Navigating the Space Between:
A Search for the Role of a Creative Facilitator in Arts Education

by

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B.F.A., Concordia University, 2007

Thesis Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of
Master of Arts

in the
Department of Arts Education
Faculty of Education

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SIMON FRASER UNIVERSITY

Summer 2014

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Abstract

This thesis is informed by my experience working with a group of grade eleven students to build an emergent, arts-based curriculum. In considering the question "What is the Role of a Creative Facilitator?' I inhabit, explore and reflect upon this dynamic position in an effort to understand how one might best navigate the space-between teaching and learning. Drawing from Performative Inquiry, Youth Participatory Action Research and Arts-based Research I set out to involve the students as artist-researchers, de-center power relationships, and create a positive environment where an emergent curriculum could develop. In my findings I consider how a creative facilitator might open a space for meaningful collaboration and critical engagement, as well as identifying some of the key attitudes, attributes, and skills required to be effective in this role.

Keywords: creative facilitation, arts education, critical pedagogy, performative inquiry, YPAR, arts-based research, creative collaboration.

"For apart from inquiry, apart from the praxis, individuals cannot be truly human. Knowledge emerges only through invention and reinvention, through the restless, impatient, continuing, hopeful inquiry human beings pursue in the world, with the world, and with each other" (Freire, 1993).

Acknowledgements

Massive and heartfelt thanks to Dr. Lynn Fels for her wisdom, guidance, and ongoing support in this process.

I extend a huge thanks to Dr. Kathryn Ricketts for her keen insight and meaningful contribution to this thesis.

Without my student-participants this project would not have been possible. I thank them for their bright eyes, enthusiasm and for helping me to learn about the role of a creative facilitator

I offer immense gratitude to my family: Chloe, Luc, Fred, Ian, Nathaniel, Annie, Ben, Joy, my grandparents Jim and Claire, my extended family, and dear friends.

Last but not least, an enormous thank-you to Paddy for his patience, encouragement and whole-hearted support.

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Preface: Flashlights in the Dark

For a moment the room was hushed and the only light came from a small gap in one of the curtains. Out of the silence a ukulele strummed and a young woman's voice sang a melancholic song, of her own arrangement, that expressed feelings of insecurity, alienation, confusion and hope. One by one the students walked onto the stage illuminated by moving handheld lights. They circled – casting their lights on the walls, ceiling, and floor before their beams found each other, revealing faces, hands and feet. The music stopped and the performers turned off their flashlights, and in the dark formed a line with their backs to the audience, holding hands. Then, a single performer stepped forward and turned to face the audience. Using her flashlight she read aloud from a monologue she had written on a single piece of paper, it glowed orange in the darkness. Her voice filled the open space; it was strong and sincere:

> I think about it a lot. What to expect from it, how to deal with it, what I should do about it. And I'll tell you one thing, it scares the shit out of me. The unknown is a frightening thing and that's my future. I'd like to think that I'll do something great with it, become a doctor, a politician, save some dolphins or whales. That would be great, but who knows what I'll do? Do I even have the skills and talents that will get me to the places I want to be? Where are the places I want to be? Everyone tells me that I don't have to decide what I want to be when I grow up, that I have plenty of time to decide, but shouldn't I at least have some idea of what I'm interested in? There isn't really anything I'm particularly passionate about, except being helpful to others. Where the heck is that going to lead me? One could say my future is a blank canvas, and to some that would be beautiful, having the opportunity to do anything, but to me my future is just a dark empty pit ready to swallow me whole if I don't watch my step.

This is a monologue from my research group's final performance and looking back now I am able to see beyond the pressures of the day, the last minute changes, unmet expectations and performance anxiety we all shared, to the many ways that the final performance represented a positive outcome of our time together. Over the course of the project the students and I worked together as creative collaborators – stepping into the unknown to explore issues and ideas that mattered to us. As an artist-researcher, I am interested in the process, and wanted to focus on how I could open a space that invited the students' voices and active participation. Curious about how to

navigate this space-between teaching and learning, I arrived at the question 'What is the role of a creative facilitator?' I would like to invite you, the reader, to join me in my search to better understand and articulate this exciting and dynamic role and its significance in the field of arts education today.

Chapter 1.

Introduction: A Wandering Path

In recent years we have seen empowered youth movements surge across Canada. The Idle No More, Occupy Wall Street and Quebec student strikes are examples that give me hope and remind me that youth are capable of representing themselves, being critically engaged, and organizing against systemic oppression and social inequality. In each of these grassroots movements I witnessed not only intense energy and passion, but also creativity and artistic expression. These examples challenge many stereotypical notions of young people as being apathetic, disconnected, and un-politicized. Instead, this widespread groundswell shows that many young people are aware of the serious issues that face their generation, and that they have a desire to affect positive change at a local, national and global level.

Though these recent youth movements are encouraging and help to strengthen my belief that change is possible, there are many other social indicators that youth are a population at risk. The Canadian Mental Health Association claim, "The total number of 12-19 year olds in Canada at risk for developing depression is a staggering 3.2 million" ("Facts About Mental Illness," 2014). They go on to say that, "Suicide is among the leading causes of death in 15-24 year old Canadians, second only to accidents; 4,000 people die prematurely each year by suicide." Young peoples' capacity for cruelty has also been in the news lately with online bullying and the trauma it causes. The Canadian Red Cross state, "Canadian teachers ranked cyber bullying as their issue of highest concern out of six listed options- 89% said bullying and violence are serious problems in our public schools" ("Facts on Bullying and Harassment," 2013).

In considering these troubling statistics, we must take into account the social, environmental, and economic stresses that effect the youth of today. If more young

people are to become engaged, caring, responsible citizens, they need spaces where they can express their frustration, concern, passion, and joy with critical thought and creativity. They need to learn how to work, encourage and support one another in order to understand and unpack the layers of complexity that surround them. In thinking of better ways to engage youth, we as educators in the arts, might ask how can we create spaces of inclusion and potential for transformation? In what ways can collaborative arts practices facilitate the construction of a creative community? How can youth be empowered through the arts to become empathic, active and engaged citizens?

Maxine Greene's (1995) use of the term the 'space-between' may offer some insight into how we might approach these complicated questions, "I hope we can ponder the opening of wider and wider spaces of dialogue, in which diverse students and teachers, empowered to speak in their own voices, reflect together as they try to bring about an in-between" (p. 59). The space-between, as I have come to understand it, is not a neutral territory. It is a contested space that dwells at the margins, rather than at the centre of a dominant culture or ideology. bell hooks (1994) explains that marginality can be a space of resistance:

> This is an intervention. A message from that space in the margin that is a site of creativity and power, that inclusive space where we forever recover ourselves, where we move in solidarity to erase the category colonizer/colonized. Marginality is the space of resistance. Enter that space. Let us meet there. Enter that space. We greet you as liberators" (p. 343).

In my journey as an artist/student/researcher I am continually drawn to the margins, to this space-between, this action site of transformation where power structures are challenged as people play, create and learn through their shared experiences and collective art making.

I experienced first-hand the power of collective art making during a trip to Bangalore, India. In 2006, I had the privilege, along with a select group of Concordia theatre students, professors, and law students, to participate in a theatre for human rights project called "Rights Here!" Working under local artists, we underwent three and a half weeks of rigorous physical and vocal street theatre training. We then, alongside a group of Indian students, assembled a street theatre production that we performed in

several public (rural and urban) locations around Bangalore on the issues of water, bonded labour and women's rights. Seeing the value of praxis, the movement between theory and practice, kept me involved in street theatre and community art projects upon my return to Canada, and informed my future academic interest.

I was inspired by how theory offered a critical lens and depth to my creative work. Ideas from performance studies, cultural theory, feminism, and the post-discourses challenged me to look at the world and myself differently and helped me see the complexity of issues related to gender, identity, power and culture.

Throughout my undergraduate degree I immersed myself in collaborative, experimental, and interdisciplinary performance. I enrolled in courses on alternative approaches to theatre production and initiated independent studies where we explored relationships between theory and practice through collective creation. We performed these experimental pieces on campus and in public venues around Montreal. It was a highly creative period that allowed me to take on the roles of writer, performer and director inside and outside of school. It was during this time that I discovered the progressive ideas of Paulo Freire and his notion of critical pedagogy, which ultimately inspired me to pursue a master's degree in Arts Education and write this thesis.

In the second year of my masters' degree I began to develop ideas for a research project. In a course on *Curriculum Theory and Arts Education* I wrote a paper entitled 'Heroines and Heroes,' an emergent curriculum for youth inspired by the work of the late American street artist Margaret Kilgallen. As an urban teenager, I was influenced by the street culture found in graffiti, photography, music and fashion of the skateboard, garage-rock and DIY communities. Experiencing these artistic movements firsthand, I began to reframe my understanding of what 'Art' was and whom it was for; it was only years later that I would find the theory that supported the value and importance of everyday aesthetics. In particular I maintained a keen interest in visual street art from around the world. Whether the medium is spray paint, paper and wheat paste, oil sticks or chalk, I continue to be inspired by these rebellious expressions of youthful imagination and the political views that are so often depicted with creativity and humour.

My initial vision for this research project was an ambitious, exciting, multi-media production, where the students were to be engaged as artist-researchers in their own communities, documenting and bringing back stories, which would be woven into a highly collaborative and visual performance art piece. However, I also wanted this to be their production, I wanted them to take ownership and engage as active participants in a truly emergent curriculum. It was therefore clear that the focus of the project should not be the end product but the opening of a space for a creative and shared experience. So I made the decision to insert myself into the process as the subject of inquiry, inhabiting the role of a creative facilitator in an effort to explore how one might navigate the space between teaching and learning. To help me discover what this role entailed, I asked the students to assist me in the research, inviting their involvement and feedback from the beginning.

For my research methodologies I turned to Youth Led Participatory Action Research (YPAR) and Performative Inquiry, as they offered insight into how I might best involve the students as researches, de-center power relationships and create a positive environment where an emergent curriculum could be developed. In considering the role of the creative facilitator in this process, my primary research questions emerged:

- What are the attitudes, attributes and skills required to be an effective creative facilitator?

- How does one navigate the space-between teaching and learning to facilitate collaborative art making?

- How does one facilitate a space that promotes critical engagement and reflexive inquiry?

In an effort to answer these questions, I will move from a broad theoretical foundation, to a real world experience, and back again, engaging in ongoing reflexive analysis and a form of praxis that I hope will be as illuminating for the reader as it was for me.

Chapter 2.

Literature Review: A Critical and Transformative Approach

Reaching towards emerging and established ideas from educational philosophy, critical pedagogy, and phenomenology, my search was guided by the work of Paulo Freire (2000), Maxine Greene (1995), Lev Vygotsky (1998), and bell hooks (1998). Though admittedly diverse, these four scholars in particular inspired and informed my thinking on the importance of critical engagement, social justice and transformative approaches to arts education. Their influence is well established, crossing disciplines and, as I intend to show in this paper, proving relevant to the current field of arts education. Drawing from the work of these foundational thinkers, and others I will introduce along the way, seven key theoretical concepts emerged that have helped to define the goals and objectives I feel underlie the role of a creative facilitator. These concepts are: the search, engagement, space-between, critical consciousness, lived experience, democratic process, and transformation education. Rather than a fixed program, the following sections should be seen as a framework that supports the theoretical, political and social context for understanding and locating the importance of the role of a creative facilitator.

2.1. The Search

The search is our path of learning. The search can be seen as the process of developing as human beings, learning to relate to each other and the world. Considering the value of the search in arts education is about being and becoming, constructing meaning and remaining open to possibility. Brazilian educator and critical philosopher Paulo Freire (2000) suggests, "the foundation stone of the whole educational process is human curiosity" (p. 19).

In *Pedagogy of Freedom*, Freire (2000) proposes that curiosity leads the search, and that it is important to "understand reality as a process rather than a static entity" (p. 57). With this, he explains that it is incompleteness that implies a permanent movement of search, where education is about constructing meaning and creating an identity. Freire (2000) explains that:

> Our work is with people, whether they be simple, youthful, or adult. People who are on the road of permanent search. People in formation, growing, redirecting their lives, becoming better, and because they are human, capable of negating fundamental values, of distorting life, of falling back, of transgressing (p. 127).

This notion of development as a movement of search is also clearly expressed by the influential educational reformer John Dewey (1916) who explains in *Democracy and Education* that education is growth. In this book he suggests that "Since growth is the characteristic of life, education is all one with growing; it has no end beyond itself" (p. 53). He also states that the "Power to grow depends upon need for others and plasticity" (Dewey, 1916, p. 52).

Built into the work of Freire and Dewey is an understanding that our learning is not an independent endeavor, but a collective one. This approach to education can also be seen in the work of social cultural theorist Lev Vygotsky (1998) who proposed that it is, "Through others, we become ourselves" (p. 170). If we are to embrace this notion, it will inevitably impact the way we relate to our students and the reciprocal relationships that emerge.

Educational philosopher, teacher and social activist Maxine Greene (1995) follows with the question: "What of curriculum itself as a search for meaning?" (p. 89) In supporting the idea that curriculum can lead us on a search, we should consider how we might inspire curiosity in our students and open up a space for them to ask questions and explore meaning making. We must encourage them to research their own lives, and the lives of others, explore multiple perspectives and contribute to collaborative art making.

In addition to seeing curriculum as a search for meaning, Elizabeth Jones (2012), co-author of the book *Emergent Curriculum* describes an emergent approach as open

ended and self-directed. In her article *The Emergence of Emergent Curriculum* Jones goes on to say that an emergent curriculum focuses on the process of learning, and is "…coconstructed by the children and the adults and the environment itself." ("Young Children," 2012).

2.2. Engagement

In her book *Teaching to Transgress*, author, feminist, and critical educator bell hooks (1994) suggests, "The most important lesson that we learn together, the lesson that allows us to move together within and beyond the classroom, is one of mutual engagement" (p. 205). She goes on to suggest that the classroom should be an exciting place where students' whole selves are invited in. hooks (1994) explains that her ideas on critical pedagogy are based on her understanding of Freire's teaching, and the belief that "…we must build community in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor (p. 40).

In this area of critical pedagogy, progressive thinkers such as bell hooks, and other academics and educators in North America and abroad have been greatly influenced by educator and philosopher Paulo Freire. In his writing, Freire (2000) suggests that a fundamental aspect of creating a space for critical interaction is for teachers and learners to "…engage in the experience of assuming themselves as social, historical, thinking, communicating, transformative, creative persons, dreamers of possible utopias, capable of being angry because of a capacity to love" (p. 45).

As suggested in the above quote, Freire brings to our attention the notion that education is not a purely intellectual engagement; he speaks to the imaginative and emotional bodies of students and teachers, and the value of rooting the search in a socio-historical context. In the *Critical Pedagogy Primer*, author and critical educator Joe L. Kincheloe (2008) writes, "Freirian liberation is a social dynamic that involves working with and engaging other people in a power conscious process" (p. 71). The term 'power conscious process' is connected to Freire's notion of critical consciousness, and can be understood as coming to an awareness of power dynamics, or oppression in one's life, and then taking action to overcome that oppression.

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If the goal is to engage our students in a power conscious process, we, as educators, need to create interactive environments where students want to engage with one another and the material being explored. In considering where engagement begins, we can draw from phenomenology and the ideas of philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty. Quoting Merleau-Ponty, Greene (1995) writes, "it is important that we insist on what we know through our own situations" (p. 60). Both Merleau-Ponty and Greene show us that engagement is rooted in our bodies, our physical connection to each other and the world. If it is through our bodies that we create connections to the world around us, then we should find ways to engage in a physical and active way with the topics we are exploring.

In order to create an open and interactive environment, philosopher Nel Noddings (2012) speaks to the importance of an education that engages the purposes and energies of those being educated. In order to secure such an engagement she suggests, "…teachers must build relationships of care and trust, and within such relationships, teachers and students construct educational objectives cooperatively" (p. 244). From the lens of educational philosophy and critical pedagogy we are shown the importance of complexity in the relationship between teaching and learning.

2.3. Space-Between

In an effort to move beyond the limitations of Cartesian dualism, educational philosophy has come to consider the space-between as a location of possibility and negotiation. Joan Wink (2010), American author and educator suggests, "Critical pedagogy focuses on the interaction between teaching and learning" (p. 73), and encourages educators to ask: How do we navigate the space between teaching and learning?

Lacking in any one definition, the space-between, or in-between, may be seen as a place of encounter where identities are negotiated, and where ideas and differences are explored. It is a space to engage in dialogue, where layers of complexity may be discovered and unpacked. Maxine Greene (1995) refers to political theorist Hannah Arendt's 'web of relations:'

I hope we can ponder the opening of wider and wider spaces of dialogue, in which diverse students and teachers, empowered to speak in their own voices, reflect together as they try to bring about an in-between…weave a web of relations (p. 59).

Expanding upon Arendt's concept, Greene (1995) describes this interaction in arts education as "Speaking with others, working with others, playing with others, and making with others"(p. 58), through this collaborative approach she suggests that "…the young may attain some reciprocity of perspectives as they create networks of relationships within and among themselves" (Greene, 1995, p. 58).

Here we may return to Freire, for him, dialogue is an integral feature of the development of critical education. Relationships and understanding are built on a foundation of sharing. Recognizing multiple perspectives and exploring one another's stories can help to foster empathy, care, and respect for other people's experiences that are different from one's own. Freire (2000) encourages us to see that "Education takes place when there are two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue" (p. 8). It is in this location of encounter where ideas are exchanged, and people become shaped and re-shaped by one another's presence.

The space-between is necessarily an ambiguous space where meaning itself is negotiated. Teachers and learners can express and convey what they know, and admit to what they don't know. In acknowledging these gaps in our own thinking and experience, we are able to be more open to others and what they may have to teach us. Nel Noddings (2012) writes, "Our goodness and growth are inextricably bound to that of others we encounter" (p. 245). As educators we should ask ourselves how we might open up and invite students into a reflective space of interaction and exploration.

2.4. Critical Consciousness

Critical consciousness is about becoming more aware of ourselves in our own circumstances, and the forces that have shaped who we are, and how we think. Maxine Greene (1995) speaks to the "…importance of persons becoming reflective enough to think about their own thinking" (p. 65). Critical does not necessarily mean to criticize as

Wink (2010) points out, but rather "It means looking within and without and seeing more deeply the complexities of teaching and learning" (p. 50).

One of the most important dimensions of Freire's pedagogy involves "the cultivation of critical consciousness" (Kincheloe, 2008, p.72). 'Conscientization' is the term Freire used to describe "…the act of coming to critical consciousness" (Kincheloe, 2008, p.73). Friere's use of the term praxis "…involves a process of action-reflection-action, that is central to development of a consciousness of power and how it operates" (Kincheloe, 2008, p.120). If we are to agree that "…education is always political and teachers are unavoidably political operatives" (Kincheloe, 2008, p.70), as Freire claims, it is therefore imperative to consider power dynamics in the classroom.

American cultural critic and pedagogue Henry Giroux (2011) states, "…critical pedagogy helps the learner become aware of the forces that have hitherto ruled their lives and especially shaped their consciousness" (p. 155). In becoming more aware of the socio-cultural context that students find themselves, we would do well to encourage them to see how these 'forces' affect their perception of reality and themselves. Lev Vygotsky draws attention to the importance of language in order to affect personal or social change:

> With human beings' ability to use tools such as language to change their social context and themselves, they are not simply at the mercy of social and historical processes. Through the mediation of such tools, humans gain agency (as cited in Kincheloe, 2008, p. 68).

Language and literacy are key elements of both Vygotsky's and Freire's work as educators. Where literacy is how we move through the world, it is our ability to interpret cultural communication, whether visual, gestural, verbal, or written. Language defines the rules, the qualities, and the aesthetics that form these different types of communication. Freire wrote from an activist perspective on how language and literacy must be focused towards helping marginalized populations "…read both the word and the world" (as cited in Giroux, 2011, p.152) in order to challenge systems of oppression. As a psychologist, Vygotsky wrote about the interrelationship of language and conscious thought.

In this way, Freire and Vygostky's ideas overlap, as they both believed that education is about connecting to one's lived experience and developing a critical awareness of how language shapes our relationships and environment. For them, literacy is about learning to unpack the cultural norms embedded in language and situate the learner within a socio-cultural context. In this light, the ability to think critically, articulate a personal perspective and engage in dialogue with one's community, allows us to move towards positive social change.

For bell hooks (1994), critical thinking helps to develop an engaged voice, and as she suggests, an engaged voice must "…always be changing, always evolving in dialogue with a world beyond itself" (p. 11). Drawing from Vygotsky, Freire and hooks, we are urged to explore the way in which critical consciousness; specifically language and literacy help to foster personal and social transformation.

2.5. Lived Experience

Stemming from embodiment theory and phenomenology is the idea that knowledge develops through our bodies, our experiences, and our interactions with others and our environment, what can be referred to as the lived experience. Our challenge is to then build a curriculum that relates to the lived experience of our students. It is the material of their lives, the issues they identify, and topics they feel are relevant, that must be made meaningful when explored through art making practices. Merleau-Ponty's (1945) ideas on phenomenology encourage us to focus on "…what we know through our own lived situations" (as cited in Greene, 1995, p. 60). Vygotsky echoes this in his sociocultural theory, that "…individual behavior cannot be removed from the context in which it is taking place" (as cited in Kincheloe, 2008, p. 67).

Acknowledging the extent to which our identities are shaped by others and our environment, the question becomes, how do we better integrate learning that takes place in the students' lives outside of class with the learning inside of the classroom. In his doctoral thesis *Performing Identity: The Politics and Pedagogy of Witnessing the Self*, academic and artist Dahn Hiuni (2005) writes, " Our individual identities are constructed through our interactions within overlapping and intersecting communities to

which we belong" (p.4). Hiuni also suggests, "Identity is thus a complex construction of biological, psychological, and cultural factors" (p.5). If, as educators, our responsibility is to encourage our students to change, grow, and reflect upon their identities, might we not provide learning opportunities by integrating our own lived experience and learning into the curriculum? In this way, we consider how teachers can learn to change and grow alongside their students.

"Lived worlds themselves must be open to reflection and transformation" (Greene, 1995, p. 59). It has been expressed that critical thinking and dialogue are fundamental aspects of a progressive education that emphasizes the lives of the students in relationship with one another and the teacher. Freire contends that:

> The school curriculum should in part be shaped by problems that face teachers and students in their effort to live just and ethical lives. Such a curriculum promotes students as researchers who engage in critical analysis of the forces that shape their world" (as cited in Kincheloe, 2008, p. 16).

The above quote speaks to the rise of Participatory Action Research (PAR) in educational research. PAR has evolved from critical pedagogy, embracing the notion that students should be directly involved in shaping the direction of their educational experience. Quoting Freire, Giroux (2011) writes that pedagogy has to be:

> … meaningful in order to be critical and transformative. This means that personal experience becomes a valuable resource that gives students the opportunity to relate their own narratives, social relations, and histories to what is being taught (p. 157).

Greene echoes Freire, Vygotsky, and Merleau-Ponty, in the idea that the lived experience of the students is a fundamental aspect of the learning process, and that teachers should consider that "…the main point of education (in the context of a lived life) is to enable a human being to become increasingly mindful with regard to his or her lived situation- and its untapped possibilities" (Greene, 1995, p. 182). Quoting Hannah Arendt, Greene (1995) emphasizes, the "…active world comes together when people come together in 'action and speech,' retaining their 'agent-revealing capacity' (p. 182), and "speaking from their life-worlds" (p. 196).

It is important to consider that educators and learners need to regard each other as "…whole human beings, striving not just for knowledge in books, but knowledge about how to live in the world" (hooks, 1994, p. 14). In addition to relating the learning that takes place inside of the classroom to the social, cultural, and economic realities of the students, we might ask how the unique talents, abilities and voices of youth can help to inform and shape an emergent curriculum.

2.6. Democratic Process

Influenced by Dewey's ideas on 'Democracy and Education,' Maxine Greene (1995) draws our attention to the notion "…that democracy is an ideal in the sense that it is always reaching towards some end - like community it has to be always in the making" (p. 66). In an effort to move beyond the 'transmission' (Dewey), or 'banking model' (Freire), we may look to the progressive thinkers in education that strive towards creating democratic environments where students actively engage in shaping their learning experience.

As Freire points out, the role of an educator is not neutral – it is a political act. With this acknowledgement, comes a responsibility for educators to be aware of their assumptions and how their political bias informs their approach to teaching. It is necessary for educators to reflect upon how their actions and words impact their students and set not just a tone, but also the working relationships of a classroom environment. Critical pedagogy is important because it "…forces educators to look again at the fundamental issues of power and its relationship to the greater societal forces that affects schools" (Wink, 2010, p.54).

Freire's liberatory approach emphasizes how the ability to read, write and articulate one's ideas can help oppressed people come to an awareness of injustice, and help them develop democratic ways to organize and challenge systems of oppression. Giroux (2011) writes of Freire's devoted passion for democratic principles:

> … to help students develop a consciousness of freedom, recognize
> authoritarian tendencies, connect knowledge to power and agency, and to

learn to read both the word and the world as part of a broader struggle for justice and democracy (p. 152).

In an effort to 'connect knowledge to power and agency' we consider critical pedagogy and "…how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others are clearly not" (Wink, 2010, p. 55).

In order for educators to have empathy and understanding for where their students are coming from, it is important that teachers are aware of the impact that dominant culture and mainstream media has on students' lives because of the power that media has in affecting how students see themselves, and how they relate to others and their environment. Giroux (2011) advocates that critical pedagogy within schools, and the critical public pedagogy represented in broader cultural apparatuses are important in critiquing dominant culture in the following ways:

> Modes of intervention dedicated to creating those democratic public spheres where individuals can think critically relate sympathetically, to the problems of others, and intervene in the world in order to address major social problems. (p. 13)

In addition, Giroux (2011) asserts that "…radical elements of democracy are worth struggling for" (p. 160), and that critical education is "…a basic element of social change" (p. 160).

If students are to become informed and active citizens within society they need to feel as though their voice and opinions matter, they also need to learn how to engage in dialogue with one another about issues that concern them so they may feel they can participate in affecting positive change. bell hooks (1994) maintains "Making the classroom a democratic setting where everyone feels a responsibility to contribute is a central goal of transformative pedagogy" (p. 39).

2.7. Transformation Education

Transformation education embraces personal and social change as being embedded in educational practice. It acknowledges that in order to adapt and interact with the changing world around us, we need to learn to be in transition, and participate in affecting positive change. Greene (1995) encourages us to see that "…education today must be conceived as a mode of opening the world to critical judgments by the young and to their imaginative projections and, in time, to their transformative actions" (p. 56). Greene emphasizes this notion of performative action when she writes:

> Once they are open, once they are informed, once they are engaged in
> speech and action from their vantage points, they may be able to identify
> a better state of things– and go on to transform. (Greene, 1995, p.59).

In the above quote, Greene reminds us of the importance of fostering an awareness and critical consciousness in our students that inspires them to ask questions and share their perspectives of the world in which they dwell. In the development of a critical consciousness, educators and learners may engage in Freire's (1968) notion of praxis, "reflection and action upon the world" (p. 33), that ideally results in transformation of ideas and relationships.

Vygotsky's (1978) thinking helps us to see that development is a collective endeavor as we are constantly being shaped through our relationships to our environment and each other. Vera John Steiner (2000), a cultural-historical theorist and educator advocates for a move from an individual centered approach to learning to an approach that focuses on group learning. She suggests that group learning is important because "humans come into being and mature in relation to others" (John Steiner, 2000, p.187).

If we embrace the idea that "Human beings come to be themselves and come to know their world and themselves in the process and as the process of collaboratively changing their world (while changing together with it)—in the midst of this process and as one of its facets—rather than outside of or merely in connection with it." (Stetsenko, 2008, p. 483), how can we help to create spaces where students are encouraged to explore the ways in which their identities and lives are influenced and shaped by each

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other and society? Czech dramatist and politician Vaclav Havel (1983) suggests, "A better outlook for such communality…does not lie in new programs or projects necessarily, but in a renaissance of human relationships" (as cited in Greene, 1995, p. 40). Ultimately it is this focus on human relationships, rather than programs, material or techniques, that is the concern of the creative facilitator.

Chapter 3.

Methodology: Searching for an in-between

Before I begin, I think it is worth mentioning that though I have chosen to organize my research paper into traditional chapters of theory and method, I intend there to be less of a clear divide between these two chapters than may be assumed. The diverse thinkers covered in my literature review each developed their own educational praxis. In turn the scholars introduced in my methodology are equally as grounded in their own philosophical theory. It should be seen as more of a progression of ideas, as I moved towards a collaborative, arts-based research project, one where I was to be an active participant.

The primary research methodologies I have selected for my investigation into the question, 'what is the role of a creative facilitator?' are Youth Participatory Action Research (YPAR), Arts-based Research, and Performative Inquiry. Each of these approaches is a well-established methodology that I intend to draw from with the aim to create an emergent curriculum that is centered on the ideas and concerns of the students. In combining these particular methodologies that emphasize group-learning process and de-centralized control in the classroom, I am especially interested in the ways YPAR and Performative Inquiry might help to explore the space between teaching and learning.

3.1. Youth Participatory Action Research

In *Revolutionizing Education: Youth Participatory Action Research in Motion,* Ernest Morrell writes that PAR (Participatory Action Research) "…gained recognition in Latin America in the 1970's through the Symposium of Cartagena on Critical Social Science Research" (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 158). Morrell goes on to

explain that the work Paulo Freire was doing in Brazil to engage peasants as collaborators, researchers and activists had a great influence on creating a vision for YPAR.

Aimed at helping marginalized and oppressed populations, Morrell writes that Freire's critical pedagogy was developed to help everyday people gain the "literacy and inquiry skills that would allow them to more powerfully engage structures of power" (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 158). Freire believed that both the process of education and the content of banking education serve the interest of power elites, and through this process inequitable conditions are maintained.

Quoting Freire, Morrell supports the notion that …"it would only be through dialogic and problem posing pedagogy that members of historically marginalized groups would come to a recognition of this oppression" (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 160). Freire thought that it was necessary to decenter "…relationships between teachers and students (by) situating the learning process within a dialectic of thought and action that he referred to as praxis" (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 161).

Cammarota and Fine (2008) state that the "pedagogical philosophy on which YPAR is based derives from Freire's (1993) notion of praxis. In addition to the great influence of Freire, other major thinkers who have influenced YPAR praxis are Lev Vygotsky and John Dewey. Dewey, a major pioneer of progressive education, "…understood that children learn naturally when they were allowed to follow their own natural curiosity about the world around them" (Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 160). He also believed that the implicit motivation that children have to become more knowledgeable is their engagement with their everyday reality. Skeptical of the pedagogies of his day, Dewey advocated a participatory social inquiry where students are encouraged to inquire about the world around them.

Author and educator Ernest T. Stringer (2013) states that Action Research is a "…collaborative approach to inquiry or investigation that provides people with means to take systematic action to resolve specific problems" (p. 8). He suggests that the fundamental premise of community based action research is that it "…commences with an interest in the problems of a group, community, or organization" (Stringer, 2013, p.

10). Stringer highlights the role of researcher as resource person, a facilitator who is there to act as a catalyst and to stimulate development. He suggests that it is important to start where people are. The key is to enable them "…to develop their own analyses of their issues" (Stringer, 2013, p. 24), allowing them to explore several courses of action.

In order to develop an analysis of their own issues, Ernest Morrell suggests, "A major goal of YPAR is youth development, but an equally important focus is the development of students' literacies through innovating and empowering classroom curricula and pedagogies" (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 159). He writes that the aim is to develop young people as empowered agents of change through a process that also addresses larger issues of social inequality. Involving youth in the research process is significant for the following reasons:

1) Youth, and especially youth from low-income communities, are seldom engaged as potential knowledge producers.

2) YPAR is an approach to research for action and change that conceptualizes youth as legitimate and essential collaborators.

3) Positioning youth as researchers offers important and unique insights into some of our most serious social ills that disproportionally effect young people (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 158).

As Morrell suggests, if we are to understand the social ills that are greatly affecting young people today we must listen to those that are most affected by them, and equip them "…with the investigative tools that allow them to collect, analyze, and distribute information about these issues from their unique perspectives as insiders" (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 158). By documenting daily lives and creating new stories, Shawn Ginwright claims that Participatory Action Research "…forces researchers to re-examine what constitutes research, and shatters the brittle barriers that separate the scholar and artist in each of us" (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 15).

Approaching YPAR as a methodology begins with framing 'worthwhile questions' (Freire), and engaging in research that "…has grown from our own experiences that we can speak to the everyday meaning of these ideas" (Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 69). YPAR does not offer a fixed model, but rather opens up a space for engaging youth in dialogue and putting "…a critique of society into practice" (Cammarota and Fine, 2008,

p. 71). In this approach, the teacher is not an expert but a facilitator and collaborator, who works alongside their students, helping to navigate and move the process forwards.

3.2. Arts-based Research

Arts-based Research is a methodological genre that stems from the qualitative paradigm. As Patricia Leavy (2008) points out in *Method Meets Art: Arts Based Research Practice*, for more than a half a century, "…diverse scholars have been challenging the basic tenets of positivism, resulting in an alternative worldview: the qualitative paradigm" (p. 5). Another major influence, Leavy adds, that has altered the academic landscape over the past few decades, was the social justice movements of the nineteen-sixties and seventies (civil rights, women's rights, gay rights).

The common outgrowth from these diverse movements, Leavy (2008) suggests, was a "…reexamination of power within the knowledge building process in order to avoid creating knowledge that continued to be complicit in the oppression of minority groups" (p. 7). In addition to the social justice movements, other factors such as globalization, media, and the post-discourses (post-modernism, post-colonialism, post-structuralism), as well as feminism, queer studies, and embodiment theories, have all contributed to shifting the academic landscape towards a qualitative paradigm in education.

In *The Arts and the Creation of Mind,* scholar and professor of art and education Elliot W. Eisner (2004) writes, "Arts-based research begins with the recognition that the arts as well as the sciences can help us understand the world in which we live" (p. 213). Advocating for a shift from theoretical knowledge towards an appreciation of the practical is fundamental for "…some things can only be known through the process of action" (Eisner, 2004, p. 214). He goes on to say that "Humans grow through their ability to experiment with aspects of the world they encounter" (Eisner, 2004, p. 240), and that "The ultimate aim of education should be to enable individuals to become architects of their own education and through that process to continually reinvent themselves" (Eisner, 2004, p. 240).

One of the strengths of Arts- based Research Leavy (2008) suggests is how interdisciplinary arts-based practices allow research questions to be posed in new ways. With an emphasis on process, these approaches aim to "…describe, explore and discover" (p. 12). In addition, arts-based practices can also be a means of exploring identity and can help to raise critical awareness. Leavy (2008) emphasizes that Arts-based Research can be seen as a social justice oriented research that "…seeks to reveal power relations (often invisible to those in privileged groups), raise critical race or gender consciousness, build coalitions across groups, and challenge dominant ideologies" (p.13).

3.3. Performative Inquiry

In *Method Meets Art*, Patricia Leavy (2008) states that performative-based methods of inquiry are a methodological sub-genre of Arts-based Research that have "…exploded in recent decades, encompassing many methodological practices" (p. 21). Performative inquiry is one such methodology, conceptualized and articulated by Lynn Fels (1999) through her work as a performing arts educator and scholar. Fels describes performative inquiry as a learning vehicle. Central to her work in performative inquiry is philosopher David Appelbaum's concept of the 'stop,' which is "…a moment of risk, a moment of opportunity. A stop is simultaneously a moment of interruption, a pause, a listening to the as-yet unnamed" (Fels, 2013, p.1).

In regards to performative inquiry Fels explains these 'stops' as action-sites of learning that encourage educators and learners to be more present and aware of the interconnections and relationships between oneself, others, and the environment and contexts of engagement. In her article *Woman Overboard: Pedagogical Moments of Performative Inquiry* Fels asserts, "A stop is not a moment in which one literally stops, but rather an embodied realization within which dwells possible recognition of as-yet unknown choices of action"(p.1). Fels (2013) explains that 'stops' encourage us to "…take meaningful and compassionate action" (p.2).

In addition to acknowledging the work of David Appelbaum (1995), Peggy Phelan (1993), M. Mitchell Waldrop (1992), Gavin Bolton (1992), Hannah Arendt (1958),

Eugenio Barba (1995), and Maxine Greene (1995), Fels' conception of Performative Inquiry draws upon enactivism and complexity theory to call to our attention to the notion that "…everything is connected in generative systems of interaction"(Fels and Belliveau, 26). In embracing this idea of 'generative interconnectedness' we as educators and learners are encouraged to pay attention and take greater responsibility for how we shape, and are shaped by others and our environments. As Fels (2009) articulates, "Our presence, our absence, our language and practices of engagement within the context and location of our interactions, and relationships, matter" (p.137). Davis, Kieran, and Sumara (1996) echo this statement (as cited in Fels, 2009), "…just as I am shaped by my location, my location is shaped my presence." Davis et al. (2003) also remind us (as cited in Fels, 2009) that, "The emphasis is not on what is, but on what might be brought forth. Thus learning comes to be understood as a recursively elaborate process of opening up new spaces of possibility by exploring current spaces."

In *Exploring Curriculum: Performative Inquiry, Role Drama, and Learning*, (2008) Fels and Belliveau suggest that learning through Performative Inquiry brings students and teachers to an awareness of how they "…as individuals and in groups, influence the world they inhabit: this is the embodied learning from and awareness of interaction that complexity theory and enactivism invite" (p. 28). Providing a theoretical framework for how this methodology can be used as a vehicle for learning across disciplines, Performative Inquiry invites:

> Participants to ask questions, to work collaboratively, to solve problems
> and to make decisions, to respond critically and creatively to situations
> and issues, and to reflect on their learning and choices of action. They
> become inquirers and learners (Fels and Belliveau, 2008, p. 10).

As teachers and participants work together as performative researchers, a space of mutual engagement is created where ideas and issues are explored through creative play and critical and reflective inquiry. The questions "What if? What matters? So what? Who cares? What happens?" (Fels, 1999, p.34), are embodied within performance, and are used as tools of analysis and motivation for further inquiry.

As researchers continue to explore links between drama and learning, the theoretical location of Performative Inquiry currently situates "…emergent learning within

curricular explorations and research investigations that embrace performance as an action site of learning" (Fels and Belliveau, 2008, p. 31). As artist- researchers, teachers and students must claim "…a position of responsibility and complicity" (Fels, 1999, p.80), as every person's contribution is significant in the shaping and re-shaping of the unfolding curricular landscape. With Performative Inquiry, all participants are encouraged to question and be aware of their "…movements across a journey-landscape that is a collective exploration" (Fels, 1999, p.81).

Seeing curriculum as a fertile venue for student voice and empowerment, Performative Inquiry is an interdisciplinary learning vehicle that brings "…the personal, the political, and the experiential into the curriculum" (Fels and Belliveau, 2008, p. 44). Through critical and creative engagement with ideas and issues that matters to both students and teachers, learning becomes "…vibrant and active as students become agents of influence and change" (Fels and Belliveau, 2008, p. 44). Emphasizing the concept of an emergent and living curriculum, and the responsibility and contribution of all participants, Performative Inquiry draws our awareness as educators to "…the co-evolving relationships and interactions that students are intimately engaged within an environment and context" (Fels and Belliveau, 2008, p. 43). With the understanding that Performative Inquiry is an action-site of learning we acknowledge, "it is through performative actions- knowing, being, doing, creating – that we come to learning" (Fels and Belliveau, 2008, p.30).

If the classroom is to be a "viable and generative system" (Fels and Belliveau, 2008, p.25) where students and teachers are actively engaged, Fels and Belliveau (2008) encourage us to see that decentralized control is vital:

> Action is initiated, and responsibility shared, by all participants… Decentralized control is established when leadership is reciprocally shared and responsive to the ideas and actions of all the participants engaged in curricular activities (p. 25).

By sharing power and responsibility, and by encouraging multiple perspectives, students may come to see that their presence and contributions are significant, and that they can be involved in shaping their learning experience and influencing change. Returning to Appelbaum's (1995) notion of the stop, Fels (2013) articulates, " A stop

moment then, like a child's tug at our sleeve, calls us again and again to its location of encounter- who am I? Who are you? How might we be in the presence of each other? – action in the gap between past and future that exposes who we are, and anticipates our future" (p.3).

3.4. Cross Connections: The Merging of Methodologies

By using the following aspects of YPAR, Arts-based Research, and Performative Inquiry, I intend to explore the role of a creative facilitator and how I might effectively create a space for meaningful interaction, collaboration, and shared responsibility in the learning process. Key aspects I have drawn from these three methodologies that I intend to relate to the role of a creative facilitator are:

- Teacher as facilitator and research participant
- Relationship and community building
- De-centralized control in the classroom
- Shared responsibility and ownership of process
- Emergent curriculum approach
- Collaborative group learning
- Concentrating on the ideas and concerns of the students
- Developing deeper listening skills
- Focus on 'lived experience'
- Exploring multiple perspectives
- Emphasis on equality and social justice
- Improvisation and play as experimentation

For both the later writing and the development of my procedure I developed an open and elastic structure within which to work. Rooted in my inquiry, the following four phases: creating connections, negotiating space, collective exploration, and creative collaboration, have helped me to establish a flow for the collaborative group process, that is at the heart of my research project.

Chapter 4.

Procedure: An Unfolding Process

Having selected my topic of inquiry 'What is the Role of a Creative Facilitator', chosen my methodology and outlined the project details, my next step was to select a site and recruit my participants. Throughout my post-secondary academic studies I had maintained a personal relationship with my high-school drama teachers, and have always hoped I could return to work with them at some point. Given the cultural and economic diversity of the East Vancouver neighbourhood where this secondary school is located, I thought it would be a prime setting to engage students in conversations and creative exploration about their ideas and perspectives of what they understand as identity and culture. In my role as a creative facilitator I wanted to build a space where students could express their critical and creative voices in an open, honest, and playful way.

After approaching Jon, the drama department head and Tonya, senior drama teacher, with an outline of the project, to which they both responded positively, I prepared my formal submission to the university's and schoolboard's Ethics Review Committees. As outlined in the 'Study Details' of the Ethics Review, I proposed a series of workshops involving eight students, both male and female ranging in age from fourteen to seventeen. The two to three hour sessions would be held after school once a week for twelve weeks. Transforming the classroom into an experiential performative space, I would work with the students as artist-researchers, inviting them into the process of investigation, questioning and co-creating the curriculum. Through various art making activities, the students and I would explore the concepts and themes that we brainstormed together. Two themes would be selected by the group to explore throughout the rest of the workshops. The final performance piece would be developed from the chosen themes.

The first workshop with the students would involve introductions, trust building exercises, and a questionnaire. At the end of the six weeks the participants would be interviewed and asked to re-visit the questionnaire that they had completed at the start of the project. My research objectives for this project were:

- To explore and examine the role of a creative facilitator
- To develop student driven learning with an effective collaborative process
- To re-introduce play into the learning environment as a legitimate academic practice
- To connect the learning that takes place inside of the classroom with the lived experience of the students, and my lived experience as well
- To explore meaning making through interdisciplinary arts practices
- To facilitate the production of a final group show

Once I gained approval on all sides and my criminal record check had been cleared, Tonya and I arranged that I should come to an Acting Eleven class and do a recruitment presentation. Wanting to give them a sense of who I was, and where I was coming from, I put together what I hoped would be an engaging and fun slideshow of personal photos and graphic text. Even with some technical difficulties, the projection background was less than ideal, the images still helped to bring my presentation to life. During the narration, I discussed my personal background and the experiences that led me to doing a masters degree in arts education. After the slideshow, I told them about my research project and handed out flyers with details on the project. Not wanting the students to feel pressured, I said I would leave a sign up sheet in the classroom for those who were interested. Eleven students volunteered to sign up on the spot.

Originally, Tonya and I arranged for the project to start early October and wrap up before Christmas. However, due to scheduling conflicts our first session did not start until the second week of November and we decided to divide the project over the holidays. From the beginning it became clear that I was going to have to adapt my original project plan to fit the reality of the environment I was working in. Rather than seeing this as a setback, I embraced the unpredictable nature of the school, remained positive and took the changes in stride. I would soon come to see this flexibility as a key attribute to my role as a researcher, creative facilitator, and the project as a whole.

The fall workshops were held during November and December 2012. In an unexpected sign of trust, Tonya suggested that I could conduct the workshops during their Acting 11 class time rather than holding the sessions after school. These sessions took place during the first block of the day, and the student turnout varied from four to seven participants. The location of each session varied depending on which space was available. The second part of the project took place once a week from January to March of 2013. The student turnout continued to fluctuate from four to seven participants per session, and the workshop locations continued to change depending on the available space.

The final performance piece was presented on the tenth session in mid-March. Again, due to scheduling conflicts, I was unable to revisit the original questionnaire one-on-one with the students. Instead, I asked them to write me their feedback, with a focus on my role as a creative facilitator.

The Field Notes section below offers a breakdown of the ten workshops, and an overview of what happened in each session. My intention with the Field Notes is to contextualize the project, give a picture of the workshops and some insight into the relationships that developed between the research-participants and myself. I have included the various locations that the workshops were held in order to illustrate the different spaces where we worked. The names of the students have been changed to protect their privacy.

4.1. Workshop #1

Date: November 14th, 2012

Time: 8:45am

Location: Editing Suite

Participants: 5 (Alastair, Maki, Val, Chandra, Nick)

The workshop took place in a small editing suite and began with us talking casually. We started off with a couple of name games and trust building exercises.

These activities were intended to lighten the mood and familiarize the students and myself. Because our workshop was during the students' Acting 11 block, I was curious how they were able to relate an actor's work to that of a researcher. Wanting to cultivate a playful exchange, I took out some 'Mr. Sketch' scented markers and the students brainstormed responses to this question on the flipchart. After everyone had the chance to write down a response, I asked 'What is research?' and Nick said that it was "an in depth searching for knowledge previously unknown." Alastair added that it was "a search to discover something new." I told them I thought those were great responses. Seeing that we were already halfway through the class, I handed out the questionnaires (see Appendix A for questionnaire sample). Reassuring the students that it was not a test – I explained that it was a way for me to get a sense of where they were coming from, and to share with them some of the research topics that interest me. Everyone worked quietly and took all of the remaining session time; two students did not finish. For those who did not complete it, I let them know that they would have time to finish it the following class. Handing out snacks, I also gave each student a small note book and explained that they were for keeping 'field notes.' As they left the room I thanked them and said I looked forward to our next workshop. And I wrote my own field notes, in reflection of that day's workshop.

Wednesday, November 14th

The school was chaotic that day, with two productions taking place in the theatre department, the teachers and students seemed exhausted. Tonya forgot I was coming, but even though the auditorium was in use she did her best to accommodate me. As the students and I entered the small editing suite, I realized that I was going to have to adapt my plan- to the space, the number of students that actually showed up, the amount of time we had, the students' ideas and interests. So much was out of my control, even though this made me nervous, I remembered it was important that I be aware and responsible for myself. Seeing how bright and thoughtful the students were quickly put me at ease. What was I expecting? Stereotypical apathetic teenagers? In seeing what an intelligent and creative group they were I felt a sense of pressure…how will I engage them? How can I challenge them and offer these students a unique and inspiring experience? Take a moment. Stop. Breathe. How can I be self-reflective and not overly self-conscious? I see my tendency to over think and in doing so the ground underneath me feels like it is moving. I stumble to find my footing and notice the impulse to 'teach something.' If I am not a teacher, who am I? In this first workshop I see that even though I don't have much teaching experience, I do have

experience as an artistic collaborator. This is a strength I can draw from in my role as a creative facilitator.

4.2. Workshop #2

Date: November 20th, 2012

Time: 8:45am

Location: Auditorium

Participants: 6 (Val, Nick, Tawny, Shana, Alastair, Chandra)

We warmed up on the stage with a sound/gesture pass where everyone stood in a circle and one person at a time, improvised a physical movement accompanied by a sound, then the next person mimicked the sound/gesture and passed it to the person who started it, and then the next person initiated a new sound/gesture. My intention with this exercise was to warm people up physically and vocally, and to enliven the environment right from the start. After this activity we sat in the bleachers and I handed back the questionnaires. The two new students and the two who had not finished last time were given time to complete them. Chandra and Alastair, who had completed theirs last time, were asked to interview one another using the questions from the questionnaire while the others were writing. Once everyone had finished the questionnaire, I asked for feedback on how it was to write it. Several students expressed that it allowed them to think deeper and respond to topics that are relevant and that they are already thinking about. Nick said that the multiple-choice questions helped to trigger his own responses. After hearing from the group, we brainstormed responses to the question: 'What matters to us?' People stood up one at a time and wrote their ideas on the flipchart paper. Their responses to this question were:

- Society's perception of teenagers.
- Finding yourself.
- Keeping options open for the future.
- A sense of community.
- Pressure from society.
- Altering body image (body modifications).

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- Passion.
- Relationships.

After everyone had written something on the flipchart, I asked 'How do we narrow this down?' Tawny proposed that all of the suggestions could loosely fit into the first response 'Society's perception of teenagers.' Seeing that everyone was in agreement, I asked, 'How do we roll this into one question?' Alastair suggested 'How does society affect us as teenagers?' I took a vote and the other students were in support of this as our research question. The school bell went and I gave the students snacks, telling them how excited I was to work with them and to see what we were going to create together.

Tuesday, November 20th
After handing out the questionnaires everyone found a space in the auditorium. Initially I didn't know what to do with myself. I didn't want to hover over the students or pace around the room, so I sat in the bleachers with my journal and focused on being present and grounded. I recorded sights and sounds of the auditorium. How does it feel to be here? Open, cold, black stage, wooden bleachers, green curtains, hum of the furnace, throats being cleared, sniffles. First class of the day. Tired. Warm-ups helped- got people moving and laughing. In bodies. Students write questionnaires. Whispers. Bright eyes. Enthusiasm. Eager. Horizons abound. Choices weigh. In the unknown. When they handed back their questionnaires I asked for their feedback on how it was to write it. Challenging? Frustrating? Fun? I stopped myself realizing that I was prompting – nervous that they wouldn't understand. I realized that I just needed to ask questions and let the students answer freely. When I asked if they discuss these topics in school they said not really, but they have reflective talks with their friends. I shared my memories of being a teenager – having conversations with friends about things that mattered to us. Stop. I see my need/desire to relate to them- to show/tell them that I remember being a teenager. Is this ok to want to relate? Should I be more neutral? I acknowledge this tension- what to be, what I am. Be who I am? Who am I? I see that it's not all on me, that they volunteered for this project and there is a reciprocal responsibility. We are creating the experience together. Trust. Listen. Allow the process to unfold.

4.3. Workshop #3

Date: November 28th, 2012

Time: 8:45am

Location: Green Room

Participants: 8 (Shana, Val, Alastair, Nick, Tawny, Chandra, Maki, and Krista)

The auditorium was in use that day so we were moved to the green room space above the theatre classroom. I had planned on doing movement exercises but due to the size of the space, I decided to start with a limb-shake countdown. This exercise did not require a lot of space but helped to focus people's attention and bring energy levels up (including my own). We reviewed our research question from the previous week, I then told the students that I had read all of their questionnaires and was greatly impressed at how thoughtful, expressive and reflective their answers were. We discussed the question, 'How does society affect us as teenagers?' and then I asked them to find a partner and handed each pair a large sheet of paper and markers. I asked them to breakdown the research question and brainstorm 'What is society?' After ten minutes of brainstorming, they shared their answers. Once everyone had presented their responses, I asked them to get with a new partner and brainstorm the question 'Who are we?' In sharing their answers, discussion was sparked on the topic and people shared their personal experiences. The conversation was lively and I could tell by how the students were listening and paying attention to one another, that everyone was engaged. Realizing we had run out of time, I handed out snacks and assigned them homework for the following week, to take note of something that surprised them and why.

> *Wednesday, November 28th*
> *Precarious balancing acts. Step carefully. Have confidence. Be open and embrace change in self and others. Acknowledge tensions. How much do I share my ideas and participate? I want to create a space where the students feel like they can express themselves. After they shared their responses I had a strong impulse to comment or have them focus on an aspect of what they were saying. I refrained from speaking and observed that when I sat back, the students were responsive to each other and shared personal anecdotes and stories that related to one another's experience. I am learning that I don't need to fill all the gaps or silences with my voice. Sitting back allows the students to step in interact with each other, and take responsibility for their learning. I had a strong impulse to document – take notes, use photo or video to record*

moments. By not documenting I am more present to what is happening – fully absorbing the experience. It is moving to see what a caring and insightful group they are. How can our stories speak to and around each other? What do we have to say to the world? What would we like to change about society? Art is our vehicle and our voice- to release/share/express/empathize, where we've been, where we are, and where we'd like to go. Together we occupy this space, between past and future. Is it possible to be fully grounded in this work, or is it about finding comfort or ease in the ground constantly shifting underneath?

4.4. Workshop #4

Date: December 3rd, 2012

Time: 8:45am

Location: Auditorium

Participants: 6 (Maki, Shana, Alastair, Val, Becky, Nick)

We started the workshop by warming up on the stage with stretching and breathing exercises. I initiated the exercise, but then asked the students to step in one at a time and lead the rest of the group in a stretch or physical movement. This helped to establish shared responsibility right from the start. Afterwards I asked them to share their homework. Though most people had not done the assignment, they were able to think of something on the spot that had surprised them. At first it was discouraging that people were not completing their homework assignments, but I respected how overloaded they seemed with their workload and decided not to push them further. This also taught me to focus on the quality of the work in the workshops themselves. After everyone had shared something that surprised them, I asked the group to name some images that came to mind from hearing each other's stories. Shana wrote their responses on the flip chart. After we had brainstormed images and ideas, I asked 'Where do we go from here?' From people's suggestions it appeared they were interested in building a collaborative piece that was interdisciplinary (using sound and film projection). At the end of class I handed out snacks and thanked the students for their valuable participation. As I packed up my things they thanked me as they left the room.

Monday, December 3rd
I was surprised by how open the students were in sharing, and how they responded to each other's stories. They listened attentively to what each other had to say and made connections to each other's lives. Lived experience – the personal is political. I shared my thoughts and related the conversation to my experience. We talked about society – what we think it is, and how it shapes how we see others, our environment and ourselves. We zoomed the lens in and out, from our personal experiences to wider philosophical ideas. The students sat in a row on the bleacher seats and I sat on the floor facing them. Did these levels change things? Was I playing 'low status'? Did it help them to open up? How does status factor in to the role of a creative facilitator? In our brainstorming session there was a cross-pollination of ideas – seeds floating in the air- some landing and sprouting- others continued to drift. This work is about openings- sharing ideas and exploring the overlap between our stories. Today I expressed the idea that our stories are all wrapped up in each other's. We discussed how our presence/thoughts/words/actions impact others, and that there is a need to take responsibility and be gentle with others and ourselves. Negotiating inner-outer space. Being and becoming. Our learning takes place through relationships. We are not separate but parts of a whole.

4.5. Workshop #5

Date: January 17th, 2013

Time: 9:15am

Location: Film classroom

Participants: 7 (Maki, Alastair, Chandra, Nick, Val, Shana, Becky)

Tonya had emailed me the night before to let me know that our workshop the next day would be shortened due to a school assembly. Even though we would not have much time to meet, I thought it was important to check in with the students, as the holiday break meant it had been over a month since our last meeting. The school was chaotic that day. I thought we were going to be working in the auditorium, but we were moved to the film classroom. By the time we started the workshop I was anxious and felt pressure because there was only twenty minutes left of class time. Launching right into 'business' talk, I discussed timelines and whether or not the final performance should be

in February or March. The students looked confused. I asked if they had been thinking about our research question – and how we might start building a performance piece from the ideas and themes we had been exploring. The room was quiet. Nick broke the silence by asking, "So, what are we doing again?" There was nervous laughter. Seeing that I was thrown off guard, Chandra jumped in and suggested we go over the notes that were written on the flipchart. I thanked her for the suggestion and ran to grab the flipchart and quickly set it up. Reading through the notes, I could see that the students were starting to remember the discussion we had had in the fall. After the review, Shana instigated a conversation about social media and bullying by sharing a story about a friend of hers that was being cyber-bullied by a classmate. The other students responded to Shana's story and we discussed where bullying comes from, why people might be inclined to bully others. Knowing that the class was just about to end, I asked the students to bring in their ideas the following week as to how we could build a performance piece based on the topic of our research question. As I was handing out snacks, Maki came up to me and said she had an idea. I asked if she could remember it and share it with the group next week. The film class students started to enter the classroom as I was packing up. Nick approached me and asked, "So…what are we doing?" I asked Nick if we could talk while walking down the hall. Realizing that he was really trying to understand what the project was about. I told him more about my research in an effort share where I was coming from, and why this work matters to me. We discussed self-searching and how other people's perceptions affect the way you see yourself. As we were talking in the hallway I asked, "Shouldn't you be in class?" He replied that he had a spare that afternoon. I thanked him for the engaging conversation and said that I was excited for our next workshop.

> *Thursday, January 17th*
> *It had been a long time since our last workshop and the students had forgotten what we had covered in our sessions before the Christmas break. Whereas, I had been thinking about the project non-stop and was ready to pick up from where we left off. Stop. There is a need to review and constantly check in with the group to make sure everyone is on the same page. When I could see that the students were not responsive, I grew nervous. I felt a subtle 'us' and 'them' divide. How do I bridge this gap? Fear of having the students turn on me and not co-operate. If you let the fear take over, the gap will widen and the group will react. Ask for help. Accept offerings. It is important that I don't get caught up in*

my head or take things personally. These students have a lot going on in their lives – this project is not high on their priority list and that is ok. Is it possible to create deep and meaningful work in the time that we have? What do I hope the students will get from this experience? I hope they understand that their ideas/struggles/perspectives are valuable and are materials from which they can create. Start from the meaning making – move into the imagination – search for openings – explore possibilities. Discover. Uncover. Recover.

4.6. Workshop #6

Date: January 24th, 2013

Time: 1:50pm

Location: Auditorium

Participants: 7 (Shana, Becky, Val, Maki, Nick, Chandra and Becky)

We started the workshop by playing the theatre improvisation games 'What are you doing?' and 'Yes, lets!' I chose these games because I thought they would help to bring everyone into a shared space and open our imaginations for the creative work to follow. Afterwards we sat on the floor in a circle and I asked everyone to close his or her eyes for a rhythm circle. During the rhythm the students and myself listened intently to one another, using our voices, hands and bodies as instruments to create a group soundscape. We raised the volume and then brought it down to low to whisper. Once this exercise came to a close, I decided to bring up last weeks session and apologized for the confusion. I acknowledged that it had been a month and a half since we had last met, and that I could understand why some were unsure as to what we were doing. Pulling out the flipchart, we quickly reviewed our research question and I listed some of their responses from the previous week:

- Media
- Social media
- Family
- Parents

- Friends
- Peer group
- School
- Self image
- Other people's perception

When I got the sense that everyone was on the same page, I asked Maki to share her suggestion from our last workshop. She proposed that we try a 'brain machine' where someone improvises a story and the group 'zooms in' one aspect of it - to highlight what is going on inside of the person's head. For example, one person would start telling a story and the other members of the group would act out (using physical images and gestures) to illustrate the subtext or inner monologue of the person speaking. I said this was a great idea and that it would be fit with the tableaux exercise I had planned. For the tableaux exercise, the students explored the theme 'peer pressure' through a series of frozen images. After trying out the tableaux activity Maki led us through the brain machine activity and we practiced it several times. Then we sat down and reflected upon the experience. During our conversation, Shana mentioned that she had written a monologue for another class that connected to the material that we were exploring. I asked if she could share it with the rest of the group and she said she would. I brought up the final performance piece and we acknowledged that we would not have enough time to do something that required a lot of rehearsal or technical set up. I asked the group if they had ideas on how we could structure the piece and one student suggested that everyone could write a monologue in response to the research question 'How does society affect us as teenagers?' Everyone agreed to this approach. Maki mentioned that she had two songs that she had written that she thought would fit our theme. She offered to bring in her guitar the following week and share them with the group. Next we discussed how we could go about structuring the piece around the monologues. The majority of students thought the theatre would be the best space to present the final piece. It was also suggested that we could integrate the tableaux images and 'brain machine' with the monologues. I handed out snacks to the students and thanked them for their work that day. Shana came over and asked if I needed help packing up my things.

Thursday, January 24th
Relief. Excitement. Reaffirmation. I told the students that the most important thing to me was that they were engaged and participating because they wanted to. Throughout the project I've felt the need to keep coming back to why this work matters to me. As we began to assemble the performance piece, I could feel an enthusiasm and energy growing for the project. I think its because we were envisioning what we could create together. In my position as the creative facilitator I am there to keep things moving forwards and to help determine pace – slowing down or speeding up – keeping things focused – asking questions – inviting – opening – encouraging – supporting. I recognize my tendency to rush things, to skim the surface. Slow down. Listen to the inner voice. This was the first workshop that I wasn't concerned with time or activities. I felt more relaxed and was able to poke fun at myself and breathe some lightness into the work...showing different sides of my personality. Beyond projections and narrow representations, we are living, breathing, flawed, and curious human beings. I am learning about what matters as a creative facilitator through the experience of working with the students and inhabiting this role.

4.7. Workshop #7

Date: February 13th, 2013

Time: 1:50pm

Location: Auditorium

Participants: 7 (Nick, Maki, Shana, Val, Alastair, Becky, Chandra)

We started the workshop by stretching on the stage and playing dance tag, we then returned to working on the monologues. As some of the students had not finished them, I gave the group twenty minutes to write and/or review. I asked Maki and Shana, who had finished theirs, to workshop them together. Once they had read and responded to each other's monologue, they invited me over to listen in and offer feedback. When the twenty minutes was up I asked the rest of the students to stop writing and sit in a circle. Shana volunteered to read hers first. After Shana, the other students stood up one at a time and read theirs aloud to the class. After each person read, I had them share any images/ideas/words in response to the monologues (I wrote their responses on the

flipchart and then asked the next person to read). The bell rang and I asked them to stay an extra minute while I handed out snacks and told them how impressed I was with what their pieces. I also told them how amazing I thought they were as people. As I responded to their work I became emotional and in seeing this, the students came up and gave me a group hug.

> *Wednesday, February 13th*
> *Between past and future, we exist in this moment. Vulnerable and exposed. When we take risks and reveal what is hidden beneath the surface we give others an opportunity to relate to our hopes and fears. Human conditioning. Let go. Be here. Be present. In responding to the research question 'How does society affect us as teenagers?' the students articulated concerns and current issues that they are faced with. Searching for a sense of self and place in the world. Struggling to find meaning and purpose. Seeing the contradictions that exist – hypocrisies. Exploring the grey area – the land between opposites. It is difficult to find clarity when the ground underneath is constantly shifting. Embrace ambiguity. Embrace the struggle. Be honest and gentle towards yourself and others. Acknowledge that we are all performers – how do we perform ourselves? How do our perceptions affect the way we view others and ourselves? How can we embrace our multiple personalities? Allow yourself change in the process, as the process unfolds.*

4.8. Workshop #8

Date: February 20th, 2013

Time: 1:50pm

Location: Film classroom

Participants: 6 (Shana, Maki, Chandra, Nick, Val, Becky)

I had set up in the auditorium before class but was asked to move into the film classroom because that space had already been booked. At the start of the workshop I checked in with the students to see if they were feeling pressured about the final performance. I reminded them that the process was more important to me and that we did not have to perform if they didn't want to. The students decided that they would like to present our piece to the rest of their class. 'How should we start today's workshop?' I

asked. Maki had brought her guitar and volunteered to present her songs first. After she played, I asked the group to give feedback on what her music made them think and feel. In response to Maki's songs the students discussed their concerns for the future and how they feel lost a lot of the time. They also discussed pressure they feel from parents and teachers to identify who they are, who they want to be, and what they want to do with their lives. Chandra mentioned that she felt better after our workshops. She and the other students expressed that they appreciated our discussions, that they did not get the chance to have these 'life conversations' in their other classes. Concerned about the time, I asked if we could work on staging the monologues. While figuring out where people should stand and how to transition between the pieces, I asked one student to step out at a time and offer their perspective from the standpoint of an audience member. This gave the students the opportunity to assume the role of director and offer feedback. As we worked together on the staging, I had an idea that they could walk onto the stage in the dark with flashlights. Everyone liked the suggestion so I said I would bring flashlights so we could rehearse with them the following week. When the bell went and I thanked the students for their work. They collected their things and thanked me as they left the class.

> *Wednesday, February 20th*
> *This work matters to the students. What more could I want? They told me that they need spaces where they can express their ideas and concerns openly. Hearing that others are struggling with similar issues helps the students to see they are not alone. I brought up Shana's comment from last week about not knowing what she wants to do with her life, that it is not enough to be 'a good person.' I expressed that I feel many people compete to get to the top and in the process of fighting they are willing to disregard or step on others. The effort to be a good person, to care, be honest, and consider others should be valued. We need people who care deeply, and being able to work with people is an asset to the majority of positions in the workforce. Who we are and how we treat others matters. Collaboration and performance are ethereal and fleeting – this work cannot be easily measured. Once the project is over the only traces/evidence that remains is the imprint of the experience and how it has shaped the participants and myself anew. The evidence, the outcome of the work becomes apart of our inner landscapes.*

4.9. Workshop #9

Date: March 1st, 2013

Time: 1:50pm

Location: Auditorium

Participants: 6 (Val, Shana, Nick, Alastair, Becky, Chandra)

We played a few games and warmed up on the stage. After this, I made sure that everyone understood what we were doing. I reminded them that we would be performing the following week in front of their Acting 11 class in the theatre classroom. I suggested that we run through the piece as many times as we could that day to figure out the transitions and make sure everyone knew what they were doing. Maki was not in class, so I played music on my iPod as a stand-in for her opening and closing songs. We ran through the performance several times and choreographed the opening and closing sequences with the flashlights. Because it was our last workshop before the final performance, I took on a more prominent role as a director. Sitting in the audience during the run through, I offered suggestions to help the transitions run smoother. Even though I was assuming the director's role, the students continued to offer their input and suggestions on how things could be put together. The bell went and I handed out snacks, everyone seemed confident and excited about the performance the following week.

Friday, March 1st
I wonder how stepping into the role of director may have changed things, did it shift the power dynamic? Was I assuming a position of creative authority? Does this go against my ideas of what a creative facilitator is? Or is there room for this role to stretch and adapt itself to any given situation? I am surprised by how well the performance piece is coming together in the amount of time we've had to work on it. It feels as though a strong sense of community has grown. I have noticed how much I've relaxed in the past couple of workshops, and that allows me to enjoy the process of collaboration. I see how concerned I was with time and the expectations of what I thought we should accomplish each workshop. Allowing things to unfold is necessary but it isn't easy. Even if

we try not to plan or have expectations we often do. In order to release control I had to gain more trust in the students and myself. I am humbled and grateful to the group for their participation and commitment to this project.

4.10. Workshop #10

Date: March 14th, 2013

Time: 1:50pm

Location: Auditorium/Theatre space

Participants: 7 (Nick, Val, Chandra, Maki, Alastair, Shana, Becky)

It was report card day and the Friday before spring break. I had arranged with the student teacher that we would present to the Acting 11 class that day. When I spoke with her that morning she said that many of the students had to finish presenting their scenes to her class. She said that my group could present perform at the end of class. I let her know I was hoping to rehearse with the student in my group before we presented. The student teacher said she would send the students over to the auditorium after they had done their scenes. While waiting in the auditorium with Alastair, Maki and Shana, I asked them to write a one-page response offering me feedback on my role as a creative facilitator. Once all of the students in my group had arrived to the auditorium, we did a quick run through of the performance and then rushed over to the theatre. When we got there, I was told there was six minutes left because all classes were dismissed early to pick up report cards. I knew that if we waited until after spring break to present that it would be a challenge for the students to remember what we had done. We had to present that day even if it meant going over class time. I introduced the project to the rest of the Acting 11 class as my group found their places on stage. I turned out the lights. One by one the students walked on stage with their flashlights glowing while Maki sang and played her ukulele. After Maki's song the group presented their monologues. This is a transcript from one of the student's monologues:

Go to school. That's what I should do right? That's what I'm told to do. And every single day I get up, go to school, do homework and go to bed just like every other teenager. But why? To learn? To educate myself and get good grades so that I can get into a good university and further my education. Oh and then get a good job because I must make something of myself. But now I'm not so sure. Look at my parents. They hate their lives. My mom went to school, got good grades has a great job and hates it. Dad? He never graduated, never received a good education, has a crap job, so you can see why he hates it too. So how am I supposed to know what I want to do if everyone I look up to is disappointed with themselves. It seems regardless of where I turn my road leads to a dead end. Some tell me to start my own path. Do some bushwhacking, lay some gravel and make it my own. But I could get lost. It's too dangerous. And it's not what they want.

During the performance the school bell went and I asked if the audience would stay seated until the very end. After the presentation the audience applauded and I turned the lights on. People dashed out of the room to go to their homerooms and pick up their report cards. I approached the students on stage and thanked them for their awesome work. They reached out and gave a big group hug.

Following the final performance I sent out a group email to the students thanking them for their active participation and hard work. In response to my evaluation questions I received feedback from the remaining students via email. Everyone responded except for Val.

Thursday, March 14th
Only five minutes left of class. It wasn't enough time but we had to – we couldn't present after spring break. I turned the lights off and stood next to the bleachers. The studio was completely dark aside from the shaft of light being let in from behind one of the black curtains. Maki started playing her ukulele and the students walked onstage with their flashlights. As the students read their monologues, their flashlights shone on the coloured paper and reflected their faces. I watched nervously. What did the audience think? How did the dark make them feel? The school bell went in the middle of the performance. I felt responsible for the students on stage. Speaking up I asked the audience to stay until the end of the performance. Were they uncomfortable presenting? It wasn't until after the performance that I realized I did have expectations. But it was never about the final performance. I felt a

sense of relief. We did it! We created a performance piece and presented it – most importantly, we enjoyed the process of collaboration. In this project I've learned that that negotiating the space-between is a precarious balancing act; it is about being adaptive, flexible, and open to change. Acknowledging inner/outer tensions and learning to deal with expectations – met and unmet – are also important in navigating this role. I have also learned that a creative facilitator needs to be forgiving of herself/himself – the stops, stumbles, fumbles are all part of learning. Embrace imperfection.

Chapter 5.

Analysis: A Reflexive Inquiry

In this section my intent is to look at my chosen research methodologies, the effectiveness of their application, and their relevance to my research question, 'what is the role of a creative facilitator?' Given the focus of my project and the methodologies selected, my analysis is understandably highly reflexive in nature as I was a central participant and therefore researching my own experience in the position of a creative facilitator. Navigating and understanding this complex dynamic, the relationships between the students and my multiple roles as masters' student, researcher and creative facilitator, is at the heart of this project.

I have broken this chapter into the four phases I initially structured this collaborative group process around. In each of these following sections, creating connections, negotiating space, collective exploration, and creative collaboration, I will reflect upon my experiences during the workshops, examine the research activities, and discuss the implications for the role of a creative facilitator. It is clear that the research project shifted from the initial plan I had envisioned. This precarious balance of constantly adjusting my plans and expectations taught me to be highly adaptable, and proved to be essential to my position as researcher and creative facilitator.

5.1. Creating Connections

During the initial workshops my focus was on creating connections between the students and myself and amongst the students themselves. In order to open a space for collaborative group work, it is important that we first established relationships that are built on a foundation of trust, care, and responsibility. Effective approaches I relied upon

throughout the process, but especially during this phase, were genuine curiosity and mutual engagement. As Freire (2000) asserts, "…the essential task of progressive education praxis is the promotion of curiosity that is critical, bold and adventurous" (p. 37). A deep curiosity was the foundation of my role as both researcher and creative facilitator.

As Freire (2000) suggests, curiosity is a force that inspires and leads us on a search for meaning. From the beginning, starting with my recruitment presentation, I aspired to elicit the students' curiosity with my own story. A strong connection with youth culture and shared background (as an alumni) proved valuable as eleven students signed up to be a part of the research project. On the first workshop I expressed my own curiosity in them in the form of a questionnaire. In designing the questionnaire, I thought a lot about how I might elicit unique and honest responses from the participants on topics such as art, culture, identity, and social change. Without pressuring them or making it feel like I was in some way testing their knowledge, I encouraged them to respond from the heart. I had set aside thirty minutes, which I expected would be more than enough time. However, the students obviously connected with the questions, taking all of the remaining time. Two students did not finish and asked if they could complete it at the beginning of the following workshop.

It was significant to me that the students took their time, thought deeply, and responded with unique and insightful answers. It worked to reinforce my curiosity, and in the process, alleviate any lingering fears I had around being able to connect with an unknown group of high school students. The questionnaire proved to be an effective vehicle, as it inspired curiosity on both sides, generated topics of interest, and opened a space for further dialogue. In hindsight, more could have been done with the questionnaire throughout the process, such as filling it out myself, allowing all of the students to interview each other and myself using the questionnaire, possibly integrate it into the performance script, and ideally returning to it at the end of the project as initially planned.

In addition to curiosity, I also worked hard to develop a sense of mutual engagement through movement exercises and a whole body approach. As hooks (1994)

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suggests, the classroom should be an exciting place where students' whole selves are invited in. She also asserts, "we must build community in order to create a climate of openness and intellectual rigor"(hooks, 1994, p. 40). hooks (1994) wants us to understand that the building of commonality and mutual engagement in the classroom is key to creating an environment where everyone feels welcome and respected. Creating a foundation of mutual engagement and respect was the focus of my opening workshops.

As outlined in the research notes, I began every workshop with a group activity that I hoped would bring people into a shared space of interaction. The exercises were selected to engage the students physically, set the tone of the workshop and begin to build the trust needed for our coming group work. The physical nature of the games helped to raise the energy level of the group that was often low first thing in the morning. It also helped to focus us, allowing the group to be mindful and present in the space. The increased level of attention and focus in the room after we had performed these exercises could clearly be seen in the quality of the group discussions.

The playful nature of the opening activities themselves was also an important part of my approach. "Dance tag" is a good example of the type of game we would play. In this exercise, participants, myself included, would spontaneously choose a dance move that the rest of the group would mimic. The person who started the move was 'it' and when they tagged another person, that person would start a new dance move that everyone would follow. Invariably there was much laughter during this game. Though these moves were often silly, it was this playfulness and shared vulnerability that helped to build an open and trusting environment. These moments were also the seeds of deeper connections and the emerging group dynamic.

In my role as the creative facilitator I was an active participant in all the exercises. In my ongoing effort to create mutual engagement it was important to me that I take the same risks and face the same challenges as the students. I found the warm up games helped me to engage with my own body and begin to break down some of the initial distance between the students and myself.

5.2. Negotiating Space

After seeing the beginning of trust form within the group, I began to place more emphasis on negotiating space, exploring the 'space-between' as a place of encounter where power, meaning and identities are revealed. Hannah Arendt's 'web of relations' encourages educators to consider the "…opening of wider and wider spaces of dialogue, in which diverse students and teachers, empowered to speak in their own voices, reflect together as they try to bring about an in-between" (Greene, 1995, p. 59). Focusing on the interaction between teaching and learning as a location of possibility, my objective as a creative facilitator was to resist traditional teacher / student power dynamics and facilitate a de-centralized creative community.

Critical pedagogy, YPAR and Performative Inquiry all speak of the importance of de-centralized control in the classroom. Fundamental to creating a democratic environment, de-centralized control encourages students to engage in dialogue and share responsibility over the learning process. Fels and Belliveau (2008) emphasize that "Decentralized control is established when leadership is reciprocally shared and responsive to the ideas and actions of all the participants engaged in curricular activities" (p. 25). In the workshops I enacted de-centralized control through a variety of methods, including active participation and procedural transparency.

As described in the previous section, I made sure to participate in all of the group exercises and games. These activities not only helped to build connections, they also helped to de-centre the traditional teacher/student relationship. As Ana Marjanovic–Shane sees it, "…playful acts have a potential to change relationships between the players, giving them new points of reference and enabling them to experience themselves and others as co-authors of the situations" (Connery, John-Steiner, Marjanovic–Shane, 2010, p. 41). Engaging in these exercises was instrumental in shifting the power dynamic towards a relationship where creative collaboration could begin and as the project progressed, I observed that students took increased ownership over the process and the work.

In addition to being an active participant, I found that being transparent in how I facilitated the process was another important aspect of promoting de-centralized control.

Starting with my recruitment presentation and throughout the workshops, I made an effort to communicate where I was coming from and what I was asking of them. I explained that I was there to learn about the role of a creative facilitator through our work together, and that their feedback was imperative in helping me understand this role. I also explained the nature of an emergent curriculum, that we were equal collaborators on the project, and that the content and construction of the performance piece greatly relied upon their ideas and contributions. In attempting to navigate this space-between and develop a group learning process, Noddings (2003) reminds us "…teachers must build relationships of care and trust, and within such relationships, teachers and students construct educational objectives cooperatively" (p. 186).

I brought in a large flipchart to aid me in building a shared sense of responsibility over the process. It was both an act of group participation and transparency. As we explored our research question and brainstormed on how to build the performance, the students took turns writing their responses (or other people's responses) onto the sheets of paper. Using the colourful scented markers, they seemed to have fun and enjoy that act of putting their mark on the collective note pad. The flipchart not only invited people's contributions, but also allowed me to step aside as the students took turns standing in front of the group and writing down each other's responses. Recording our brainstorming sessions acted as documentation that we would refer back to throughout the project. Our brainstorming sessions and the use of the flipchart also helped to create a democratic environment where the students were actively involved in generating content and making decisions on how to move the process forward.

Fels reminds us that "the performative researcher does not stand outside of the action: his or her participation plays an active role in the shaping and re (shaping) of unfolding landscape(s) journeyed"(Fels, 1999, p.80). Fels goes on to say that it is necessary for the performative researcher to constantly question their actions in this journey landscape. I took this very much to heart and throughout the process continually questioned myself, my motivations and the impact my participation was having on the group. I had a lot to say but did not want to dominate the conversations with my ideas; I wanted the students to feel comfortable enough to share their stories and reflect upon their lived experience. As the creative facilitator, I therefore placed more emphasis on

the students' ideas and their lived experience than my own. I was not formal in this approach, but relied upon being present and observing the level and quality of the group's interaction to adjust my own involvement. Learning how to navigate this space-between the students and myself proved to be a fundamental aspect of creative facilitation.

5.3. Collective Exploration

A major aspect of Freire's (2000) approach to critical pedagogy is dialogue. As I quoted earlier, he writes that, "Education takes place when there are two learners who occupy somewhat different spaces in an ongoing dialogue. But both participants bring knowledge to the relationship, and one of the objects of the pedagogic process is to explore what each knows and what they can teach each other" (p. 8). As a participant in the dialogue, I listened intently to the students, shared from my own perspective, maintained focus in the group, and made sure that everyone had a chance to speak. Observing how the students listened intently to one another and related to one another's experience were positive signs that I had effectively created a space for mutual engagement. Two approaches that proved to be invaluable in the facilitation of meaningful dialogue were: centering the work on the lived experience of the students, and the promotion of equality and justice.

As stated earlier, Greene, Freire, Vygotsky, and Merleau-Ponty all promote the lived experience of the students as a fundamental aspect of the learning process, and that teachers should consider that "…the main point of education (in the context of a lived life) is to enable a human being to become increasingly mindful with regard to his or her lived situation- and its untapped possibilities" (Greene, 1995, p. 182). Starting with the recruitment presentation, I was open and shared from my lived experience. I spoke of my background in theatre, travels, and the experience that led me to pursue a master's degree in arts education. In discussing these experiences I was also expressing my struggles. Seeing how quickly the students were able to open up and share from their personal perspectives suggests to me that making myself vulnerable was an important aspect to help students feel comfortable enough to share their own stories.

Both my recruitment presentation and the questionnaire helped to encourage the students to speak from their lived experience. Vygotsky reminds us "…individual behavior cannot be removed from the context in which it is taking place" (Kincheloe, 2008, p. 67). In our group conversations we discussed the extent to which our identities are shaped through our relationships and our environment, and in sharing and reflecting upon one another's stories, we observed the extent to which our words and actions impact each other. One issue that concerned the students was the current topic of online bullying. In discussing this issue, students spoke to their personal experiences and related to the story of the Port Coquitlam teenager Amanda Todd, a victim of cyber bullying, who committed suicide in October 2012. As we talked about this emotional and heated topic we asked questions around what motivates people to bully others and how students might better respond individually and collectively to this issue. By creating a space to listen and respond to each other, we were able to begin to explore the layers of complexity and see different sides to the issue.

In supporting the critical reflection of their lived experience, it should come as no surprise that the themes of equality and justice naturally followed. Critical theorist and educator Peter McLaren writes, "Critical pedagogy asks how and why knowledge gets constructed the way it does, and how and why some constructions of reality are legitimated and celebrated by the dominant culture while others are clearly not" (as cited in Wink, 1997, p. 55). In our discussions on personal topics such as on-line bullying, peer pressure, body image and searching for identity, I asked the students to relate these issues to a broader socio-political context. Influenced by critical pedagogy, I made an effort to validate their experience and draw attention to assumptions and stereotypes that are perpetuated by dominant culture and mainstream media. Educator, activist and cultural critic Stanley Aronowitz reminds us "critical pedagogy helps the learner become aware of the forces that have hitherto ruled their lives and especially shaped their consciousness" (as cited in Giroux, 2011, p. 155). Aware of how parents, teachers, friends and the media shape their ideas, the students expressed the challenge of trying to figure out who they are and where they want to go amidst the multitude of opinions and influences that surround them.

In brainstorming the general question, 'What matters to us?' the students came up with the following research question: 'How does society affect us as teenagers?' The collective exploration of this research question brought forth issues that were relevant to the students and placed them in a larger socio-political context. Not only did sharing stories and listening to one another help to promote empathy and a deeper level of understanding for one another's unique perspectives and experience, but it also showed the students that they were not alone in their personal struggles. Additionally, I asked the students and myself to constantly check our assumptions and in doing so we created an open and collaborative space that resisted judgment. Being aware of ourselves in our relationships to each other was at the heart of our work together. Engaging the students as co-participants and collaborators was an integral aspect of my work as a creative facilitator. By involving the students as researchers they were able to locate relevant issues that we explored through dialogue and drama-based activities. My role as creative facilitator was to help open the space and create a dynamic environment that valued listening and shared dialogue and creative exploration for the student-led experience.

5.4. Creative Collaboration

Steven Nachmanovitch (1990), author of *Free Play: Improvisation in Life and Art* proposes that "Shared art making is, in and of itself, the expression of, the vehicle for, and the stimulus to human relationships" (p. 99). Creative collaboration is about shared art making, and as Nachmanovitch suggests, human relationships are developed and explored through this process. As we have seen in the previous sections building connections, negotiating space, and collective exploration are fundamental phases that contribute to a positive collaborative group process. In facilitating the students' creative collaboration as we worked to build a final performance piece, I found that improvisation and radical imagination were valuable in this shared art making process.

In this latter half of the project we shifted from research and exploration to expression and assemblage. 'Assemblage' is about sifting through material, looking at the pieces that have been collected, and then problem solving different ways that it can be put together. With the material we had generated we used improvisation exercises to

ask 'What if?' as we tried out people's ideas and began to piece together our performance. One of the first rules of theatre improvisation is to say 'yes.' This simple rule is about accepting other people's suggestions and being willing to play with ideas and try them out physically in space. As the creative facilitator I found it most important to listen and support the students. When someone offered a suggestion I would encourage the group to experiment and try out the idea rather than debate or question it. This approach created a group attitude of cooperation and kept the collaborative process moving forward.

An excellent example of a student-initiated improvisation was the 'brain machine' idea that Maki proposed (see Workshop #6 in the Procedure Section for a full description). She explained the concept and then led the group through the exercise. After practicing it a few times, we explored the topic of peer pressure using the brain machine. Combining the brain machine with tableaux images, the students explored this issue through sound, gesture and movement. While we were doing this activity, I would ask one student at a time to step out and respond with what they saw or felt.

As part of creating an inclusive framework, I encouraged the students to briefly assume the role of director, where they would take turns critiquing the material that came out of our group improvisation. Whether or not an idea became a part of the performance was for the students to decide collectively. Given our limited time, lack of resources, and being shuffled around to various workspaces, improvisation and effective collective decision making were integral to creative collaboration because it allowed us to be flexible, resourceful and work with what we had (mainly ourselves).

Our improvisational work could also be seen as a foundation for the practice of radical imagination. In their article *Convoking the Radical Imagination: Social Movement Research, Dialogic Methodologies, and Scholarly Vocations* Alex Khasnabish and Max Haiven (2012) argue that, "…the imagination is a collective *process* rather than an individualized *thing* and that it emerges not from geniuses in their romanticized autonomy but from communities and collectives as they work their way through their world" (p.411). As author and philosopher Anthony Weston (2007) puts it, "Radical imagination begins with a move beyond complaint and resistance, beyond reactive

tinkering or hunkering down or cynical accommodation. The first big move is to an alternative picture of how things could be instead" (p. 7). Sean Ginwright describes how radical imagination encourages educators to embrace the notion that, "…our role should be not only to inform, but also to inspire and foster a collective imagination about how to make the world a more human dwelling place" (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 14). Ginwright goes on to describe how, "By documenting their daily lives, creating new stories about their lived realities and envisioning new social and civic possibilities" (Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 15), YPAR allows researchers to "…re-examine what constitutes research" (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p.15).

Radical imagination was born out of the political nature of our discussions, and the group envisioning of how a performance piece could be created from our collaborative efforts and the critical and creative voices of the students. In an effort to create a generative space where students could research, question or challenge the pressures they face from social authorities such as teachers, parents, and the school system, I encouraged the students to articulate their ideas and speak from their own lived perspective. Centering the performance on the written monologues allowed the student's individual voices to be heard and their personal connection to the research question expressed. As the monologues were presented back to back multiple perspectives were revealed and each person's story became a piece of the group's story and collaborative creation.

Given our ambitious schedule, the process of actualizing the performance was necessarily compressed and at times a little rushed. In just four workshops the students put together their monologues, worked on staging, transitions, and the opening and closing sequences. Right up until the end I reminded the students that our focus was in the process of creative collaboration and meaningful dialogue and that there was no obligation to perform the piece in front of a larger audience. The students, however, were open to performing in front of their classmates but several of them expressed that they did not want their parents, other faculty or students outside of their Acting Eleven class to attend. When I asked them why, Val responded that she wouldn't feel comfortable. Other students agreed, saying that trust had been established amongst our group and within their acting class, and they didn't know how a wider audience would

receive them. Their explanations showed me that there was risk and vulnerability involved for the students and that we had created something personal, based on ideas and concerns that mattered to them. If we had more time, and if they were willing, I would have continued to workshop the final performance piece, and explore ways with the students so that they could develop the confidence to communicate their radical ideas to a wider audience.

As the creative facilitator I helped to develop a space for radical imagination by creating an environment where the students felt comfortable to express personal and critical ideas. It was through dialogue and improvisation that the students and I worked co-operatively to construct a performance piece. Connecting to radical imagination helped us to envision a performance that artistically represented and expressed the individual and collective ideas of the group. Given time constraints and less than ideal circumstances, I think we were successful not only in what we were able to create, but in particular, how well we worked together. Nurturing positive relationships and facilitating a productive collaborative group process proved to be central to the role of a creative facilitator.

In this analysis section my intention was to look at my chosen research methods, the effectiveness of their application and their relevance to my research question. As stated in the introduction, my analysis was highly reflexive as I was researching my experience and multiple roles as master's student, researcher, and creative facilitator. Drawn from YPAR and Performative Inquiry, the methodological approaches that I selected not only proved themselves effective throughout the process, but also informed and expanded my understanding and practice of creative facilitation. Though it was never my intention to create a systematized program, the four phases outlined above not only helped me to critically reflect upon the research project, but they also proved to be an effective foundation for the creative facilitation of this highly collaborative group process. After the imagining, practice and reflection, I believe I am now ready to share what I learned to be the key attributes, attitudes and skills embodied in the role of a creative facilitator.

Chapter 6.

Research Findings: Qualities of a Creative Facilitator

In the field of arts-education I have come to see the creative facilitator as someone who navigates the space between teaching and learning in an effort to engage students as active participants in collaborative art making. While working with the students as artist-researchers to create an emergent curriculum, the creative facilitator sets the tone and opens a space for mutual engagement, democratic process, and creative exploration. In reflecting upon my role as the creative facilitator, I have reviewed my work with the students, looking for key attitudes, attributes and skills that proved invaluable to the role and contributed to the vitality and richness of my research site.

From my research I have learned that an effective creative facilitator must always be present, understands the value of hospitality, treats his or her students and himself or herself with care, approaches life with curiosity, emphasizes critical thinking, sees the radical potential in imagination, has the self-confidence to embrace play, is flexible in nature, and above all strives to share power and truly collaborate. In the following sections, I will expand on the key features listed above, providing my interpretation, other thinkers' use of the term, and their connection to the role of the creative facilitator.

6.1. Presence

In my experience as the creative facilitator during this research project, presence was fundamental to the role and the effective construction of an emergent curriculum. Without a predetermined script, I relied heavily on the ability to be grounded in the moment and to focus on what was happening within the group and within myself. Being present also required openness and vulnerability, if I, as a creative facilitator, was to empower the students and allow them to create their own experience. As hooks (1994)

says, "…empowerment cannot happen if we refuse to be vulnerable while encouraging the students to take risks" (p. 21). Presence encompasses not only the ability to focus on the immediate, but also on receptiveness to what the students have to offer as we seek to engage and build relationships within the group.

Put simply, if we are not present, if we are distracted and our minds are elsewhere, then we are not fully paying attention to the students or to what is happening in the moment. As Fels (2010) states, "Thus it is our presence that matters as educators, as individuals, as humans in the moment of each new encounter"(p.17). Being present allowed me to attend to the needs of students and to be responsive to each situation as it arose. Greene (1995) speaks of a need to de-center ourselves in order to break "…out of the confinements of privatism and self-regard into a space where we can come face to face with others and call out, Here we are" (p. 31). As Greene suggests, it is imperative that the creative facilitator de-center herself or himself in order to be fully present, vulnerable and receptive.

At the onset of the research project I was admittedly nervous and struggled with being present. In those early days I had to remind myself to trust in the process, my own abilities and what I had to offer. Trust helps to inspire confidence and confidence allows us to stay in the moment and relax our body and mind. The opening warm up games were not just for the students, they were valuable exercise in allowing me to relax and breathe normally, and at the same time, I could better focus my energy on the students and what they had to share. Throughout the project, I found the more that I was able to be present and aware in my role; the more the students were able to do the same. Through our work together, I learned that I could trust myself, the creative process, and, most importantly, my students.

6.2. Hospitality

Hospitality, when used in educational theory, starts with the tradition of opening the door to others without expectation and saying simply, "welcome." Its aim is to create a positive environment that is generous and kind, embracing newcomers and new ideas unconditionally. A hospitable pedagogical approach sets the necessary conditions for

the possibilities of an emergent curriculum. The creative facilitator must be willing to invite and accept the students' whole selves into this space. In turn they must share the role and responsibilities of host. By welcoming students as both guests of the project and the hosts of their own lived experience, the students can become active participants, collaborators in a reciprocal creative experience.

Referring to the significance of hospitality in arts-education, Fels quotes Derrida, stating that "…his words caution us not to impose expectations, nor seek to shape the other into something or someone recognizable, nor to make presumptions, nor to seize authority, and in doing so, demand reproduction of that which already is" ("A Question of Hospitality," 2010). As Fels highlights, it is crucial that we work to accept students as they are, without trying to coerce, control, or shape them into someone else. Creating an environment of reciprocal respect and recognition where students felt welcome, comfortable and free to be themselves was at the heart of my work as a creative facilitator.

The concept of hospitality when used with an emergent curriculum is both complex and dynamic. It is not enough for the creative facilitator to simply adopt the role of host and create a welcoming environment, the creative facilitator must know when to relinquish this position and encourage students assume the responsibilities of host. Arts-educator and scholar Amanda Wardrop speaks to this reciprocal involvement and its ability to stimulate learning and interstanding amongst teachers and students, "I learn that I must trust my students and accept their hospitality in return. I want to explore this give and take, this reciprocal involvement that hopefully allows for growth and understanding in all parties" (p. 139). As Wardrop suggests, hospitality is about creating a dynamic environment where de-centralized control is paramount. In considering the importance of hospitality in education Wardrop poses the question, "Is then, pedagogy of hospitality a liminal space, a space of transition, in which trust and hospitality and welcome are reciprocal responsibilities?"(p. 141). In my experience with the students I worked with, my answer is yes, most emphatically.

6.3. Care

Nel Noddings defines care as, "relation in its most basic form, a connection or encounter between two human beings- as carer and a recipient of care, or cared for" (as cited in Baker-Ohler and Holba, 2009, p. 87). Similar to hospitality, I understand care to be a reciprocal responsibility, an attitude of empathy and respect that should be both given and received, between myself and the students and amongst the students themselves. Noddings (2012) speaks to an ethic of care, which, "…rejects the notion of a truly autonomous moral agent and accepts the reality of moral interdependence"(p. 245). She goes on to say that, "Our goodness and our growth are inextricably bound to that of others we encounter. As teachers, we are as dependent on our students as they are on us" (p. 245). I approached this complex notion of care openly with the students, discussing our interdependence with others, both inside and outside of the classroom. Talking about our relationships to one another helped them to see ways in which their identities and actions are influenced and shaped by those around them. In this context, we reflected upon the importance of treating ourselves and others with care and respect.

From the start of the project, my primary goal was to create a caring environment that encouraged the development of positive and supportive relationships. The first step towards creating this environment was to model the behavior I wanted to see in the students. I did this by practicing active listening, responding with empathy and respecting their ideas. I quickly saw evidence that a community of care was being established when we engaged in conversations around emotionally weighted topics, such as teen suicide and cyber bullying. I observed as the students listened to one another with empathy and compassion, helping to create the space where we all felt comfortable to take risks and enjoy the process of creative collaboration.

In *The Communicative Relationship Between Dialogue and Care,* the authors write, "Ultimately joy is the reason we continue to care. Noddings believed that joy found in relation reflects our basic reality. The joy that occurs in the caring relation maintains the caring and our desire to preserve the ethical idea of caring" (as cited in Baker-Ohler and Holba, 2009, p. 87). A creative facilitator must embrace this ethic of care, that the joy found in the work, in the building of relationships, is authentic and therefore

infectious. Genuine caring allows the creative facilitator to step outside of him or herself, to see connections and find joy in the process of working with others. Most importantly, care allows the creative facilitator to be effective in his or her position's primary responsibility, the building of positive relationships.

6.4. Curiosity

I see curiosity as the questioning, the impulse, and the inquiry that leads us on a search for meaning. It is the desire to make sense and gain a deeper understanding of the world around us. Fels and Belliveau (2008) ask, "How might we as educators understand our engagement with curriculum as an educational quest to reawaken our curiosity and sense of agency?" (p. 20). I would suggest that it would be nearly impossible for a creative facilitator, working within an emergent curriculum, to approach their role without a deep sense of curiosity and professional ease working within an open structure.

We often speak of the need to spark the curiosity of our students, however, it is our own curiosity that must come first. Being curious about the students, who they were, what they thought and where they came from, was essential in my efforts to create a space where meaningful dialogue could occur. My goal was to establish a culture of inquiry, by exploring ideas, asking questions, making connections, listening, and responding to the students, all in an attempt to widen this space of dialogue. The opening questionnaire proved to be a useful device in generating mutual curiosity and discussion. The questions gave the students a sense of where I was coming from, while their thoughtful answers revealed their unique perspectives on a variety of topics, which in turn informed the quality of our later discussions.

In the introduction to Freire's (2000) *A Pedagogy of Freedom*, Stanley Aronowitz writes, "…people cannot raise themselves to bid for power unless their curiosity has been aroused to ask the hard questions: 'why' as well as 'what.' For Freire, then, the foundation stone of the whole (educational) process is human curiosity" (p. 19). For the creative facilitator, curiosity is at the heart of an emergent curriculum that seeks to de-centre control in the classroom and empower the students with a sense of agency and

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ownership over the learning process. During the research project, I was impressed at how often the students took it upon themselves to ask the difficult questions, propelling our collaborative search forward with their own curiosity and enthusiasm.

6.5. Critical Thinking

A curious mind that is also critical is what allows us to dig deeper and explore issues such as power and injustice, which students evoked through our conversations together. You might think of critical thinking as politicized curiosity. As you recall Freire's term, 'conscientization' advocates for the critical reflection of one's lived experience as a means for people to expand their awareness and transform undesirable conditions. Freire states that, "In problem-posing education, people develop their power to perceive critically the way they exist in the world with which and in which they find themselves; they come to see the world not as static reality, but as reality in process, in transformation" (as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 100). Those engaging as creative facilitators must understand the importance of critical thinking if they are to embody the belief that change is possible. They must themselves be critical thinkers if the environments they seek to create are to be spaces of possible transformation where set ideas and identities are challenged and re-imagined.

In order to reflect upon why we think the way we do, Greene (1995) urges educators to consider the question, "how can we teach so as to provoke questioning of the taken-for-granted, the kind of questioning that involves simultaneously critical and creative thinking and attentive engagement with actualities?"(p. 175). Critical thinking is often seen as an academic solitary endeavour, but in a collaborative project it requires dialogue. Dialogue is not just about debate, it is about sharing, exploring and communicating ideas in a group setting. In the book *Revolutionizing Education*, Cahill et al. state, "Through the dialogic process of collectively working through and making sense of personal and shared experiences, there is the potential of identifying new ways of being in the world. Key is the collective act of sharing and processing together our personal experiences…"(as cited in Cammarota and Fine, 2008, p. 112). It is through critical dialogue that we can see from different perspectives and question our previously held assumptions.

Through Freire, I have come to appreciate the role that critical pedagogy plays in opening a space to question the production of knowledge, the institutions of learning, and the systems that govern them. Freire (2000) advocates "…for the learner's critical reflection on the social, economic, and cultural conditions within which education occurs; learning begins with taking the self as the first- but not the last- object of knowledge" (p. 12). Taking the self as the first object of knowledge starts with the creative facilitator and his or her ability to question the larger system and his or her position of power within it, along with his or her personal biases, attitudes and assumptions. It is necessary for a creative facilitator to question herself or himself if they are to create an environment where the students feel free to do the same.

6.6. Imagination

If critical thinking helps us to dismantle and understand systems of power and our position within it, imagination is the first step towards positive change, imagination is the creative act of stimulating alternate ways of being. Imagination is also connected to care, specifically empathy, as we strive to identify with the other and their lived experience. As Maxine Greene (1995) writes, "People trying to be more fully human must not only engage in critical thinking but must be able to imagine something coming of their hopes; their silence must be overcome by their search (p. 25)." The imagination of a creative facilitator must be nimble and far-reaching; nimble in the sense that it is used every day to enliven and facilitate the collaborative process, and far-reaching in the sense that they must believe in the power of art to positively effect social change.

My intention at the start of every workshop was to not only wake us up physically and bring us into the moment, but also to ignite our individual and collective imagination. The improvisational nature of the performance exercises was designed to bring our bodies into a space of creative exploration, because as Merleau-Ponty suggests, it is through our bodies that we connect with and express ourselves to the world. These physical, vocal and imaginative activities were an important first step as they set the foundation for later group sharing and discussions. In these discussions I asked the students to try and imagine realities beyond their own, and in doing so better relate to one another's unique experiences.

Greene (1995) speaks to the power of imagination as it "…permits us to give credence to alternative realities. It allows us to break with the taken for granted, to set aside familiar distinctions and definitions" (p. 3). She goes on to say "one of the reasons (she) has come to concentrate on imagination as a means through which we can assemble a coherent world is that imagination is what, above all, makes empathy possible" (Greene, 1995, p. 3). Ultimately, it was empathy and care for the other that I looked for, and recognized in the students, as evidence of their active imaginations.

6.7. Play

From the opening exercises, to our brainstorming, and the assembly of our final performance piece, I strove to develop and encourage a playful environment. As an active participant, I showed the students that I could be spontaneous, silly and have fun; it was therefore important that I was comfortable in expressing my imagination and these different sides of my personality. This act of play allowed us to connect as a group and gave the students permission to express themselves and their ideas more freely. As Connery, John-Steiner and Marjonovic-Shane (2010) write, "For Vygotsky, play represents the first appearance of imagination in development- as imagination in action" (p. 11). The creative facilitator must work inside of the action; they cannot stand apart from the group. It is imperative that the creative facilitator participates in the group play without inhibition if they are to create a truly imaginative and collaborative space.

I strategically introduced play early in the process, for as Connery et al., (2010) suggest, "playing together can bring about transformations in the relationships in the community of players, it can strengthen the bond, the feeling of mutual completion between the ME and the YOU"(p. 68). It was the emerging trust in myself, the process and the students I was working with, and the de-centering of my position of power through play that helped to transform the relationships between the students and myself. For the creative facilitator, play is not only an attitude but also an act of engagement that must be practiced and learned.

Embracing play is also vital to a successful emergent curriculum approach. The uncertain nature of the process demands the resourcefulness and spontaneity that

comes with the ability to play. Nachmanovitch (2002) supports the notion that play makes us more flexible when he says, "A creature that plays is more readily adaptable to changing contexts and conditions. Play as free improvisation sharpens our capacity to deal with a changing world" (p. 45). With the students I encouraged them to see our project as an experiment, introducing them to research as a form of play and play as a form of research (I was introduced to this idea of play as a form of research in *Inquiry, Creativity and Community: Drama in Education*, a course taught by Lynn Fels and Kathryn Ricketts). However, play cannot be forced, it is a voluntary engagement, an act for and of itself, and it is the responsibility of the facilitator to create the conditions in which the students are comfortable and have a desire to participate in these imaginative acts.

6.8. Flexibility

Closely related to the practice of play, for both the creative process and the role of a creative facilitator, is the idea of flexibility. As Nachmanovitch (2002) asserts, "Our play fosters a richness of response and adaptive flexibility. This is the evolutionary value of play – play makes us flexible" (p. 43). The construction of an emergent curriculum is in itself a flexible endeavour, one that is in constant movement and change and must embrace the unexpected - the unknown. The players within this space must also learn to be flexible, if they are to be productive, creative and open to the complexity of multiple perspectives. As with the previous attributes, it is the responsibility of the creative facilitator to prepare themselves, they should come to the process with a confident, open and agile mind.

To enable a productive and creative group process, the facilitator must embrace complexity and resist rigid or reductive black-and-white thinking. As Fels and Belliveau (2008) write, "Complexity theory reminds us that everything is connected in generative systems of interaction and that, as educators, we need to remember that learning requires fluidity, adaptability, shared responsibility, and flexibility within enabling constraints" (p. 26). As I navigated the dynamic space between teaching and learning, I was constantly reminded of the importance of flexibility, the need to maintain my balance in the process, as relationships formed, shifted and a curriculum emerged.

As the students and I explored the multiple perspectives of our lived experiences, we embraced the complexity of our relationships to sensitive issues such as alienation, online bullying and teen suicide and the connections between them. Fels and Belliveau (2008) speak to these connections when they say, "The worlds that we inhabit are not independent but are in a constant state of flux, simultaneously shaping and being shaped by one another, and by us. We are, in other words, constantly co-evolving and changing as a result of our relationships and interactions with others and our environments" (p. 27). It is only through fluid, adaptable and flexible ways of thinking that we can begin to acknowledge and take responsibility for the roles we play and the environments we create. It is especially important that a creative facilitator understands that our relationships with others and our environment are constantly in flux, and it is therefore important to build flexibility into their every day practice.

6.9. Collaboration

Community is created as people come together to work in a collaborative and co-operative way. Facilitating a flexible, emergent arts-based curriculum that aims to produce a collective art piece requires a foundation of trust, shared ownership, and free imagination, if the necessary creative collaboration is to materialize. If I had a concrete goal from the onset of the project, it was to successfully create such a community. In hindsight I see how the attitudes, attributes and skills of the creative facilitator I have described above, aided me in building such a communal creative space, one in which, I myself, was an active collaborator. A true spirit of collaboration is transformative, it is inherently positive, constructive and mutually beneficial, allowing all parties to be learners and contributors to shared dialogue and creation.

The challenges to creating a collaborative environment require a creative facilitator with both highly developed skills and a diverse experience from which to draw upon. However, even a relatively cohesive group such as the group I worked with, required that I approach our collaboration with positive energy and enthusiasm for the project – there was absolutely no room for apathy or cynicism, disinterest, or non-constructive criticism. As hooks (1994) helps us to see generative positivity and collaboration are reciprocal in nature. She writes, "Excitement is generated through

collective efforts" (p. 8), she goes on to say, "… As a classroom community, our capacity to generate excitement is deeply affected by our interest in one another, in hearing one another's voices, in recognizing one another's presence" (p. 8). As hooks emphasizes, it is our ability to get excited, to listen and respond to each other that fuels a collaborative process.

It is vital that the creative facilitator embrace the notion that learning itself is a collective endeavour. Vygotsky (1998) reminds us learning takes place through our relationships with one another, and it is through the process of collaboration that individual and collective change is possible. As we relate our experiences, open our imaginations, and problem solve together, we begin to believe in a better world. With the belief that change is possible, the creative facilitator embraces a transformative approach where equality and social justice are embedded in all aspects of the collaborative work. How we are able to work together is just as important as what we are able to create. As hooks (1994) asserts, "The important lesson that we learn together, the lesson that allows us to move together within and beyond the classroom, is one of mutual engagement" (p. 205).

Chapter 7.

Conclusions: Towards a Radical Imagination

As a researcher and arts educator, I set out to explore the space-between teaching and learning by adopting the role of a creative facilitator in a secondary school environment. In an effort to better understand this role, my focus was on locating and identifying the relevant attitudes, attributes and skills required for this position. The previous section narrows these features down to a list of characteristics or qualities of engagement that, for me, were invaluable throughout the process of creative collaboration and facilitation. Though not intended to be a complete list, I put forth these qualities as core attributes of the role of a creative facilitator. I also believe, these key features have value and are relevant to any educator looking to introduce creative collaboration into their classroom to create an emergent curriculum of reciprocal learning and inquiry. In addition, my findings suggest that a space for creative collaboration must be carefully approached, and within this process, there are identifiable phases, namely: building connections, negotiating space, collective exploration and finally creative collaboration. The objectives for these phases were drawn from my study in educational philosophy, critical pedagogy, arts-based research, and phenomenology, and together helped to open a space for the experience I set out to create for and with my research participants. I have come to recognize that the order of the above phases is integral the work of a creative facilitator and for the successful development of a creative, collaborative community.

For the role of a creative facilitator, I suggest that the practitioner must embody the values they teach, and as such devote time and energy to developing the relevant personal skills and inner resources that I have learned are critical to successful creative facilitation. In this case 'to come prepared' does not mean to have the answers, on the contrary, the creative facilitator, teacher or educator must engage in decentralized

control or shared leadership with those he or she is working with, if he or she are to navigate the space between teaching and learning with curiosity, enthusiasm and confidence. It is important to understand the role of a creative facilitator as a political one; the facilitator must be critically self-aware if he or she seeks to encourage and integrate questions of equality and social justice into the collaborative experience. There is no doubt that the role of creative facilitator is challenging. The practice demands total engagement; there is no set curriculum to rest upon and no room for detachment. As an active participant, the creative facilitator is not a neutral or passive observer, but a player who must remain open and responsive to individual needs and the group as a whole, and yet bring a guiding, compassionate, presence to the work.

For the site of my research project, I purposefully chose to work within a public school setting. Anticipating criticisms of my alternative approach; I was curious to see how students would receive my research and practice as a creative facilitator. I wanted to test my ideas in a mainstream education environment. The constraints of the public school system, with its relatively large class size, set location, and fixed time duration pose the most obvious barriers to the adoption of a collaborative emergent curriculum. Working within the theatre department, I was able to request a small group of students, thereby sidestepping the challenge of working with an entire class. Though the other two issues of time and space were at times frustrating, they did not significantly impact the work when we met these obstacles with resourcefulness and flexibility.

An expected criticism of an emergent approach is that such an approach lacks structure; images of disrespectful, unruly students controlling the classroom come to mind. It is true that a standardized curriculum seemingly gives the educator easy authority and a firm foundation to stand upon. However, a collaborative emergent curriculum is unique in that there develops, out of necessity, a community of learners who share ownership and responsibility over the 'process' and 'product,' and who, as I experienced through this research project, display a level of maturity and respect that is admirable. These positive attitudes by students when allotted responsibility to be collaborative co-creators in their own learning also address concern or resistance some teachers may have to dealing with the personal and sensitive topics that can arise during a dialogic group process such as play creation. Considering how to deal with sensitive

issues as they arise opens up the question of boundaries and the responsibility of the creative facilitator, as I can see at times, the work may at times border on that of a counselor. Relevant training and knowledge of available resources and support should be considered as part of the position and responsibility of someone who wishes to be a creative facilitator.

7.1. Feedback

Upon the completion of the research project, I requested and received written feedback from the students on the following questions: What did you find interesting / different about this project? Was there anything in particular that surprised you? What feedback would you give me on my role as a creative facilitator? Their insightful and positive feedback reaffirmed my own perceptions, that the project was both enjoyable and meaningful to them, and that they were able to learn something new about themselves and each other through the experience. To begin, several of them expressed how taken aback they were that everyone was so open in discussing issues and ideas that mattered to them. In the words of one of the students, "I was surprised by how much we as a group had in common in terms of worries and issues." Another participant wrote, "I found it interesting to talk about issues and topics that came directly from us, rather than topics that came from a curriculum made up by some guy in a suit who knows nothing about our lives or interests." The student's words reflect the trust that was established in the group, and the honest and supportive relationships they developed amongst their peers, as well, I suspect, appreciation for the welcoming reception of their ideas and work.

Speaking to the structure of the collaborative process, one of the participants expressed, "I think that we are so used to structure in our lives that it took a while to adjust to the freedom you offered. That might be why we were a little bit slow at the beginning. If we started with a little structure and then slowly removed it, we might be more effective." Even though I had a loose structure going into the project, I see where this student is coming from and in future projects, would consider how to involve students or participants in the structuring of the process earlier in the project. Another participant commented on what they found interesting about the process, "I liked the

openness. There was no curriculum or format so everything was very collaborative. It therefore felt very honest because we did not have a set final destination, the process became more about the journey than the final product." Put another way, a student wrote, "I loved the fact that you didn't start the project with any expectations. You believed in us and you knew that at the end, it would be great." It was reaffirming to discover that the students were able to see the value in the emphasis being on the process rather than the final product.

In the responses to the question on my role as a creative facilitator, I was looking for feedback on the effectiveness of the environment I established within the group process. One student wrote, "I think you did an amazing job at making us feel at ease and bringing the project to life. There's a reason we keep wanting you back for counseling sessions." Another students echoes this sentiment, she felt I opened a space where the students could discuss things honestly without feeling they would be judged or ridiculed, "I thought the way you guided discussions was really good because you let us talk a lot and created a really comfortable atmosphere for us to share while still keeping us on track." Reviewing this positive feedback from the students has helped me to see that my attempt to create an environment for meaningful engagement, dialogue and collaboration was successful, in that I was able to open a space where students felt they could truly express themselves. In one of the workshops I told the students that the most important thing to me was that they were engaged and participating because they wanted to. From my observations throughout the process and the feedback I received at the end, I saw the many ways in which the students took responsibility and ownership of the project. Without their enthusiasm and contributions the experience could have been much different (and likely more challenging). I am grateful to the group for their inspiration, imaginations, their active participation, and the insight it has given me into the role of a creative facilitator.

7.2. Unanswered Questions and Future Directions

If I step back and look at my research study as a whole, I see that my project had certain advantages, such as small group size, the progressive and supportive theatre department, and an existing relationship with the faculty. Because of these advantages, I

would suggest that more qualitative research is required to explore some of the unanswered questions, such as is there an ideal group size for successful creative facilitation, the number of workshops required to lead to successful group collaboration, and establishing an evaluation vehicle to observe the overall impact and benefits to the participants. In particular, I am curious to see how one might implement a collaborative and emergent arts curriculum into a full class size. Perhaps by pairing a public school arts teacher with a trained creative facilitator, one might better manage the complexity and demands of a larger group. I would be interested in developing such a pilot project that looked to introduce creative facilitation techniques into the public school classroom. I would also suggest that further research into creative facilitation would benefit from engaging with the progressive work currently being done at the community and grassroots levels. For example, the not-for-profit organization 'Power of Hope' has established programs of creative facilitation that bear further study and may inform further academic discourse around the role of the creative facilitator in arts education.

Creating space for youth empowerment lies in teachers, academics, community workers, and young people coming together to discuss how best to facilitate meaningful dialogue; a dialogue that allows students to express their critical and creative voices on issues that matter to them. As Maxine Greene (1995) writes, "When such a dialogue is activated in classrooms, even the young are stirred to reach out on their own initiatives. Apathy and indifference are likely to give way as images of what might be arise" (p.5). After two years of researching, writing, exploring, and reflecting, I am filled with inspiration and excitement for projects to come. This journey through the Arts Education masters program has reinforced my belief that we need more opportunities to relate our shared struggles, explore our differences and create collaboratively, if we are to re-imagine the world in which we live as a better place. With a desire to see social justice embedded in all aspects of education, we must continue to research the space-between teaching and learning, creative facilitation, and how the arts can best help to create potential opportunities for transformation.

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Appendix A.

Student Questionnaire

Student Name:

Date:

Radical Imagination: Questionnaire

(Note: please circle as many answers as you like and feel free to add any additional thoughts. There are no right/wrong answers!)

1. Identity is:

a) Is based on someone's personality

b) Is always changing

c) The way you look

d) Affected by your culture and society

e) Your facebook profile

f) Something you can buy

g) All of the above

h) None of the above

i) Your definition:

2. An artist is:

a) A creative person

b) A person who sells paintings for a lot of money

c) Someone who doesn't work

d) A person who thinks differently

e) A person who sees beauty in things

f) A person who is critical of the world in which they live

g) All of the above

h) None of the above

i) Your definition:

3. Art is:

a) Drawing and painting

b) Cartoons

c) Graffiti

d) Reality television

e) Poetry

f) Fashion

g) Photography

h) Food

i) Dance

j) All of the above

k) None of the above

l) Your definition:

4. How do you see art being connected to your daily life?

a) I make art everyday

b) I appreciate art everyday

c) I make art sometimes

d) I don't care about art

e) My life is art

f) Your thoughts:

5. What is research?

a) Is something scientists do

b) Is observing and reflecting upon the world that you live in

c) Is surfing the Internet

d) Is listening to music

e) Is taking photographs

f) Is none of the above

g) Is all of the above

h) Your definition:

6. What is Education for?

a) To make you smarter

b) To help you get a job

c) To empower you to make your own decisions

d) To improve your quality of thinking

e) To encourage you to see things differently

f) A place where your parents send you to be disciplined

g) All of the above

h) None of the above

i) Your thoughts:

7. Social change is:

a) About improving society

b) Is about looking at injustice and inequality

c) Something that activists do

d) Concerns you

e) Does not concern you

f) Your definition:

8. Do you think that art has the power to shape society?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Not sure

d) Your thoughts:

9. Community is:

a) When you feel connected to a group of people

b) A group of people working together for a common goal

c) A sports team

d) A high school

e) All of the above

f) None of the above

g) Your thoughts:

10. Do you feel connected to a community?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Not sure

d) Your thoughts:

11. Can art help to create community?

a) Yes

b) No

c) Not sure

d) Your thoughts:

12. What you learn at school relates to your life outside of school?

a) A lot

b) Somewhat

c) A little

d) Not at all

e) Your thoughts:

13. What issues matter to you? List 3-5

14. What are 5 of your favorite activities?

15. Where are 5 places that you enjoy spending time?

16. If you could be a landscape, what would it look like?

17. Name 5 things you love about life:

18. Name 5 of the best things about being a teenager:

19. Name 5 of the most challenging things about being a teenager:

20. Who is someone that inspires you and why?

21. What does freedom mean to you?

22. What goals do you have in participating in this project?

23. If you were designing this questionnaire, what is one question you would add?

24. What made you want to sign up for this project?

25. What gifts/talents do you bring as an artist-researcher?

Appendix B:

Student Monologues

Chandra

How does society affect us?

How does society affect us? Kind of a funny question right? I mean, you would think that we'd be able to answer that considering we ARE society but how some it's so hard to be the change that we want to see?

Simple. We make it difficult on ourselves. Society affects us everyday from the way we look to the way we act. Even to the way we do things! We don't realize it but sometimes we give into society's idea of 'social norms' without even thinking about it or we might just give into it because we want to fit in and be cool.

For me, personally, society affects me the most in my perception of things, myself mostly. We see things the way society wants us to as opposed to they way we should and it sucks! Especially for teenagers.

We feel the pressure to look a certain way and act a certain way that it we don't, it silently kills us and we're judged. Media plays a huge part in it too! We try to portray all these people that we see on t.v but we don't realize that they're corporate symbols and are made to look like that.

We always say that we want to see change and be who we are without a single care in the world about what people think, and we can do that if we're willing to but are we really?

Alastair

How society negatively or positively affects us.

Wow loaded question. You know to answer that we'd have to go back, back, way back to when I was in high school…before I became the "man" I am now. You see I was into the arts, and I was really good too. Somehow I had this natural talent for anything physical, be it painting, sculpting, acting, or playing music. Man music was my calling. I played about 5 different instruments, but my favourite was and still is, the cello. I joined every string, classical and jazz band at my school, had my own band and did my own shows. I'd win the talent show every year. My school loved me. I fed off their support; it drove me to work harder and harder. But, though they seemed to support and encourage me, I could tell my parents didn't fully approve. They always joked about how it's impossible to make a living as a musician. But I would tell them they were wrong. Whenever we would get asked 'What do you want to be when you grow up?' in school, everyone else would have these perfect answers…doctor, lawyer, accountant, it made me second guess myself until I'd just say "IDK!" It drove me mad, pretending not to know what my dream job was when I did. I'd pretend to be interested in law, it seemed like something others

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would never buy…I didn't realise I would buy it too….my parents, thinking they were helping me, got me into and paid for law school…I didn't, I couldn't disappoint them so I said yes…little did I realise it was 9 years….WORST TIME OF MY LIFE. I couldn't drop out, especially after it had been paid for….here I am now, a super successful lawyer….well that's how others see it. …Me? I think I'm a failure. I gave up on my dreams, and faked a passion too long. My view of success is based upon personal appreciation of your craft. Every time I hear classical music I feel an empty hole of regret. If I was smart, or ignorant, or selfish, or whatever I might be out there, strong, I could be in a hole wearing scraps instead of suits, playing the cello in front of a half drunk audience. And I'd never be happier.

Becky

Just like a fish in water, society is what is always around us. Everyone and everything around us creates our society. When I was a little kid I was different from who I am today in more than many ways; over the years I have picked up styles and trends, hobbies and interests, inspirations, but I have also left them behind. I am still and always will be collecting things that come up in my life. That is what makes me who I am, as well as everyone else who they are.

Nick

Me afraid? Yes.

Yes I am.

Afraid of never becoming a man of value.

Never reaching the expectations of my friends, family and peers.

Afraid that one day I may not have something special to share.

But why am I so afraid?

I can't control their expectations nor can I control the future.

Why should I fear tomorrow when I have today? Because I know somewhere in this long journey of life, everything will be okay.

Shana

I think about it a lot. What to expect from it, how to deal with it, what I should do about it. And I'll tell you one thing, it scares the shit out of me. The unknown is a frightening thing and that's my future. I'd like to think that I'll do something great with it, become a doctor, a politician, save some dolphins or whales. That would be great, but who knows what I'll do? Do I even have the skills and talents that will get me to the places I want to be? Where are the places I want to be? Everyone tells me that I don't have to decide what I want to be when I grow up, that I have plenty of time to decide, but shouldn't I at least

have some idea of what I'm interested in? There isn't really anything I'm particularly passionate about, except being helpful to others. Where the heck is that going to lead me? Becoming a therapist? I'd need a few therapists of my own to get me through my own job. The people that know what they love, they're the lucky ones. I would give anything to have a passion for something. I feel like I just 'like' everything right now and look at me, I'm a bloody chicken with it's head cut off, always all over the place, having too many places to be at one time and never having enough time for friends and family. One could say my future is a blank canvas, and to some that would be beautiful, having the opportunity to do anything, but to me my future is just a dark empty pit ready to swallow me whole if I don't watch my step.

Maki

Go to school. That's what I should do right? That's what I'm told to do. And every single day I get up, go to school, do homework and go to bed just like every other teenager. But why? To learn? To education myself and get good grades so that I can get into a good university and further my education. Oh and then get a good job because I must make something of myself. But now I'm not so sure. Look at my parents. They have their lives. My mom went to school, got good grades has a great job and hates it. Dad? He never graduated, never received a good education, has a crap job, so you can see why he hates it too. So how am I supposed to know what I want to do if everyone I look up to is disappointed with themselves. It seems regardless of where I turn my road leads to a dead end. Some tell me to start my own path. Do some bushwhacking, lay some gravel and make it my own. But I could get lost. It's too dangerous. And it's not what they want.