that I grant Alysha Sloane the right to use my voice and image for the purposes of the research project entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities.

I understand that once the play has been videotaped I will be unable to remove my image and voice from the study.

The videotape will be encrypted and in a password-protected file on Alysha Sloane's computer.

The only person who will have access to the data will be Alysha Sloane.

The videotape will not be released publicly and it will be destroyed 5 years after the completion of the study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

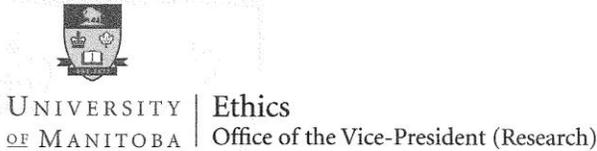
**Appendix S**  
**Pledge of Confidentiality for Workshop Participants**  
**To be Placed on U of M Letterhead**

I understand that any personal stories shared during the theatre workshops and during any individual conversations I have with other participants in the study entitled, Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities undertaken by Alysha Sloane from the University of Manitoba is confidential, and I will not breach its anonymous and confidential nature. I will keep all personal information shared in the workshops confidential.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

**Appendix T**  
**University of Manitoba Ethics Approval Certificate**



CTC Building  
208 - 194 Dafoe Road  
Winnipeg, MB R3T 2N2  
Fax (204) 269-7173  
[www.umanitoba.ca/research](http://www.umanitoba.ca/research)

**APPROVAL CERTIFICATE**

April 6, 2011

**TO:** Alysha June Sloane (Advisor D. Wallin)  
Principal Investigator

**FROM:** Stan Straw, Chair   
Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board (ENREB)

**Re:** Protocol #E2011:007  
"Theatre of the Commons: A Theatrical Inquiry into the Democratic Engagement of Former Refugee Families in Public High School Communities"

Please be advised that your above-referenced protocol has received human ethics approval by the **Education/Nursing Research Ethics Board**, which is organized and operates according to the Tri-Council Policy Statement. This approval is valid for one year only.

Any significant changes of the protocol and/or informed consent form should be reported to the Human Ethics Secretariat in advance of implementation of such changes.

**Please note:**

- If you have funds pending human ethics approval, the auditor requires that you submit a copy of this Approval Certificate to the Office of Research Services, fax 261-0325 - please include the name of the funding agency and your UM Project number. This must be faxed before your account can be accessed.
- if you have received multi-year funding for this research, responsibility lies with you to apply for and obtain Renewal Approval at the expiry of the initial one-year approval; otherwise the account will be locked.

**The Research Ethics Board requests a final report for your study (available at: [http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors\\_ethics\\_human\\_REB\\_forms\\_guidelines.html](http://umanitoba.ca/research/ors/ethics/ors_ethics_human_REB_forms_guidelines.html)) in order to be in compliance with Tri-Council Guidelines.**

*Bringing Research to Life*