

**TOWARDS ETHICAL PRACTICE: A NARRATIVE SELF STUDY OF
DISCOURSES IN THE DRAMA CLASSROOM**

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Kristopher Ryan Dueck

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SUPERVISORY AND EXAMINING COMMITTEE

Kristopher Ryan Dueck, candidate for the degree of Master of Education in Curriculum & Instruction, has presented a thesis titled, ***Towards Ethical Practice: A Narrative Self Study of Discourses in the Drama Classroom***, in an oral examination held on August 30, 2013. The following committee members have found the thesis acceptable in form and content, and that the candidate demonstrated satisfactory knowledge of the subject material.

External Examiner: Dr. Scott A. Thompson, Educational Psychology

Supervisor: Dr. Carol Schick, Curriculum & Instruction

Committee Member: Dr. Janice Huber, Curriculum & Instruction

Committee Member: *Dr. Mia Perry, Curriculum & Instruction

Committee Member: Dr. Kathleen Irwin, Faculty of Fine Arts

Chair of Defense: Dr. Lisa Watson, Faculty of Business Administration

*Not present at defense

ABSTRACT

This self-study explores some of the subject positions that are negotiated, produced and reinforced through discourses that circulate in the high school drama classroom where I teach. By exploring my areas of discomfort in the classroom as well as my self-definition as a teacher, I expose many of the ways I affect and am affected by technologies of power and governmentality that operate within the school.

Drawing on a number of self-study research methods, through an interrogation of my intellectual history as well as through careful reflection of my past experiences as an educator, I illuminate some of the discursive practices, events and assumptions that have produced my subject positions. Subjects are discursively constructed through their role within educational institutions that too often reflect and reproduce hierarchical power relations that limit agency. Therefore, in this study I explore ways of gaining a degree of agency by reconciling my practice with my core ethical beliefs about learning. This work is grounded in post-structuralist theory and uses the work of Michel Foucault as a basis for an analysis of power relations in the context of my practice. Working with a group of Drama 10 students during the fall semester of 2011, I begin by charting the discursive practices through which students are produced as subjects. I go on to expose my areas of discomfort in the classroom as a means to identify what prevents me from encouraging students to take a more active role in the planning and facilitation of drama work. I comment upon spatiality or the ways in which the production of social space can act to control the behaviour of subjects. Throughout this work, I take stock of how my body, as the object of research, has been inscribed socially, politically and historically, gaining insights into the ways that it contributes to the subjectivation of students. In order to

identify the role my body plays in producing students as subjects, I use reflective journals of my experiences in the drama classroom as my primary source of data collection.

Reflecting upon the modes of subjectivity that produce us, I problematize the means through which people are produced as subjects, and therefore explore ways to expand agency by disrupting various subjectivities. This process is informed by my new understanding of ethics and exposes the need for me to refuse certain subjectivities, to challenge my areas of discomfort, and to adopt a kind of ethical and embodied practice that recognizes the connection between mind, body and emotion and which requires agency as a necessary tenet of its own subject-hood.

Understanding the discourses that produce subject identity exposes a number of ways for educators to reposition their own practice in order to effectively share power with students in the classroom so that they will gain a deeper understanding of their subject positions and begin to transform their practice in order to develop more reciprocal relationships with students.

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CHAPTER I

BRIDGING PEDAGOGY AND PRACTICE

I am standing in front of a history 9 classroom of 25 students who are seated in 5 rows, each with 5 desks. I am speaking about the interconnected nature of the global economy and the unequal power relations that are required to support first world wealth. Occasionally a student asks a question or makes a comment. I show a clip from “youtube” that emphasizes my point. As I speak, I move around the classroom animatedly, hoping to engage a maximum number of students. I feel comfortable and in control. I like the certainty that comes from this kind of instruction. Despite my enthusiasm, I notice a number of students whom I sense are completely disengaged.

1.1 Introduction

I believe students learn best when they have agency as well as a high degree of control over the learning process. Despite this belief, I have often relied on more traditional models of education to inform my practice. In my experience I have found a number of obstacles standing in the way of facilitating more democratic principles in my teaching. Teachers are expected to meet a broad range of learning objectives that foster all areas of cognitive development (Bloom, 1956) as well as appeal to multiple intelligences (Gardner, 1983). Further, teachers must ensure that curricular objectives are met and must effectively and authentically assess student learning. Increased demand for accountability, and in some subject areas standardized assessment, compounds the challenges teachers face in attempting to negotiate more equitable power relations with students. Meanwhile, teachers’ identities are discursively constructed through their education and their role within educational institutions that too often reflect and reproduce hierarchical power relations which limit student agency. Therefore, I would like to find ways to reconcile my practice with my core ethical beliefs about learning by understanding the role I play in the production of power relations in the classroom. I also

hope to discover ways to effectively supporting students in gaining a higher degree of control over their own learning. Therefore, I must determine ways to reposition my practice to challenge existing power relations. Using reflective journals and narrative explorations of my personal history, I take stock of ways my body, as the object of research, is inscribed politically. In so doing, I gain insights into possible ways my body may contribute to the subjectivation of students. I explore the role of my body in the classroom in order to adopt an embodied practice that embraces the connection between the cognitive, the emotional and the physical, and that acknowledges the inseparability of ethics and bodies (Allegranti, 2011).

The central research question that guides this self-study is: What are some of the subject positions negotiated, produced and reinforced through discourses that circulate through my teaching? The following sub-questions provide a basis for focused exploration within my larger study.

1. What are the narratives through which I have defined myself as a teacher?
2. What have I observed about how I effect power relations in the classroom?
3. What are my experiences of discomfort in the classroom space?

It is my hope that such questions will help me to see how my teaching is disciplined through various discourses, and allow me to gain key insights regarding student self-efficacy (Bandura, 1997) and locus of control (Rotter, 1954; 1990). Further, I explore the ways that power relations are negotiated, produced and reinforced in the classroom through the various processes of *subjectivation* (Foucault, 1982, 1986, 1988; Butler, 1988; Grant, 1997). By deconstructing my responses to power relations in the classroom, I hope to find ways of effectively negotiating more reciprocal relations between students and me. An examination of the ways power circulates within my

practice through the context of the work of Michel Foucault (1971, 1972, 1973, 1977, 1980, 1982, 1983, 1985, 1986, 1988, 1997a, 1997b, 2002) will support my investigation of the ways subject positions are constructed and negotiated in the classroom.

While this work primarily explores the processes of subjectivation whereby I am discursively produced to perform various roles within the school, it must be acknowledged that many of my ideas about learning are informed by critical pedagogy. Throughout my teacher education program, this orientation made sense to me, and so critical pedagogy was important in enabling me to incorporate the language of freedom and emancipation into my teaching practice. Critical pedagogy demands that a central tenet of any narrative or autobiographical research must call my subject position into question (Freire, 1970a; Kincheloe, 2004, 2008; McLaren, 2007; Giroux, 2011). As such, my own social positioning and performance as a white, middle-class, straight Christian male will form a necessary part of my observations. Freire (1970a) suggests that those who authentically commit themselves to the people must re-examine themselves constantly. This conversion is so radical as not to allow for ambivalent behavior... Conversion to the people requires a profound rebirth. Those who undergo it must take on a new form of existence; they can no longer remain as they were. (p.60)

As a part of my thesis research I read more of Foucault and realized that freedom and emancipation are modernist positions that belong with a notion of a fixed subjectivity. The impetus to do much of this research has come from my reading and knowledge of critical pedagogy. This is my personal orientation. Now, however, I have come to understand identity in the context of post-structuralism, as having no fixed subjectivity, as being produced through discourse. As such, though I may comment throughout this thesis on the ways that my teaching practice has been informed by a critical orientation, I

will primarily be using the language of post-structuralism to describe my research. This is especially challenging when I write about creating opportunities for students to gain a higher degree of agency within the drama work in the classroom. Initially, I hoped to be able to facilitate power sharing between my students and me. Through a more careful reading of post-structuralist theory, however, I now understand that power is not mine to share. Instead, discourses of power circulate through multiple sources, limiting the amount of power possessed by any individual. Despite this complexity, I do describe my efforts to provide spaces for students to take more control over the learning process, while acknowledging the limited and partial nature of this control.

This work will discuss the ways I have been discursively produced as a subject within the larger institutions to which I belong. The constitutive nature of the subject limits the ability of expression of all subjects. All subjects are required to perform in prescribed ways because they are produced by institutions through various forces of governmentality (Foucault, 2007). Despite the limited agency of subjects (Clark, 2008), through constant and ongoing critical reflection subjects can exercise a degree of agency. This requires the agentic subjects to refuse particular subjectivities, to define their position, and to decide on a mode of being that will serve as their goal (O'Leary, 2002). As such, this thesis will explore the modes through which subjects can reposition their subject identities through certain practices on the self that require a new understanding of ethics (Clark, 2008).

This is a self-study of the very personal act of teaching in which understanding one's self is key to repositioning ourselves as educators (Bullough & Pinnegar, 2001; Freire, 1970a; Kimson 2005; Samaras, 2011; Schon, 1983; Whitehead, 1989). Through a combination of self-study methods, I will be reflecting upon both my intellectual history

as well as my experiences in the classroom with a group of grade 10 drama students. While I experiment with a variety of approaches in negotiating power with this class, the focus of the research is an exploration of my own reactions to the work we do. By reflecting upon my participation in a variety of learning experiences intended to allow students a degree of control, I expose areas of my discomfort as an educator and illuminate various processes through which I am produced by my role within institutions, the community and the classroom into a certain kind of subject.

Throughout this research I will not be actively collecting information from students in the form of grades, papers or by observing their actions for the purposes of data gathering. Any identifying features of people or places will be anonymized in the final work, and when discussing classroom experiences, pseudonyms will be used. In deconstructing the ways that discourses of power circulate within schools, I am not setting out to judge or to harm my fellow teachers, administrators and students. Instead I am attempting to expose the complex ways that all subjects operate within discourses of power. Attached in Appendix A is a copy of email correspondence that confirms that because I am the primary object of research, this research does not require the approval of the Research Ethics Board.

As this self-study is intended to chart the ways I have come to understand my role in affecting discourses of power within my practice, at times I am recalling past events that have produced my subject identity. This requires that the verb tense will change periodically in my dissertation, and so while this thesis is primarily written in the present tense, during the times when I am recalling events from the distant past, I intentionally use past tense.

1.2 Review of the Literature

Foucault suggests in order to challenge existing power relations that are constitutive of all social systems and institutions, there must be the development of a new economy of power relations. To begin to do so involves:

taking the forms of resistance against different forms of power as a starting point. To use another metaphor, it consists of using this resistance as a chemical catalyst so as to bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and the methods used. Rather than analyzing power from the point of view of its internal rationality, it consists of analyzing power relations through the antagonism of strategies. (Foucault, 1982, p. 780)

In the context of my practice, this requires making power relations an explicit topic of exploration and discussion, as well as brainstorming ways to undo these relations in the classroom and in the wider world by exploring theatre forms and pieces that engage critically with various forms of oppression. It also requires the nature of instruction to be transformed in such a way as to facilitate a degree of meaningful participation, critical analysis, reflection and action. Further, by using conventions associated with *Theatre of the Oppressed* and Forum theatre (Boal, 1985, 1995, 2002; Diamond, 2007) students can begin to learn strategies for resistance against oppression both in the classroom and in their lives. Implementation of these approaches is of secondary importance, as this self-study is intended to expose the discursive productions of power that make this work of power-sharing difficult. In other words, what are the discourses that prevent me from effectively negotiating more reciprocal power relations with students?

As this study is an experiment in power sharing, an analysis of the way power circulates through discourses must be included. Within the classroom, power relations are produced at every level and between all groups. One of the central ways power relations are produced and reinforced is through the processes in which humans are made into subjects. Foucault (1982) seeks to “create a history of the different modes by which, in our culture, human beings are made subjects” (p. 777). People are produced as subjects by three modes of objectification. The first is in the “modes of inquiry that try to give themselves the status of sciences.” That is to say, people are defined by their role in various institutions through their occupations, their language, or by the fact that they are alive as humans. The second mode that transforms people into subjects is what Foucault refers to as dividing practices: “The subject is either divided inside himself or divided from others” (Foucault, 1982, pp. 777-778). Dividing practices are what create and reinforce binary divisions of good and bad, popular and unpopular, powerful and powerless. The third mode of objectification is “the way a human being turns him or herself into a subject” (Foucault, 1982, p. 778). Foucault points to the example that people have “learned to recognize themselves as subjects of sexuality.” The theme of Foucault’s (1982, p. 778) research surrounding power does not concern power operating through authority alone, but through the ways power is exercised discursively on various subjects.

One of the main sources for analyzing the way power relations are exercised within my teaching context will be to observe and interpret the various discourses in the school and classroom. It is most important that I become attentive to small shifts in how ideas are expressed in language. Language and other forms of symbolic exchange are the primary object studied by discourse theory (Foucault, 1972). Discourse has been

described as “a social language created by particular cultural conditions at a particular time and place, and it expresses a particular way of understanding human experience” (Tyson, 1999, p. 281). As power is exercised primarily through relationships of communication (Foucault, 1982, p. 786), the discourses used between students in the classroom will represent the points where power relations make themselves visible. Identifying these times and my participation and response to them will help me to dissect and understand my own subject position within the classroom. Weedon (1997) says that for Foucault power is “a dynamic of control and lack of control between discourses and subjects, constituted by discourses, who are their agents. Power is exercised within discourses in the ways in which they constitute and govern individual subjects” (p. 110). Being aware of the ways discourse impacts power relations in the classroom, I hope to change the ways I speak to students by using a *language of possibilities* (Giroux, 1988). That is by constantly monitoring the way I interact with students and by approaching all classroom conversations with a language that is egalitarian and intended to challenge students to be critical; therefore, discourse can become a tool to help deconstruct existing power relations in the classroom.

Central to the way power operates within institutions is through the discursive creation of discipline. Modern institutions require that people be controlled according to the tasks they must perform. Disciplinary power was created in order that people could perform their duties within new forms of economic, political, and military organizations. Discipline creates what Foucault describes as *docile bodies* that are perfect for performing the tasks necessary in the new institutions of the modern industrial age. This discipline would create people who could work in factories, perform effectively in the military and in school classrooms. Within the very institutions which people must be

made to effectively perform are the institutions that reinforce and create these disciplinary structures. In order to construct the *docile body*, the institutions must be able to observe and record the “bodies” they control. Further, the discipline must produce these bodies without excessive force and mold them into the correct form through careful surveillance. Traditional models of instruction and assessment can be seen as products of these forms of discipline (Foucault, 1977). Foucault’s suggestion—that discipline and training are a continuing force that shapes privilege—is highlighted in his metaphor of the prison cell based on Jeremy Bentham’s *Panopticon* (Bentham, 2008). Foucault writes: “Visibility is a trap” (1977, p. 200) which makes the social norms and behaviors of both the oppressed and oppressor highly visible and therefore easily disciplined to perform the expected social behaviors based on that visibility. Visibility produces self-control, as oppressed subjects feel they are in a constant state of being observed, so “should therefore act as they would have us act” (Dei, p. 91). Whether or not “the prison became the model for disciplinary institutions, it was the school of the *Ecole Militaire* which may have provided the inspiration for the *Panopticon*” (Deacon, 2006, p. 181). Of particular interest to this self-study is the way power relations are inscribed on the body. As I will be commenting on the ways spatiality and physicality effect power relations in the classroom, it is important to note that I acknowledge the body to be “a site where regimes of discourse and power inscribe themselves, a nodal point or nexus for relations of juridical and productive power” (Butler, 1989, p. 602). Because discourses of power are inscribed on the body, “bodies are not neutral; gender, sexuality, ethnicity and class are socio-political aspects that shape our mental, emotional and physical selves and inform our ethical values” (Allegranti, 2011, p. 487). Embodied practice requires that I recognize the body as a site through which discourses of power operate, and that I am reflective of

the ways my body contributes to the subjectivation of students. The embodied classroom is one where “the connections between cognition and emotion, affect and intellect [are] recognized, where ‘bodily’ knowledge [is] honored as epistemically valuable, and where body and mind, both, [are] welcome in the learning space” (Chapman, 2001, p. 35). Each chapter of this thesis begins with a short description of what I consider to be an important moment of my practice that exposes certain truths about the role my body plays in effecting power relations in the classroom space. These moments act as starting points to further explore discourses of power in my teaching context, and provide key insights regarding how I might make changes to how I perform my role as teacher.

Schools also employ a variety of technologies to produce subjects in a certain way. Foucault (1988) uses four major categories to describe the technologies used by institutions:

(1) technologies of production, which permit us to produce, transform or manipulate things; (2) technologies of sign systems, which permit us to use signs, meanings, symbols or signification; (3) technologies of power, which determine the conduct of individuals and submit them to certain ends or domination, an objectivizing of the subject; (4) technologies of the self, which permit individuals to effect by their own means, or with the help of others, a certain number of operations on their own bodies and souls, thoughts, conduct, and a way of being, so as to transform themselves in order to attain a certain state of happiness, purity, wisdom, perfection, or immortality. (p. 146)

These technologies are expressed through rules and regulations, discourse and language used between students and teachers and through the physical organization of both the classroom and the school.

Despite the relational nature of power, Foucault (1982) suggests it is “less a confrontation between two adversaries or their mutual engagement than it is a question of ‘government’” (p. 789). Here, he refers to government as the force that “designated the way in which the conduct of individuals or of groups might be directed”. The structure of institutions such as schools controls “the possible field of action of others” by limiting what is acceptable behavior within the institution (Foucault, 1982, p. 789). Subjects within schools have the illusion of freedom because they are “faced with a field of possibilities in which several kinds of conduct, several ways of reacting and modes of behavior are available” (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). The governmental nature of schools allows for the production of certain identities for its subjects. By situating students in such a way as to present them with a number of acceptable options for conduct, the illusion of freedom is created, while technologies of power ensure a certain type of individual is produced.

While I have indicated it is my intent to look for opportunities in my practice to allow students more agency and control over their own learning processes, it should be noted that my research is reflexive in that I intend to make inroads towards this end, but will do so, only in response to classroom practice. Further, it must be noted that power relations do not exist so simply within a binary of me giving control to or taking power away from students. The ways that power is distributed within all institutions is complex and shifting and is shaped by many different forces of subjectivation. Still, this work will describe my efforts to create spaces where students can deconstruct and in some cases

challenge existing power relations. Giroux (2004) suggests critical reflexivity is important in “bridging the gap between learning and everyday life, understanding the connection between power and knowledge” (p. 34). In the context of my practice, reflexivity requires me to constantly reflect on my practice and adapt my approaches in response to the learning experiences we have together. This interplay between reflection and action is what Freire (1970b) refers to as *praxis*. Freire writes: "Critical consciousness is brought about not through intellectual effort alone but through *praxis* — through the authentic union of action and reflection" (p. 48).

During my data-gathering semester, I conclude that the act of redefining the role of teacher and student and of negotiating more reciprocal relations between students and me does not mean I can never employ direct instruction as one of the tools to do this work. Foucault (1985) writes:

I really cannot see what is so objectionable in the practice of those who know more in a given truth game than another participant and tell the latter what he must do, teach him, and pass on knowledge and explain techniques to him. The problem arises much more in knowing how, when using these practices (in which power is neither avoidable nor intrinsically unacceptable), to avoid the effects of dominance. (p. 44)

In the context of the classroom where I teach, the work I will do requires teaching students basic skills prior to experimentation and participation. It also requires direct facilitation when explicitly approaching the subject of power relations.

Perhaps the most challenging goal of this research is to reconcile my practice with my core ethical beliefs. Foucault describes ethics as “the concerned form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection” (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 284). Much of

Foucault's later work that describes ethics as the 'aesthetics of existence' (1986, 1988) provides insight into the work that can be done on the self to become a more agentic subject. In order to practice social justice and equity with students, I am required to refuse certain forms of subjectivities that have produced me as a subject. In a sense, I am forced to refuse the self. Foucault describes this refusal as "the art not to be governed in this way" (Foucault, 2007, p. 44). In Chapter Five I explore Foucault's notion of ethical practice as it relates to my practice.

Much of the work I do with students draws upon existing models for conscious and deliberate power sharing in the classroom (Harvey & Daniels, 2009; Wiggins & McTigh, 2005) as well as student centered approaches to drama work (Booth & Lundy, 1985; Johnstone, 1999; Neelands & Goode, 2000). In addition, what I do in the classroom draws upon models for doing critical work in theatre that forces students to question the way power is constructed in society, in schools and in classrooms (Boal, 1985, 1995, 2002; Diamond, 2007). This work exposes the way power relations are constructed and supports an analysis of power relations in the context of my practice.

As I am the primary subject of this research, the methodology of this thesis will use a variety of self-study approaches. As a method, self-study has been defined as:

A personal, systematic inquiry situated in one's own context that requires critical and collaborative reflection in order to generate knowledge, as well as, inform the broader educational field. This reflection, in turn, contributes to the knowledge base of education and to the work and professional development of the practitioner. (Samaras, 2011, p. 10)

Schön (1983) suggests that all professionals must actively engage in reflection on their practice. He writes "when someone reflects-in-action, he becomes a researcher in

the practice context (*sic*). He is not dependent on the categories of established theory and technique, but constructs a new theory of the unique case" (p. 68). While Schön's work illustrates the value of reflective practice and self-study, it also implies the need for teachers to develop their own *living educational theory* (Whitehead, 1989). Through the process of reflection on my educational experiences, I can generate a *living educational theory* appropriate to the context in which I am practicing and researching. Self-study is a powerful tool to help me begin this process.

This self-study allows me to reflect deeply about my experiences through journaling as well as through the telling of personal narratives. Bullough and Pinnegar (2001) suggest that blending personal narratives and autobiography into self-study allows the reader a deeper insight into the teacher researcher's actions. Kimson (2005) describes the powerful nature of autobiography in the context of feminist research in *Research as Resistance* when she suggests "what becomes central in autobiographical narratives is 'I', our accounts of the world, which are constructions made up of language and meanings, and our own histories of thinking about topics that interest us" (p. 75). Inherent in her work is the idea that implicating the 'self' in one's work is of profound value.

The concept of 'self' within post-structuralism is challenging, as 'self' is replaced by subject in order to suggest the 'self' is a production of technologies acting upon the body through various institutions (Foucault, 1988; Butler, 1997; Grant 1997). This study recognizes the processes of subjectivation that are constitutive of the ways we define ourselves (Grant, 1997). Taking up the processes through which we are produced as subjects exposes the limited agency teachers can have within schools. However, placing myself within the narratives that have produced me, and reflecting upon the discourses within the classroom space helps me to understand my own subject positioning as well as

to see some of the ways I contribute to the discursive production of the subject positioning of students. It is my hope that this work will empower me to embrace a kind of ethical practice (Clarke, 2008) in which a degree of agency in spite of the institutions which produce me as a subject becomes a necessary tenet of the way I define myself (O'Leary 2002, p. 114).

1.3 Design and Methodology

Though many different teaching experiences guide this self-study, I draw primarily on my experiences in the drama classroom, and more specifically from my experiences teaching a group of Drama 10 students in the fall of 2011. Throughout my teaching career, I have sought to create learning experiences that are student centered, but have found it difficult to truly give control of the learning process to students to the extent that they are able to take a leadership role in the facilitation of drama work as well as freedom to explore areas of theatre of their choice. Through careful reflection on both my past experiences as an educator as well as my present work as a drama teacher, I illuminate some of the discursive practices, events and assumptions that prevent more reciprocal relations of power in my classroom context. As well, I discover ways of facilitating power sharing effectively. The primary method of data collection is through the process of journaling, reflecting on my experiences in the classroom with regard to power sharing as well as observing the discourses between students and myself. By reflecting upon and engaging in critical analysis of my journaling, my areas of discomfort became more clear. These areas are indicated through observation of my preferred instructional approaches, by the times when I limit student choices, by the language I use to communicate with students in the classroom, and by all of the methods and activities I

am reluctant to use because of my uncertainty of the outcomes or my ability to maintain control.

Though the bulk of the data draws upon key learning experiences from my work with Drama 10 students, the focus of the journaling is about me as the facilitator of such work. Any observations on classroom experiences focus primarily on my reactions and insights in order to understand how the students and I negotiate discursive subject positions, as well as to gauge how successful I have been in transferring control of the learning process to students.

This study will draw on a number of self-study methods. *The Personal History Self-study Method* (Samaras, Hicks, & Garvey Berger, 2004) allows me to reflect on my journey as an educator and the learning and transformations I have gone through in order to become the teacher I am today. I also draw upon the *Memory Work Self-study Method* (Mitchell & Weber, 1999) as an autobiographical inquiry into my past. The reflective revisiting of key experiences helps me to expose how I have composed my identities as an individual and as an educator. While exploring my personal history and drawing upon memories of key learning experiences is an important process of self-discovery and context setting, a key element of this research is based on reflections of teaching a specific group of students. This element of the research is reflexive in nature, as my reflections on classroom experiences help guide future teaching and help me to understand ways of more closely aligning my practice with my pedagogical beliefs about learning. This central part of my self-study draws heavily upon the *Living Educational Theory Method* (Whitehead, 1989) which states educators are able to construct meaning by analyzing their own daily practice for its alignment to their own teaching philosophy.

Daily journaling about classroom experiences is the main source of identifying the

places where power relations are made visible. A key component to understanding the nature of power relations within my school and classroom will be in determining the points where power is expressed spatially and socially in ways that are both observed and unobserved. They are expressed by the places certain groups of students congregate, by the ways classrooms are organized, and by the discourses about learning and school that circulate between students and teachers. Further, points where power is expressed may show themselves as reactions to my efforts to negotiate more reciprocal power relations for students or through student responses to exploring or making visible the subject of power relations in class. The utility of my journal will be in reflecting upon the work I do with students and in seeing and understanding my process.

This work helps me to gain the critical consciousness required in order to understand the ways discourse forms power relations in the classroom. It enables me to find ways to facilitate theatre work that is critical of various forms of oppression, as well as work that is liberating for students and me. As Freire (1970a) concludes: “Leaders who do not act dialogically, but insist on imposing their decisions, do not organize the people—they manipulate them. They do not liberate, nor are they liberated: they oppress” (p. 178).

In Chapter Two, I will describe how I have been discursively produced within my work into a certain kind of subject by examining my intellectual history. This teacher identity is formed by a series of power relations between students and me, between my administration and me, and between the institution and me. In Chapter Three, I examine the ways the productive nature of these relationships has transformed how I perform my role as teacher. I also explore the ways I effect power relations in the classroom, and as such, contribute to the subjectivation of students. In Chapter Four I explore my areas of

discomfort in the classroom space in order to expose the ways I am discursively produced within my institution. In Chapter Five, I focus on the narrative through which I have come to define myself as an educator. Unpacking these histories is a key step in refusing certain subjectivities in order to reposition myself to better facilitate work in the classroom that troubles existing power relations. In Chapter Six, based on my new understanding of ethics, I explore the self-work required for me to embrace a kind of ethical and embodied practice. Finally, I provide a summary of what I have learned through this self-study about my practice and myself.

At the beginning of each chapter, a short fictionalized narrative focusing on the role my body plays in effecting power relations charts the changing ways I perform my subject identity as a result of the ongoing work on the self I am doing in relation to my thesis research. These short narratives are based on my experiences in the classroom at various points in my data-gathering semester. These narratives will be italicized and single-spaced.

CHAPTER II:

Tracing my intellectual history

I have arranged the desks in a large circle. After a few classes of planning, today is the day when we begin an historical simulation in which students represent a variety of groups from the early industrial revolution. I sit at the front of the room and facilitate student speeches and debates. I instruct students that they must raise their hand prior to speaking. I feel nervous that students will not participate. Once the debate begins, I record comments on rubrics I designed to assess student participation. When there are lulls in the conversation, I feel the need to step in, to comment, or add points to the argument, which I do. While all students are required to participate by giving speeches, two or three enthusiastic male students dominate the conversations. Encouraged by the passion this small group of students displays, I mainly allow these students to take control of the simulation.

2.1 Introduction

In this chapter, I weave together a narrative of my past educational experiences. These stories represent a few key moments in the discursive formation of my subject identity as a teacher. I divide this narrative into three broad themes that are important to my goals for troubling existing power relations in the context of the drama classroom. In the first section I reflect on my experiences working with student centered drama forms. These experiences reveal some of my past discomforts with regard to creating spaces where students can take more control over their drama practice, as well as my desire to actively change the ways I approach facilitation of drama work. They also trace the ways my critical orientation as an educator contributes to the subjectivation of students while working with student centered dramatic forms. In the second part of this chapter I reflect on the physical spaces I have worked in as a student and teacher. Through an exploration of the ways spatialized and embodied relationships between teacher and student affect and limit educational experiences, I am able to understand more clearly the kinds of

classroom spaces I need to create to support the broad range of educational experiences I wish to facilitate in the classroom. In the final part of this chapter, I explore my political positioning as an educator. These narratives explore the ways I increasingly adopted a critical orientation in my practice and have come to be positioned against oppression. Learning about critical pedagogies through my early graduate work and engaging students in discourse inspired by my burgeoning critical orientation represents an important step in my intellectual history. As a result of this study, I came to realize the inherent tension between critical theories that demand a fixed subjectivity and post-structuralist theories that acknowledge the discursive production of subjects. Even though many of the practices I describe throughout my intellectual history are from critical pedagogy, my analysis is firmly grounded in post-structuralism. These narratives also expose the disciplinary power expressed through administration on educators to perform their roles as teachers in very prescribed ways, specifically, in a way that claims objectivity, but in practice, reinforces existing power relations.

Tracing my intellectual history is a part of the groundwork required for me to further investigate my subject positioning as a teacher and to more clearly understand the kind of educator I want to become. By documenting and reflecting upon these narratives, I felt better prepared to plan my data-gathering semester. In recording some of the formative events of my past, I have gained a better understanding of my present and can plan more effectively for the future.

I would like to acknowledge that some of the teaching approaches I describe are not approaches I might use in the drama classroom today. However, they represent the approaches I was using at the time. Reflecting on these experiences, I can now identify instances where certain drama pedagogies I describe are contradictory in the outcomes

they seek to achieve. It is useful to identify these contradictions, as this exposes one of the most useful purposes of self-study: that of seeing the need to change or adapt one's teaching to align practices with one's core pedagogical beliefs about learning.

2.2 Collective Creation: an exercise in power sharing

The experience of theatre is distinguished from real-life experience by the conscious application of form to meaning in order to engage both the intellect and emotions in a representation of meaning... Understanding the possibilities (and limitations) of form gives insight into the medium of theatre, and offers students the possibility of operating greater control over the medium and its personal and social uses. (Neelands & Goode, 2000, p. 3)

I believe that this quote illustrates the balance I seek in facilitating drama work with students. I want to expose both the possibilities and limitations of different theatre forms, and offer students the possibility of greater control over the mediums used. I seek to do this without exerting too much pressure on students to perform their subject identities as I would have them perform.

One central tenet of the Saskatchewan Drama 10, 20 and 30 curricula is the production of a *Collective Creation* (Glenys & Reinbold, 1985). A theme or topic is brainstormed as a class, information on the topic is gathered, and students spend weeks and sometimes months exploring the topic through participation in improvised simulations, creation of storyboards and scripts, blocking, practicing and perfecting short scenes in a variety of genres and forms that loosely relate to the overall theme (Saskatchewan Education, 1994). The scenes are then put together to create a cohesive though rarely linear piece of theatre ready for performance. Consequently, students

engage in a reflective process where they talk and write about what they have experienced (Wallewein, 1994). The concept fits brilliantly with pedagogies I would like to embrace as an educator: students have control of the process from the brainstorming stage to performance; they are able to adopt the role of writer, director, and actor, as they produce something for which they have taken ownership, and there is a profound emphasis on the creative process over the product created at the end. Through my participation in this process as a high school student in Regina, as a substitute drama teacher with *Regina Public Schools*, as a drama teacher in Spain at an international school, and at the semi-private high school where I teach drama today, Collective Creations have illustrated many important philosophical dilemmas for me as an educator.

When I was a grade 12 high school student at Thom Collegiate in Regina, I recall clearly being introduced to the Collective Creation for the first time. I remember the power struggles that presented themselves at each stage of the process and the battles I chose to fight to take control of the production. The day had arrived in early March to begin brainstorming themes for the end of the year performance, and my class crowded around a series of poster boards at the front of the room. Our teacher stood at the front of the class and asked us to contribute themes or titles she would record and that we as a class would later pare down to the one which would form the basis for the rest of the year's work.

For four years of high school, theatre had been my creative outlet. I was a cast member in every school play and competed each year for the improv team. Throughout all of the theatrical roles I took on in high school, nearly all were comedic in nature. I had very little interest in approaching dramatic work, but instead, sought to make people laugh. My insecurities as a 17 year old led me to shy away from more serious theatre,

which would force me into a position of vulnerability with which I was not yet comfortable. My teacher at the time was no doubt aware of my preference and despite her pleas with the class to choose a theme that was more conducive to a broad range of genres or scenes; I was able to convince enough of my class members to vote for my suggestion, *Wizards, Ninjas and Cowboys*. I felt spiteful towards my teacher at the time for constantly trying to push us to do serious or realistic work, and as a reaction I would push to do work based in fantasy and comedy. I now see she was trying to push me outside of my comfort zone. Perhaps she saw potential and knew if I would allow myself to be open minded to new types of theatre that I would grow and improve as an actor. My 17-year-old self was not so enlightened, and all I remember about that semester was the power struggle.

The performance itself was not memorable: a series of outrageous and sometimes funny scenes, interspersed with rare moments of sincerity. It was a piece of theatre that failed to challenge us, and as such, was likely a piece of theatre of which no one was profoundly proud.

Three years later, I was enrolled in my first Education Drama class during my second year of university. We were being introduced to the theoretical foundations that support models for creative drama like the Collective Creation. As we explored the medium of contextual drama, we were to design learning experiences we could implement in the classroom. Contextual dramas are based heavily on the work of British drama educators Dorothy Heathcote (1994, 2002), Jonathon Neelands and Tony Goode (2000). Heathcote (1994) developed an approach of facilitating creative drama she referred to as the 'Mantle of the Expert'. She compares this model to the guilds of earlier times when she suggests:

...a master oversees the work of apprentices, but everyone shares in the tasks which must be accomplished for the client. In my head I think of myself as a working master responsible for providing, overseeing and maintaining the momentum of the work. (Heathcote, 2002, p 3)

As such, drama educators can move in and out of role during their teaching of drama, providing direction and leading by example. Neelands and Goode describe theatre as “the direct experience that is shared when people imagine and behave as if they were other than themselves in some other place and time” (Neelands & Goode, 2000, p.4). Their work endeavors to provide educators with conventions to structure contextual drama. Key to structuring this work is the implementation of *Context –building actions* “which either ‘set the scene’ or add information to the context of the drama as it unfolds” (Neelands & Goode, 2000, p.6). Contextual dramas allow student actors to immerse themselves in an imaginary context and then respond in a variety of ways in role. These dramas are exercises in imagination, and some would suggest an extension of some of the method acting techniques developed by Stanislavsky (1991). Stanislavsky demanded that within the context of a scene the actor:

must feel the challenge physically as well as intellectually because the imagination . . . can reflexively affect our physical nature and make it act. . . . Not a step should be taken on the stage without the cooperation of your imagination. (Stanislavsky, 1991)

While Stanislavsky’s methods were used primarily to prepare actors for performance, they trained actors to use their imaginations and force themselves to believe that they were the character they were portraying on stage. In the same way, contextual drama

fuels the creative process by helping both students and teachers to use their imaginations as they create unique characters and develop original narratives.

In my first Drama Education class, I remember being proud of some of the contextual dramas I designed, only to receive mediocre marks. The written comments indicated that the experiences I designed, while creative, failed to provide students with the opportunities they needed to contribute meaningfully to the creative process. I disagreed and failed to closely analyze the possible reasons that my designs tended to limit student input.

Brief forays into creative drama after that held true to my initial designs in that first Drama Education course. I was working hard to engage students, and often my ideas were creative, but I remained unwilling to take the leap of faith required to structure experiences in such a way that student participation determined the outcomes of the dramas. When doing contextual drama, work would be structured in a way that gave students very specific directions that required minimal creative imagination. Further, reflecting on the spatial relationship between the student and me that these early contextual dramas required, I am surprised by the amount of time I would be standing and speaking to students, or the times when the students' attention or focus would be on me as I facilitated contextual drama work, using what I thought to be Heathcote's 'Mantle of the expert' as my instructional strategy.

In 2007, I began teaching my first high school drama classes at a small international school on Spain's Mediterranean coast where my charge was to teach the grade 7, 8, 9, and 10 drama courses. I was given virtually no guidance or curriculum and was free to design the classes as I saw fit. My preference towards creative, process-oriented drama formed the backbone of the program I designed and implemented over a

two-year period. I experimented with experiential and contextual dramas, and created a number of projects where students had the opportunity to lead creative drama exercises. Each year and with each grade level, I would implement elements of the Collective Creation process into my practice. Gradually I became more adept at creating spaces and opportunities for students to improvise and script scenes independently or in groups with minimal guidance from me. Despite students having a higher degree of input into scenes within my classes, if the finished product was not meeting my expectations, I would involve myself to critique, adjust, and direct. And therefore the students only had a level of control as long as they were creating theatre that fit into what I had come to define as quality performance. I was still reluctant to let students take ownership of the creative process.

Two years after leaving my position in Spain, I was once more the teacher of a high school drama program, teaching Drama 10, 20 and 30 at a small high school in Regina. I would once more engage a group of students in the Collective Creation process, and this time, I decided, I felt I was ready to resist my desires to intervene greatly in student work. I kept silent during the brainstorming phase when students chose the confusing title *Big Box: The Revolution: The Musical*, and allowed groups of students to do scenes that were primarily comedic and fantastical. Eventually however, I found that students came to me regularly asking for guidance regarding the structure of scenes, for feedback, and for ideas. The students surprised me with their willingness and enthusiasm to try more challenging, serious or abstract scenes. And though the finished product was a negotiation between their original work and suggestions and ideas I contributed, the students took a high level of ownership of the piece and were very proud and excited about the finished product. I was proud of the way students and I successfully negotiated

control over the learning process when we created this piece. Still, as the performance date grew near, I found myself, often at the request of the students, increasingly involved in directing student scenes.

Earlier in my semester with this group of Drama 20/30 students, I attended a workshop on *Forum theatre*, which is a central form within Brazilian drama theorist Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the oppressed* (TO) (1985, 1992, 1995). Forum theatre is:

a theatrical game in which a problem is shown in an unsolved form, to which the audience, [again] spect-actors, is invited to suggest and enact solutions. The problem is always the symptom of an oppression, and generally involves visible oppressors and a protagonist who is oppressed. (xxiv, Boal, 1992)

This form offered me so many models and games through which to approach the subject of oppression with students. Boal's theatre forms are inspired by the work of Paulo Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (1970a) and use theatrical games and forms to challenge oppressive institutions and relationships. Boal says:

Let us be democratic and ask our audiences to tell us their desires, and let us show them alternatives. Let us hope that one day –please, not too far in the future –we'll be able to convince or force our governments, our leaders, to do the same; to ask their audiences –us–what they should do, so as to make this world a place to live and be happy in–yes, it is possible–rather than just a vast market in which we sell our goods and our souls. Let's hope. Let's work for it! (Boal, 1992, p. 246-247)

Reading Boal's words excited and motivated me to incorporate more work into the drama classroom that dealt directly with various forms of oppression. I could now see practical ways for me to facilitate drama work that challenged existing power relations. Though I was only just learning about *TO*, I felt comfortable engaging my Drama 10 class in a

discussion about the role of oppressor and the concept of *social othering*. This kind of language had already crept into my teaching as a result of two graduate courses I took on critical pedagogy (Education Curriculum and Instruction 820: *Multicultural and Anti-Racist Curriculum* and Education Curriculum and Instruction 822: *Anti-oppressive Education and Teacher Activism*). These courses deeply influenced my thinking about education and began a personal paradigm shift towards a more critical orientation. The informal conversation about oppression with students acted as inspiration and as a starting place for a small unit on *Forum theatre* (Boal, 1985, 1992, 1995). We participated in a number of activities from Boal's *Arsenal* (1992) that explored power relations in very abstract and physical ways. For example, Boal's image theatre techniques that I drew from during this time use the human body as a tool for representing feelings, ideas, and relationships (Boal, 1995). In image theatre, the "image is a language, if it is interpreted into words, all its possible interpretations are reduced to a single one: the polysemy of the image is destroyed" (Boal, 1995, p. 77). The games and activities have students exploring a variety of spatial relationships through tableaux, sculpting, and dynamization (Boal, 1995, p.77-78). While image theatre seems like an obvious way to explore how the bodily and spatial relationships contribute to the discursive production of power relations, I was only just becoming familiar with Boal and Forum theatre, so after using some of these forms we moved on to other work.

Prior to beginning work on our Collective Creation, I also facilitated a unit on Stanislavsky's approach to method acting (1996). We explored method acting through a number of activities that encouraged students to discover the subtext and motivation of the characters they play on stage. The method acting approach demands students use imagination and concentration to live and become a role, instead of emulating the actions

of a character they are playing. As a part of this work, Stanislavsky demands that “... all action in the theatre must have an inner justification, be logical, coherent and real” (Stanislavsky, 1996, 46). Theatre in Boal’s approach is intended to act as a tool for challenging certain oppressions, and Stanislavsky’s approach is only intended to push performances to adopt a level of sincerity and realism. In some ways these are two conflicting pedagogies, and today I might reconsider implementing units on both areas of theatre so close together. However, they also exposed students to a wide variety of approaches and tools that students could now incorporate into their Collective Creation.

It became clear early in the planning stages of our Collective Creation that students were incorporating many ideas and approaches from both the method-acting unit and our work on *TO* into the scenes that they were creating. Some of the students in the class began using the language of critical theory and expressed a keen desire to discover the motivations behind the oppressors within the context of a variety of situations.

One scene that particularly impressed me involved an abusive manager at a big box store. The scene began with a number of short vignettes that showed a variety of interactions between the manager and employees and included monologues that exposed the personal perspectives of the employees towards the manager. There were times in the scene when the audience hears about the manager’s internal struggle and the motivations behind his abusive behavior. The audience comes to understand that while the manager is acting to oppress certain employees, he is also part of a system that promotes competitive and aggressive behavior. Further he is plagued by a variety of personal problems that contribute towards his harsh treatment of his employees. The scene did not end with the manager being fired or the employees storming out. Instead, the employees silently resent the manager, and the manager confides in one other employee about his frustrations. The

audience is left frustrated as there are numerous obvious solutions, but none are offered or even implied. This in many ways reflects the reality of many oppressive work places, and I think the students did an excellent job at exploring the complexities of how hierarchies in the workplace can lead to various forms of oppression. Other scenes in the collective were more solution oriented and involved union protests, and in one scene, even a riot. In the end, the students created a performance piece that was critical of economic and political institutions and the way existing power relationships affect us all.

Throughout the planning phase of this collective, I saw the connection between the types of theatre forms I introduced to the class and the themes they wanted to explore in the work they created. In this case, the work they created embraced Boal's assertion that theatre "is a form of knowledge; it should and can also be a means of transforming society. Theatre can help us build our future, rather than just waiting for it" (xxxix, Boal, 1992). Students are critical of unequal power relations, but are not likely to voice their frustrations unless given appropriate avenues or forms with which to effectively express themselves. In this case Forum theatre and *TO* as well as method acting provided forms where these criticisms were made possible through performance. As such, the exploration of these theatre forms made it likely student actors would explore concepts and themes with a critical orientation.

While it seems clear that student centered approaches in the classroom can help to improve self-efficacy and can give students control of and make them accountable to the learning process, it is also something with which many teachers struggle. The demands placed on teachers for accountability as well as our fears that students are not ready to take control of their own learning prevent many of us from taking the leap of faith

required to provide opportunities for students to lead. Giroux and McLaren (1986) suggests:

one of the great failures of North American education has been its inability seriously to threaten or eventually replace the prevailing paradigm of teacher as a former classroom manager with the more emancipatory model of the teacher as critical theorist. (p. 286)

Student centered instructional approaches are only a small part of the work required to challenge the existing paradigm that engenders teachers as classroom managers. In my context, I brought my own critical orientation to the class. The language used when speaking with students framed us as co-facilitators which helped to create a climate in which I was working *with* them, not *above* them. Furthermore, the models, activities and forms I introduced to the class were designed to help actors create work that was critical of society as well as challenged their subject identity within the class. At times during the semester I would engage students directly in conversations about power relations both in the classroom and in the context of events in their community and around the world. I felt proud of the ways I was able to effectively negotiate control over the final performance of this Collective Creation with students. I was also impressed with how enthusiastically they embraced many of the themes of oppression introduced early in the semester into their creative work later on. During this time, however, I was not actively researching the nature of power, nor was I gathering data on the ways power relations served to discursively produce the students as subjects. My data-gathering semester would come one year later. In comparing the two experiences, I now see that I was far less aware of the subtle ways students' express disciplinary power on each other through dominating group work, choosing certain student's ideas, or by excluding class

members from taking on leading roles. The Collective Creation work that forms a large part of my analysis in Chapter Six illustrates my changing understanding of the performative nature of subject identities as well as the ways power relations are expressed.

2.3 Rethinking educational space

The disposal of space, the meticulous regulations which govern its internal life, the different activities which are organized there, the diverse persons who live there or meet one another, each with his own function, his well-defined character—all of these things constitute a block of capacity-communication–power.

(Foucault, 2002, p. 136)

Foucault's description of the relationship between space and power relations conjures many memories of the schools of my childhood, and makes visible the many ways I have been produced into a certain kind of subject through the educational spaces I occupied as a student. While instructional approaches have changed and best practice dictates that teachers appeal to a broad range of learning styles, the design of the classroom and the school remains the same. It follows that the space becomes an obstacle for envisioning more creative learning approaches.

I can picture quite vividly each classroom that I had as a student in elementary and high school such as where the windows were located, whether we sat in desks or tables, and how they were arranged as well as many of the motivational posters on the walls. With very few exceptions, these classes differed only marginally from each other. Sometimes the desks were in rows and sometimes they were arranged in groups of four. The teacher's desk was either at the back or at the front, and the motivational posters

either featured monkeys or kittens. These rooms are likely part of the lived experience of nearly every North American who has gone through the public education system. These familiar spaces provide a backdrop to our educational experiences, and in many ways the physical space can dictate or limit learning.

The classrooms I occupied as an elementary student were overwhelmingly traditional, and for the most part, reflected the instructional approaches of the teachers who facilitated learning. These classes combined drill and practice, question and answer, as well as a barrage of reading and writing exercises. Most of the projects and reports we would write were done individually, and rarely do I recall having had input into topics researched or mediums used.

The elementary classroom I remember most vividly is my grade three/four class. The floors were covered in an industrial green vinyl, a set of lockers lined the northern wall, and the blinds on the windows on the eastern wall were nearly always drawn. The entire class was lit with bright fluorescent lighting, which often produced a constant buzzing sound. Two bulletin boards were set up on the western wall of the classroom, one to display student work, the other used for the classroom calendar and for a variety of instructional posters on grammatical and mathematic devices. The southern wall of the classroom had two large blackboards, and the teacher's large black and brown desk. Above the blackboard near the ceiling was a framed picture of Queen Elizabeth II and the clock. The clock was standard issue made by IBM. I remember the brand clearly as I would spend much of my time in class disengaged, desperately willing the clock to move more quickly. The desks were arranged in 4 rows of 5 or 6 desks. The instructional strategies used in this classroom primarily consisted of note taking, direct instruction and drill and practice.

While this was likely the most traditional educational space I spent time in as a student, many elements of both the space and the experience are immediately recognizable as being a part of the normative schooling experience. My time in grade three and four illustrates a time when I was learning what school was ‘supposed’ to look like. This narrative also hints at the ways the physical organization of space can limit the range of learning approaches possible within each classroom.

Speaking with students today, I find almost without exception that students are willing to vocalize their general dislike for school. When asked to defend their positions, most suggest it is boring or feel that the skills they are learning are useless. While physical space is only one element of the education system, following both my experience as a student and the impressions I receive from many students, it seems obvious that schools and classrooms need to be designed to feel welcoming and to stimulate discussion and community where children want to be.

The classroom spaces where I was to spend a large portion of my youth, differed only marginally as I went from elementary school to high school, from high school to university. Each space was immediately recognizable as a classroom. The classrooms and schools of my childhood embrace many of the principles of panopticism. They represent:

a type of location of bodies in space, of distribution of individuals in relation to one another, of hierarchical organization, of disposition of centres and channels of power... Whenever one is dealing with a multiplicity of individuals on whom a task or a particular form of behavior must be imposed, the panoptic schema may be used. (Foucault, 1977, p. 205)

Each school day at 8:20 in the morning, the students of the public secondary school in Leeds, England where I worked during the 2005/2006 school year, walk

through the front doors of the school, past the metal detector and security guard, past the head teacher who casually inspects the length of their skirts and the tightness of their ties which are a part of the mandatory school uniform, past the security cameras obscurely hidden in various parts of the hallways, to make their way to their first class. Once classes begin, the gates of the entire schoolyard are locked, and students are to remain on the school grounds until 3:30 when the gates are unlocked. Fifteen minutes after classes end for the day, all doors are locked and students are to have vacated the building. Teachers and support staff are able to move through wings of the school using an electronic card lock system.

While elements of panopticism certainly exist in Canadian schools, my experience teaching in England provided a more rigid example of surveillance being used as a tool to control and manipulate students. Like Bentham's *Panopticon* (2008), Horsforth School used a variety of security and surveillance methods to efficiently exercise power upon its pupils:

because it can reduce the number who exercise it, while increasing the number on whom it is exercised. Because it is possible to intervene at any moment and because the constant pressure acts even before the offences, mistakes or crimes have been committed. (Foucault, 1977, p. 206)

It provided an efficient way for the school to ensure discipline and control.

Each day at 10:45 a.m. the students at the small high school in Regina, Saskatchewan where I currently work crowd onto the bleachers in the aging gymnasium to take part in a daily chapel service. Chapel time is intended not only to provide spiritual exploration, but is also a time meant to bring the students together in order to develop a strong sense of community. The chapel time typically consists of a reading or

observation, a musical piece and a time for announcements. Sometimes there is a guest speaker, performance or presentation from one of the school's many extracurricular clubs. During my time at this school I have come to look forward to the daily chapel service. For me it is a time of reflection or simply a time to connect with students I might not otherwise see during the busy day. I acknowledge that the mandatory nature of chapel exposes the service as an instrument of disciplinary power within the institution; chapel time is successful in reinforcing the sense of identity and community in which the school takes pride.

While the daily ritual does reinforce community, I would argue it also reinforces the place and expected behaviors of different members of the community. The most obvious example of this is where students choose to sit. Without fail, international students who live in the school's dorm and specifically non-white dorm students always sit together at the end of the bleachers. Other than this area, there tends to be sections dominated by grade groups; a place for grade nines, tens, elevens and twelves. The grade twelve section is directly in the center of the bleachers with younger grade groups delineating out from the center. The students have, without any direction from the school, organized themselves according to status, with lower status groups being furthest away from the center of the bleachers. This ritual, which is intended to bring the school closer together, also serves as a daily reminder of the divisive nature of our community and of the ways power operates within the student body. The ways students organize themselves is an example of Foucault's assertion that:

he who is subjected to a field of visibility, and who knows it, assumes responsibility for the constraints of power; he makes them play spontaneously

upon himself; he inscribes in himself the power relation in which he simultaneously plays both roles; he becomes the principle of his own subjection. (Foucault, 1977, 202-203)

Students with lower status behave in chapel as the higher status students would have them behave. That is, they place themselves in chapel where they would place themselves in a social hierarchy. Much of this behavior is likely subconscious. Nevertheless, lower status students consistently allow themselves to be disciplined by those with more power. While students with high status do not seem to work to make this division visible, consistently students place themselves in accordance with where they place themselves within the school's social hierarchy. I have often pressured many of my younger students to challenge this seating order by encouraging them to sit in the center of the bleachers. When students have attempted this, they were not asked to move by older students, but afterwards expressed to me a sense of discomfort as they were not sitting with the people whom they were most comfortable. Students are also generally very well behaved during chapel time because of the constant threat of surveillance from teachers and staff. This surveillance is made possible by the chairs set up daily for faculty on the sides of the gym, where teachers are able to look out across the student body.

The physical arrangement of students into different spaces within the school expresses itself in both official and unofficial ways. Lockers are organized by grade, forcing grade groups to congregate together in certain parts of the school. There is a corridor where each grade commonly spends time between classes and on breaks. Grade twelve students have a special lounge where other students are not to go. Dorm students are not appointed lockers, as it is believed their belongings are easily accessible in their

rooms. However, because dorm students do not have lockers within the classroom wings of the school, many dorm students tend to spend their breaks and down time in their rooms. This prevents them from fully integrating with the community and from making friends with day students. Again, these descriptions suggest the divisive nature of the school is partially the result of the architectural reality. These roles are performed by students without any direct intervention from staff, because “without any physical instrument other than architecture and geometry, it acts directly on individuals; it gives them power over mind” (Foucault, 1977, p. 206).

I was hired at my current school just in time to be part of a visioning process that birthed what is referred to as the ‘*Grand Vision Facilities Renewal Plan*’. The plan calls for thirty million dollars in spending over twenty years to build a new gymnasium, performing arts centre, film/music/drama classrooms, a new student commons as well as a new cafeteria. Phase one of the plan calls for the new gym as well as a new student commons and the drama/music/film classrooms to be constructed at an estimated cost of eighteen million dollars. Facilities renewal has become an issue of heated debate among staff, as many believe the school is incapable of raising this much money. Others believe that as a semi-private school we need to continue to invest in infrastructure to attract new students, as well as to have facilities that promote effective learning. In visioning sessions, the architecture firm that is helping to design the new facilities has shown us incredible spaces that have forced many teachers to re-evaluate what a classroom can be. Designs were presented to our staff that suggested spaces that were open, flexible, and not prescriptive of any particular instructional approach. These designs are contrary to traditional school models in which “activities usually take place in a four walled classroom where students sit for most of the period, working out of shared books or

writing” (Kumashiro, p. xxxiii). There was mixed reaction from the staff, many of whom feel there is simply a need for more traditional classroom space and that open and flexible spaces seem expensive, unnecessary and less practical. During one session in particular, after a few critical comments from the staff regarding some potential new designs, one of the senior staff members declared that we as a staff must re-evaluate both the classroom space as well as our traditional instructional approaches. He expressed frustration that too many teachers at our school were relying on direct instruction and desk based learning, and suggested that more flexible multi-purpose spaces are necessary to help us develop new approaches. While his words were not well received by some staff, I was privately pleased. It made me feel that I was not alone in my excitement at the prospect of new and different instructional spaces. I have often worried that fellow staff members quietly disapproved of some of my teaching methods. I have felt at times that the climate among teachers is too conservative. At other times, however, I feel re-affirmed that I am supported and that the pedagogies and approaches of my colleagues are changing. The ways I have felt pressure from my institution to perform my role as teacher in certain ways are not expressed explicitly through official avenues, but rather are implied through the stories teachers exchange with each other, the spatial relationships between staff within the institution as well as through all of the ways I have observed other teachers performing their subject identities. The way that I in turn negotiate my subject performance depends on my changing understanding of the relationship I have with the institution. In this way I now see that stories of experiences are not stones; they are not fixed and final but always shifting.

Prakesh Nair (2011) is a school architect who proposes 12 principles for the design of educational spaces of the future. He suggests these spaces be:

(1) Personalized; (2) safe and secure; (3) inquiry-based; (4) student-directed; (5) collaborative; (6) interdisciplinary; (7) rigorous and hands-on; (8) embodying a culture of excellence and high expectations; (9) environmentally conscious; (10) offering strong connections to the local community and business; (11) globally networked; and (12) setting the stage for lifelong learning. (p. 2)

Using his principles to envision new spaces for my drama program can be useful; that is: a space that is comfortable and warm, has room for small group break-out sessions as well as whole class performances; space with access to chairs and tables, but normally is open and large enough to support a broad range of movement activities. My preference would be a space that has a basic lighting and sound grid to enable students to learn about technical aspects of theatre as well as to support small scale and in-class performances. These are some of the suggestions I raised at a consultation meeting with architects.

I am especially excited by the prospect of a new space for drama at the school. I have often felt that drama instruction occupies a low status within our school's hidden curriculum. Our school offers IB Film, Art and Music, but not drama. Students are able to enroll in any level of drama class regardless whether they have taken the course at a previous level. While many students enroll in the course as a result of a genuine interest in drama, there are those who enroll because they view the course as an easy credit, one that will likely raise their average. It follows that the drama class is relegated to the smallest classroom in the school; one without windows or working heat and one crowded with tables that need to be pushed aside and stacked at the beginning and end of each class. The limitations of the physical space make it difficult to imagine creative instructional approaches. While drama's relatively low status presents challenges, it also provides opportunity and freedoms. Process-oriented, creative drama can become the

focus of the course without scrutiny, and innovative and experimental projects can be tackled without judgment. It is in this context that I chose the drama class as an obvious place to explore boundaries surrounding power relations in the classroom.

2.4 The fallacy of objectivity

Taking care of oneself requires knowing oneself. Care of the self is, of course, knowledge of the self... but also knowledge of a number of rules of acceptable conduct or of principles that are both truths and prescriptions. To take care of the self is to equip oneself with these truths: this is where ethics is linked to the game of truth. (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 29)

Dissecting this selection of narratives through my intellectual history is a useful part of learning about myself, but perhaps more useful is coming to understand my relationship with various discourses of power.

I struggled early in my career with issues surrounding objectivity. When I began my teaching career, it was my impression that teachers must seek objectivity at all times in an effort to achieve a balanced approach and allow students to form their own opinions about the world. I believe this impression was based on my past experiences as a student as well as the education classes I took in university that stressed the importance of exploring a variety of perspectives, and of encouraging students to develop critical thinking skills, but were always careful not to construct the teacher as positioned. As a teacher of history, where conversations about political and historical issues are a daily occurrence, the ability to stay objective was always difficult.

After university, I moved to Leeds, England to work as a daily supply teacher in the public school system. After a few challenging weeks of daily supply teaching, I was

able to get a longer term position teaching high school English at a secondary school in a northwestern suburb of the city. I was given the charge of teaching years 7 to 9 (key stage 3) English literature. The school streamed its English students into three separate forms based upon aptitude. I was given two forms of year 9 English classes, one that was the lowest aptitude ability group and one that was in the second ability grouping. At the end of year 9 students were required to write Standardized Assessment Tasks (SATs) exams. The scores for these exams were published nationally, and as a comprehensive state funded school, higher test scores would increase funding for the school. The head of English provided me with a resource binder for preparing students to write these exams. He informed me immediately that my primary goal was to ensure students had high scores on these tests. An important part of this exam demanded students analyze and write about a Shakespearean text. The text I was instructed to study was Macbeth. After a brief but unsuccessful attempt to approach the play with the lowest ability group, I decided I needed to adapt the curriculum to make it more accessible for students. I purchased a class set of Macbeth comic books, got students to do a lot of role playing of various scenarios linked to the context of the play and facilitated activities where students would write in role using characters from the play as inspiration. This group was minimally engaged in reading and comprehension activities that used Shakespeare's original language. However, I felt these students had a solid understanding of the plot and broader themes of the play. Once the department head found out I had strayed from his initial directions, he began to observe my teaching. After a few of his visits, I was brought into his office and mildly reprimanded. I was to stick to the original play and simply work through the suggested activities in the SAT preparation booklet.

While I could likely write a thesis filled with pedagogical criticisms of my work place in England, perhaps what stuck with me most about this experience was the feeling I had been robbed of my professionalism. I was disciplined indirectly through careful observation as well as directly through my interactions with the department head. I was not to make choices about content or instructional approaches; I was simply to follow a step-by-step guide to preparing students to write an exam. The experience was insulting and dehumanizing. Freire suggests that:

Integration within one's context, as distinguished from adaptation, is a distinctly human activity. Integration results from the capacity to adapt oneself to reality plus the critical capacity to make choices and transform reality... The integrated person is person as *subject*. In contrast, the adaptive person is person as *object*.
(Freire, 1987, p. 4)

As a first year teacher, eager to succeed, I allowed myself to be repositioned from *subject* into *object*. Further, my workplace was designed to encourage surveillance on both students and staff. The head of my department made it clear I could be 'caught' at any time. This was communicated through his unannounced visits to the classroom where he would observe my teaching to ensure I was following his careful directions. At my workplace in England, like in Jeremy Bentham's *Panopticon*:

the director may spy on all employees that he has under his orders: nurses, doctors, foremen, teachers, warders; he will be able to judge them continuously, alter their behavior, impose upon them methods he thinks best. (Foucault, 1977, p. 204)

As a first year teacher, anxious to get experience and keep my first paid teaching position, I followed the directions of my department head and mainly implemented activities from

the SAT preparation booklet and directly from the British National Curriculum.

A few years later, my graduate work began with a class on critical pedagogy (Education Curriculum and Instruction 820: *Multicultural and Anti-Racist Curriculum*). For the first time, I was given a defense of the fact that objectivity is an impossibility within the classroom. Ratner (2002) suggests:

Objectivity is said to negate subjectivity since it renders the observer a passive recipient of external information, devoid of agency. And the researcher's subjectivity is said to negate the possibility of objectively knowing a social psychological world. The investigator's values are said to define the world that is studied. One never really sees or talks about the world, per se. One only sees and talks about what one's values dictate. A world may exist beyond values, but it can never be known as it is, only as values shape our knowledge of it. (p. 2)

As a researcher and an educator, all of my choices in terms of what I study and what kinds of work I choose to facilitate with students are informed by my values. As a practitioner within an occupation that is so very personal, it is impossible not to put myself into my practice. True, the notion of the self can be challenged in the context of post-structuralism as being something discursively produced through participation in various institutions. In this light, our opinions, viewpoints, and ways of seeing the world are shaped by the ways we have been disciplined to perform roles. However, despite the discourse of objectivity circulating in educational institutions, teachers should not seek to achieve objectivity, but instead learn to refuse certain subjectivities in order to become more agentic subjects. When I was told to follow the step-by-step directions in the SAT preparation booklet, I was being asked to perform my practice in a way that fit into the pedagogy of the department head. This pedagogy did not allow for differentiated

instruction or the adaptive dimension. Despite streaming students based on aptitude, the department insisted on using the same expectations and instructional strategies with each group. The results of the school's approach meant students in higher streams were destined to succeed, while lower streams were destined to fail. Performing as the department would have me perform does not represent an objective pedagogy. Instead, I was communicating subjective ideas about education and learning to students that belonged to my director and my school instead of myself. Not only is it impossible to find complete objectivity, it is not something which I should seek. While many have suggested that schools:

have become distracted with social or political issues and instead should be neutral and focus on more academic matters... research suggests that moral and social values constantly arise whether or not teachers intend to address them... Furthermore, research suggests that the official views of what and how schools should teach often reflects the perspectives, experiences, and values of only certain people in society, especially those who have been privileged or currently wield political influence. (Kumashiro, 2004, p. xxxiv)

Ideas about what teaching is supposed to look like are passed down and learned through participation in the educational system, by curricular demands, administrative expectations, as well as by the walls, white boards and desks that limit possible learning experiences. All of these forces have left me with the impression that I am somehow supposed to teach skills and transmit knowledge to students in a way that is absent of political ideology and represents a kind of unbiased truth; a task I now realize is impossible.

In order to further expose existing power relations within institutions, it can be helpful to “investigate forms of resistance and attempts made to dissociate these relations” (Foucault, 2002a, p.129). The high school I currently work at is an institution that grants its teachers a high level of independence within the classroom. I have felt in my time there that I have been given direction and guidance, but was always able to have a high level of autonomy over my teaching practice. I feel fortunate enough to be in a community of educators who seem to work together and collaborate, as well as a community that respects the variety of pedagogical perspectives and instructional approaches present within the school. However, while I have never been reprimanded officially, the culture of the school has sent a clear message regarding the general expectations within the classroom. One particular incident comes to mind in which a form of resistance was challenged, exposing the normative assumptions guiding educational philosophy at my school. I was teaching History 10 and planned on showing the film *The Corporation* (Abbot, Achbar & Bakan, 2003), a film that compares the morality of the modern corporation to that of a psychopath. The documentary is not objective, nor does it pretend to be. However, it can be an excellent catalyst for discussions regarding the dark side of globalization. I was discussing my plans for a mini unit surrounding this film with a member of the administration and was challenged because the documentary did not meet what he suggested was the requirement for objectivity. I suggested all media sources and in fact all individuals are positioned in society and bring perspectives and arguments that are biased. I went on to explain that while we need to find sources that present a variety of perspectives, we cannot try to find sources that are objective. While the discussion on the fallacy of objectivity will likely continue into the future during my time at the school, this example illustrates an

important facet of the way power is exercised within our institution. I am encouraged to experiment and given what I believe to be a high level of independence, as long as my practice coincides with what the teachers and administrators at the school would define as good practice. When I choose to push the boundaries of what the school culture defines as acceptable, I am gently reminded not to do so. In the end, I showed the film. It generated a lot of rich discussion and debate from students. Seeing the ways that many class members responded to the film's message with strong criticism justified my decision to use it in the classroom, and exposed the need for students to hear perspectives that challenge their existing world views.

Within critical pedagogy, to view education “as the practice of freedom” (Freire, 1970a, p.16) is to recognize an inherent aspect of being human is the act of engaging critically in relationships with others and with the world. Freire suggests there are those subjects who, in the co-creation of culture, integrate themselves and are part of forming and transforming society, and those who adapt to the existing culture. Only “by developing a permanently critical attitude can ... [people] overcome a posture of adjustment in order to become integrated with the spirit of time” (Freire, 1987, p. 5). Unfortunately, as a result of the unequal ways power and privilege is divided in our world:

the ordinary [person] ... is crushed, diminished, converted into a spectator, maneuvered by the myths which powerful social forces have created...Gradually, without even realizing his loss he relinquishes his capacity for choice; he is expelled from the orbit of decisions. (Freire, 1987, p. 5)

We live in a world plagued with inequities, and critical pedagogy suggests education should be an emancipatory, transformative experience for learners that should help to break down these deep divisions that exist along racial, gender, socio-economic and political lines. If these issues are to be addressed, teachers must be positioned against policies that create prejudice and inequality in our society.

In the context of post-structuralism, Foucault would suggest the source of unequal power relations is through dominating forces that exercise control over us through institutions and through discourse. He suggests the way to exercise freedom is to:

take proper care of yourself, that is, if you know ontologically what you are, if you know what you are capable of... if you know what things you should and should not fear, what things should not matter to you... if you know all this, you cannot abuse your power over others. Thus, there is no danger. (Foucault, 2002, p. 30)

For me, the process of becoming an anti-oppressive educator is motivated by the ways I have come to understand the forces of privilege and oppression that limit the agency of subjects. While critical theorists expose so clearly the forces of domination and control that lead to unequal power relations, it is through understanding the productive nature of discourses in the context of post-structuralism that I am able to better negotiate a kind of ethical agency. This journey requires an understanding of the subversive ways in which unequal power relations are expressed, but it also requires a lot of personal reflection and an implication of oneself. In order to successfully position myself against oppression, I must first come to recognize my own privilege. As a white, middle-class, Christian male this can be a difficult task.

As early as grade 7 or 8 I can remember conversations and stories between friends where I sought to minimize my position of privilege. I grew up in a working class neighborhood and attended a community school. My father worked as a travelling salesman and my mother cleaned houses. Neither of my parents had a university education. As I moved into high school and gained friends who lived in more affluent neighborhoods, I would tell stories which emphasized my family's relative position of poverty. I felt somehow that coming from a different neighborhood and background made my successes more of an achievement. In fact, I grew up in a very loving and supporting two-parent household. We always had plenty to eat, we were able to enroll in as many sports and cultural activities as we wished, and as I got older, my parents paid for my entire university education. I lead a privileged lifestyle and yet from a young age I wanted to publicly deny these privileges. Even as an adult, I catch myself proudly telling stories about my childhood that emphasize the dangers I was exposed to at a young age. I am guilty of discursively constructing myself as a part of a marginalized group, as it allows me to attribute my achievements to my hard work and dedication, instead of to my race, gender, religion, sexual orientation, and socio-economic position; all subject positions that make me privileged. Likewise, the privileged subject positions I occupy expose my relationship to many elite power strategies that I embody.

While a large part of facing my own privilege began formally through my participation in classes embracing critical pedagogies, a formative experience for me as an educator was the year I spent working as a grade 7/8 teacher at a community school in Regina during the 2008/2009 school year. Within my class of nineteen students, six had been diagnosed with ADHD, three struggled with substance abuse, and several others had learning difficulties that had yet to be diagnosed. Two students were members of SARP

(Senior Alternative Resource Program), two others were a part of the Ranch Ehrlo program (a restorative residential program for at risk youth), two students were living in foster homes, many of the students lived in poverty and would regularly come to school hungry, and others still did not have the required school supplies or clothing.

Approximately half of the class was of First Nations background, two students were from recent immigrant families and the remainder of the students were of mixed European descent. I mention this only to provide context in describing both the diversity and the barriers many of the students faced in learning in school. This was a class I would describe as being in crisis. Violence in our classroom was a regular occurrence; some of the students would often come to school under the influence of drugs, and on most days, the climate in the classroom was too chaotic to learn effectively. On several occasions I had to physically restrain students to protect the physical safety of both the students and me.

My year teaching in this classroom was a difficult time for me emotionally. I established close relationships with many students and was pained by both the situations they faced at home and in the classroom as well as by the fact that I didn't feel I was able to effectively facilitate learning or control the classroom climate. For a large portion of the year, I would come home from work each day, lie on the couch and cry. As the year wore on I became emotionally fragile and would break into tears when talking about my work. On one occasion, a fight broke out in the classroom, and a student who was not involved and who had a significant physical disability was knocked into a wall, and I lost control of my emotional capacities and cried for nearly half an hour in front of students.

During this year, I was also enrolled in Education Curriculum and Instruction 820: *Multicultural and Anti-Racist Curriculum*; many of the issues in this course applied

directly to the work I was doing with the students. I also took an intensive training program through the division office called Response Abilities Pathways. The program is based on the central tenet that everyone who is concerned with the well being of young people:

need[s] the ability to respond to their needs rather than react to their problems.

RAP teaches skills to connect with kids in need, clarify problems and restore bonds. Following Circle of Courage resilience principles, RAP addresses needs for belonging, mastery, independence and generosity. (Brenthro & du Toit, 2005, p. xi)

The program gives educators effective ways to respond to pain, to reclaim healing environments, and to help young people restore the pillars that make them whole (Brendtro, Brokenleg, & Bockern, 1996).

Encouraged by both my graduate work on anti-oppressive education as well as by the RAP methodology, in an effort to heal the classroom climate that had become so destructive, we began to embrace the principles of RAP in the classroom. I consciously shifted the tone and way I spoke to students; we instituted a daily talking circle for students to share their thoughts and emotions; we brought in a First Nations elder each week to talk about values; I put less focus on covering curricular objectives and more on giving students choice by facilitating a number of inquiry projects (Harvey & Daniels, 2009). As a part of the healing process, we introduced a role playing model into many classes based on a program called *The Courage to be yourself* (Desetta & Gommage, 2006), where we simulated the problems students faced daily through role playing and problem solving. I also chose to engage the class in discussions about the oppressions students faced. They were able to identify the forces of oppression in their lives, and

come up with realistic solutions to many problems. The students were already very knowledgeable about the way unequal power relations express themselves from their lived experiences. It has been suggested that when working with marginalized groups:

the social change vision is more likely to be shared by students and the facilitator because its realization is seen to benefit the students. When working with the dominant social group, or those who benefit from existing inequitable systems, the social change vision may not be shared. (Choules, 2007, p. 161)

Envisioning solutions to their problems helped to engage and excite the learners in this classroom. I have since found Choules' assertions to be true; when doing such work with more privileged groups in the school where I currently work, I encounter far more resistance because the solutions generated require sacrifices for them. While I struggled emotionally all of the 2008/2009 school year, I felt the work we did that focused on building generosity, independence, mastery and belonging, as well as the activities that tackled the various forms of oppressions students faced did much to begin healing some of their pain.

Sometimes I think back to the day in 2009 when I broke down crying in front of a classroom full of students. At first I tried to stifle my tears, to carry on teaching, hoping to save face in front of them. However, as I began to acknowledge what I was feeling, it became clear to me that any hope to carry on as before was not a possibility. Students watched in near silence as I moved to my desk, sat down, put my head into my arms and quietly wept. Some of my tears were selfish. A big part of me wanted out of the crisis situation and to find a classroom where students got along with each other and were more engaged in learning. However, mostly, my emotional outpouring came from a deep sadness I felt for their situations. All at once I was crying for the poverty many of them

experienced every day, the abuse that had become a normal part of their daily experience, the racism they had been victims of, and the anger and aggression they were in turn inflicting upon each other. At that moment I was more vulnerable and exposed than I had ever been before, and though I believe that something important shifted on that day in the relationship between the students and me, I believe a more fundamental shift occurred within myself. Feeling critical empathy for those young people acted as a powerful source of nourishment to fuel my desire to orient my entire practice towards social justice. My work with them has formed an important part of who I am. Increasingly, I find it is not a conscious decision to tackle oppression through my teaching. Instead, it has formed a part of how I define myself and a central part of my practice as described by the discourses used in my classes, the topics of discussion and the instructional strategies I use. These have all been profoundly influenced by my direct encounters with marginalized people as well as by my academic journey.

CHAPTER III:

What have I observed about how I effect power relations in the classroom?

As I walk down the hall towards one of the classrooms in the history wing of the school, I hear loud noises coming from a room that a group of students is using to plan and prepare a scene as a part of our Collective Creation process. I cautiously inch my way closer to the door, listening to see if the students are focused and on task. The discovery that they are enthusiastically practicing their scene provides only temporary satisfaction as I glance towards the open door of a neighboring history class to see what I perceive as a look of disapproval from one of my colleagues. I return to the class to ask the group to practice more quietly. As I walk away from the room to check in with other groups in different parts of the school, I worry I may have dampened their initial enthusiasm.

3.1 Introduction

The exercise of power can be defined not only in terms of relations but the "way in which certain actions modify others" (Foucault, 1982, p. 788). In the classroom, all interactions with students affect how we perform the roles of teacher and student. The way I exercise the limited power I have in the classroom "consists in guiding the possibility of conduct and putting in order the possible outcome[s]" (Foucault, 1982, p. 790). Because my goal in working with students during this research is to effect power relations in such a way as to give students more control and agency in the drama work they do, this chapter will describe the specific ways I have effected power relations between students and me, primarily during the first half of my data-gathering semester.

Many students are not accustomed to having access to a high degree of control over the learning processes they experience in school. As such, effective facilitation requires structuring activities so that students can gradually begin to exercise more control over their own theatre practice. In this chapter, I will describe my attempts to create spaces for this kind of theatre work. This narrative will be guided by noting the specific ways I effect discourses of power in the classroom. I will also note the times

when existing power relations in my class create obstacles for learning and growth as well as times when existing power relations allow for more effective learning experiences. Daily journaling throughout my data-gathering semester allowed me to record important insights and experiences relating to discourse. Throughout this chapter, I will be weaving excerpts from my journals into my larger narrative. These excerpts will be formatted as quotations, and will be labeled consistently as *Research Notes*, followed by the date the thoughts were recorded in my journal.

Considerations that also affect the drama class are the power relations expressed between the institution and drama as a subject as well as between the school and myself as a newer teacher within the institution. In this chapter, I also comment upon my reactions to the various ways the school operates and influences power relations that are constructed within the drama classroom.

All student actions in class are performative of the ways they have made themselves into subjects. The concept of ‘performance’ in this instance is used to describe the ways all subjects respond to discourses of power and processes of subjectivation that together produce their subject identities. In regard to the performative nature of subject identities, Grant asserts: “always in process, this subject is constituted within multiple socially-produced and changing discourses, each of which produces a range of subject positions” (Grant, 1997, p. 103). As such, all of the discourses used in the classroom, including my performativity as ‘teacher’ define and help to constitute the subject positions and power relations for both teacher and student in the context of my practice. It should be acknowledged once more that though my performance as ‘teacher’ does indeed affect discourses of power for students, it does so in a very limited way. The

discursive production of power relations comes from a multiplicity of sources including institutions that I lack the agency to transform.

“The mundane way in which social agents *constitute* social reality through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign” (Butler, 1988, p. 519) constitute the process of *subjectivation* in which individuals come to perform as subjects. Because schooling is concerned with the formation of human subjects, “central to the enterprise of ... education, then, must be a concern with its ethical dimension, that is with the question of what kind of people we want our students to become and how our practices are contributing to this formation” (Grant, 1997, p. 101). Therefore, this chapter concerns itself not only with the ways I as a teacher discursively effect power relations in the classroom, but also comments on how this contributes to the kinds of people I knowingly and unknowingly want students to become.

While there are times in the classroom when the consequences of certain discourses are obvious, other times they can be difficult to identify and require deconstruction. This chapter then is not the description of ‘actual’ discourses, as there are many discourses that operate in the classroom I am unable to notice. This discourse analysis becomes further clouded by the nature of my research; in my role as teacher-researcher, I am the subject of all of the data that I arrange and produce (Youdell, 2006, p. 513). While I can never come to fully understand the ways that my performance of the role of teacher discursively limits the power and agency of students, it is my hope that there are important insights about my practice that can be drawn from an exploration of the discourses in the classroom that will enable me to more effectively challenge existing power relations through the drama work I do with students in the classroom.

I feel motivated to understand the ways that I effect power relations in the classroom because of a desire to become an ethical educator. This requires me first to understand the ways that I discursively limit the freedom of others. It also requires understanding the practices of governmentality that:

constitute, define, organize and instrumentalise the strategies that individuals in their freedom can use in dealing with each other. Those who try to control, determine and limit the freedom of others are themselves free individuals who have at their disposal certain instruments they can use to govern others. (Foucault, 1997a, p. 300)

I cannot deny my role in limiting the freedom of students. However, embracing a particular kind of governmentality “makes it possible to bring out the freedom of the subject and its relationship to others” (Niesche & Haase, 2012, p. 278). Foucault’s notion of ethics “stands against any understanding of ethics that defines itself as an abstract normalising code of customary conduct” (Niesche & Haase, 2012, p. 278). In the context of my teaching practice, my relationships with students, other teachers, administrators and parents are “in a continual process of negotiation that needs to be seen as important rather than the codes of behaviour themselves” (Niesche & Haase, 2012, p. 278). In order to achieve the kind of ethical agency I seek, I must constantly reflect upon my daily practice, and begin to reposition my subject identity in such a way that democratic values and the sharing of decision-making become defining characteristics of how I perform my role as teacher.

Reflecting upon my practice as it relates to the constitution of subjects is a personal and political act. Freire (1970a) suggests:

There is no such thing as a neutral education process. Education either functions as an instrument which is used to facilitate the integration of generations into the logic of the present system and bring about conformity to it, or it becomes the 'practice of freedom', the means by which men and women deal critically with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world. (p.16)

Freire's words reinforce my belief that within my teaching practice, the learning process needs to be about the practice of freedom. This requires students to be at the center of important decisions regarding learning, as well as engagement with critical issues so as to force them to face oppression and to see possible avenues to become agents of change. When Freire describes "education as the practice of freedom" he is intending to make visible the various ways that marginalized people can act against forms of oppression. In the context of the classroom, the meaning of freedom must evolve into something quite different. While a certain degree of cultural and socio-economic diversity exists within the drama class; as an overwhelmingly middle-class school, students occupy a relative position of privilege. The majority of the students in the Drama 10 class I will be reflecting upon are white, middle-class, straight, and Christian. Like myself they occupy nearly every societal position of privilege. Meanwhile, most models for doing anti-oppressive theatre work (Boal, 1985, 1995, 2006, 2007; Diamond, 2007) are intended to work with people who face oppression in their daily lives. I contend, however, that anti-oppressive education of students of privilege serves an equally important role. For students in this context 'the practice of freedom' requires an unpacking of the roles we play within society; roles through which we are both benefited and marginalized. Further,

this kind of education requires students to critically examine oppression in the larger world and to implicate themselves as a part of the forces of domination and subjugation that form unequal relationships in our lives. Finally, in light of new understandings of identity informed by post-structuralism, the meaning of freedom may result in students gaining a critical awareness of the productive forces of governmentality that operate within all institutions in which they are subjects. My hope is that this kind of freedom enables students to refuse certain forces of disciplinary power; that they can become more agentic subjects by refusing certain subjectivities. This may represent an undoing of existing power relations within their lives.

Over the course of my data-gathering semester, I create structured opportunities for students to design and implement a number of their own projects. In addition, I allow time for brainstorming and deciding upon topics and theatre forms in which students are interested. Throughout the semester, it is my intention that by consciously employing a discourse that constructs students as co-learners, students will begin to feel the agency required for them to be intrinsically motivated by the learning process.

I have found that the students have responded effectively when given control over the class. They have opinions and preferences. The language [used in classroom conversations] requires a paradigm shift [for me], and I sense that I have established a climate where we are co-facilitators in the learning process and that students are feeling increasingly comfortable being a part of these discussions. My observation is that students can feel the difference when they are addressed as co-learners. (Research Notes, November 22, 2011)

3.2 Beginnings

On the first day of the semester students pack into the small, windowless room, and after I request we all form a circle, the class begins. The classroom has long tables and chairs around the outside walls. A shelf in the corner houses old science textbooks, as well as a number of motivational posters that someone, somewhere deemed too cliché to warrant a space on the wall. In the opposite corner are two teachers' desks; the drawers, filled with a random assortment of school supplies belonging to no one in particular. Fluorescent lighting creates a barely audible buzzing noise. Plugged in to an electrical outlet is a small space heater, intended to replace the broken heating system that lies dormant at the back of the classroom. Two of the walls are lined with white boards; the other two, home to a variety of playbills, a *Drama Opportunities* bulletin board, and a series of grammatical rules posters that exist as a result of the space's alternative use as an English as an Additional Language classroom.

In the process of *subjectivation*, students are “both subject to the controls (regulations) of the institution and to her or his own 'conscience' which 'knows' what it means to be a good student” (Grant, 1997, p. 104). The messages about what it means to be a good student are informed by past educational experiences, by the institution as well as myself. The physical space in which the drama class is expected to operate is the result of the status of the subject within the school and also informs how students perform their role within the classroom. I make decisions about teaching in relation to the codes of behavior set out by governmental, parental, community expectations and educational pedagogies and discourses. The ways in which I negotiate my practice is “not so much in a linear fashion but often in complex and conflicting ways that involve a looking back of the self in order to circumvent the often disciplinary power of educational institutions”

(Niesche & Haase, 2012, p. 278). The location of the drama classroom and the status of my subject within the institution are only small examples of the ways disciplinary power operates on my practice at the institutional level.

Despite the inadequacies of the room, the class exudes positive energy. Students talk excitedly with each other, and a group of young men huddle together on top of each other, creating a human pile up in one corner of the room. A few students sit isolated, waiting, alone, for the activities to begin. Others run into the classroom and join the circle long after the bell.

My intention from the beginning is to find ways to share decision-making over the instructional strategies used, the genres and forms of theatre explored, and all aspects of the learning experience. I wanted to ensure that skill building workshops that required more input and guidance from me take place primarily near the beginning of the semester. Later, having spent time practicing facilitating group work and working independently, the students would take a more active role in both the planning and facilitating of the course. This instructional approach is inspired by the *Gradual Release of Responsibility Model* (Pearson & Gallagher, 1983) that suggests students take control over the learning process only after *Teacher Modeling*, *Guided Practice*, and *Collaborative Practice*. Finally students begin to engage in work that encourages *Independent Practice* and *Application of The Strategy*. This approach is shown below in Figure 3.1.

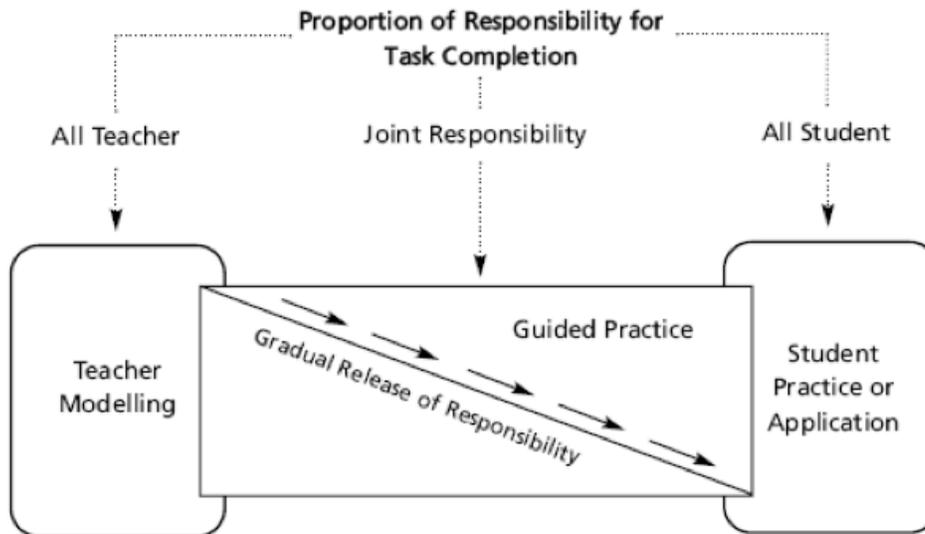


Figure 3.1. Gradual release of responsibility model of explicit instruction. Reprinted from “The instruction of reading comprehension,” by P. Pearson, and M. Gallagher, 1983, *Contemporary Educational Psychology*, 8(3), p. 337. Copyright 2004 by Access Copyright license agreement.

It should be noted that *The Gradual Release of Responsibility Model* requires me to take a very active role in discursively defining the ways I expect students to perform within the class. In this way I am active in defining viable subject-hood for students. In some ways, this is contrary to my desire to create opportunities for students to take a leadership role in the learning process. However, as a skill based course, I believe I have a degree of expert knowledge that is useful and in some cases necessary to share with students. As such, the *Gradual Release of Responsibility Model* is a method for me to share expert knowledge, facilitate efficient skill development and through careful use of egalitarian language, set a democratic tone that I hope will remain for the remainder of the semester.

In many schools, “when students interact with lecturers, mostly they are not positioned as 'equal' adults—as the liberal humanist discourse suggests—but come from a

position of relative weakness: as child, subordinate, supplicant, initiate, rebel, or devotee” (Grant, 1997, p. 103). If this were the model of education students had become accustomed to, then it would require considerable work and training to effectively engage students in a more reciprocal relationship.

The students who are lying in a pile in one corner of the classroom lend some reservations to my plan. I know these four students. They have a history of being very high energy; and as is revealed from many staffroom conversations, they have been the source of other teachers’ frustrations in the past. At the same time, I know them to be very creative individuals and that drama will be an excellent outlet for their sometimes raucous and unfocussed behavior.

My initial concerns about the class will occupy a portion of this chapter. My reactions to their behavior reveal many of the areas of my practice where I experience discomfort. Further, it is by noting and being aware of this discomfort that I am able to push my comfort zone, and as a result, see some of the greatest successes of the semester.

Once the class assembles, I lead them through a variety of trust and team building activities. Students are required to accomplish tasks as a group; they have to get over an imaginary electric fence and to fit onto a small piece of paper representing an island. In other activities, they lead each other blindly around the space and fall into each other’s arms knowing their classmates will catch them.

The rationale in spending time with each of these activities is to build an environment of trust between classmates and help to make them more comfortable working together as a team. Further, these activities push students out of their comfort zones and force them to focus on activities that in other contexts they might find embarrassing. (Research Notes, September 1, 2011)

These kinds of activities, while student-centered, are highly structured and require students to follow directions closely. For this first class, I move quite quickly from activity to activity. My intention is to force students into action and to prevent them from feeling self-conscious in the new space. There would be plenty of time over the coming weeks to engage students in reflective conversations about the purpose of such activities and to negotiate together a classroom contract that would create guidelines for the supportive environment. For now, however, I need students to become engrossed in the process of working together as a group.

I have planned many of the activities I would lead students through during our first unit together to be heavily structured in order to enforce a classroom climate that makes productive and creative work possible. These acts are intended to support the *subjectivation* of students in a very particular way. I am actively expressing a kind of power on students. If we are to understand:

power as forming the subject as well as providing the very condition of its existence and the trajectory of its desire, then power is not simply what we oppose but also, in a strong sense, what we depend on for our existence. (Butler, 1997, p. 2)

In this sense, it should not be my goal to actively avoid expressing power on students. This process is both inevitable and necessary. Actively expressing power on students does not imply that they possess no power, nor does it suggest that they are devoid of agency. In my context, by encouraging a supportive climate where students are able to express themselves openly, I hope to organize conditions where students have a higher degree of agency.

Despite all efforts to reorganize or resist existing power relations within the classroom, the Drama 10 course continues to exist within a larger institution. The existence of the drama program depends on being recognized as a viable department within the school. And so while I hope to change my comfort zone and allow for a larger degree of student agency, and thus a larger range of possible forms of performance and behavior by students, I can only do so within the narrowing boundaries of what my school is willing to accept as good practice. And because their very existence as drama students depends on a degree of acceptance by the larger institution, their agency will be and must be produced in particular ways.

The following day we discuss the goals and aims of the course as well as my intentions with regard to power sharing. We begin by examining a section of the course outline that reads:

The plan for this course is fluid and flexible. In order to give you as a participant agency in the course, we will as a class negotiate which themes, genres, plays and activities we wish to explore. This class will only be as useful as you are willing to make it. This means being positive, trying all things with an open mind, and in some cases pushing yourself beyond your comfort zone! (Research Notes, August 30, 2011)

After students create a list of guidelines to do effective drama work, and discuss what is required, they draft the following contract that they suggest hang on the wall as a reminder of our community norms. The contract suggests the following: “Stay positive at all times, do not criticize others, participate, respect all class members” (Research Notes, August 30, 2011). While the guidelines are very general, students agree this will allow them to successfully prevent a broad range of potential obstacles to creating effective

learning experiences.

The subsequent classes are intended to create a climate of openness and trust. Students participate in a range of team building or basic improvisational activities. Each activity is followed by a discussion to gauge students' reactions to the activity. Being conscious of the language used when speaking to students allows me to make minor adjustments in the way I engage the class and how discourses help to define student participation. I believe this helps to improve the climate of trust required for students to motivate themselves to participate in challenging theatre work.

I begin to take note of the ways I approach students who are off task or who are distracting others. Early in the semester, when I was particularly frustrated with the behavior of a small group of students:

I asked the students if they understood or agreed with my justification for demanding such focus, and the boys who had more difficulty with staying focused, all agreed. Approaching the problem as a conversation was helpful.

(Research Notes, September 8, 2011)

Based on student responses to such discussions, it seems students both appreciate being approached in a non-confrontational manner, and in general, they want to improve their level of focus in the class but find it difficult because of the culture they have created within the group. The active practices students are engaged in are constitutive of themselves as subjects but are “not something invented by the individual himself. They are models that he finds in his culture and are proposed, suggested, imposed upon him by his culture, his society, his social group” (Foucault, 1997a, p. 291). Central to the “formation of the subject are the mutual acts of recognition through which subjects accord each other the status of viable subjecthood” (Davies, 2006, p. 427). In the context

of the drama class, I can see that the students are able to recognize that their behavior is dependent on how their social group defines viable subject-hood. In order for students to have agency, it is a requirement for them to feel they have individual autonomy, as this “is necessary for the accomplishment of oneself as a recognisable and thus viable subject” (Davies, 2006, p. 427).

3.3 Oppression as a Form of Theatre

Early in the semester, I have the opportunity to bring into the school a Forum theatre troupe from Ontario. They are to perform a Forum theatre piece that uses the form to engage with the topic of dating violence. In Augusto Boal’s Forum theatre:

Those we call Spect-actors are invited to come on stage and reveal by means of theatre—rather than by just using words—the thoughts, desires and strategies that can suggest, to the group to which they belong, a palette of possible alternatives of their own invention. This theatre should be a rehearsal for action in real life, rather than an end in itself. (Boal, 2006, p. 6)

The model for a Forum theatre play represents “a series of unresolved arcs, some of them obviously connected, some appearing not to be connected, which... build to a crisis with no resolution” (Diamond, 2007, p. 75). Forum theatre represents only one part of the ever-growing form of *TO* (Boal, 1985, 2006, 2007). Though multi faceted, “in all its forms, [it] is always seeking the trans-formation of society in the direction of the liberation of the oppressed. It is both action in itself, and a preparation for future actions” (Boal, 2006, p. 6). During our unit on Forum theatre leading up to the performance, I engage students in a number of activities taken from Boal’s *Arsenal* of games (Boal, 2002). Taken from his image theatre series, one series of games I introduced created particularly powerful learning experiences. Boal suggests that: “images don’t replace

words but they cannot be translated into words either. They are a language in themselves” (Boal, 2002, p. 175). Getting students to explore the notion of power through a variety of image-based exercises allows them to experience, if only briefly, what it feels like to be a victim. Boal suggests that in dealing with images “we should not try to ‘understand’ the meaning of each image, to apprehend its precise meaning, but to *feel* those images, to let our memories and imaginations wander” (Boal, 2002, p. 175). Some of the activities require students to sculpt each other, and others ask groups to create tableaux that simulate a form of oppression. As the exercises become more complex, through the process of *dynamization* we add movement to our images and try to transition them towards solutions. Though most of our exercises are done in silence, we spend time debriefing and discussing which moments and images hold meaning for us. Exploring movement in these ways encourages students to be mindful of how they communicate through body language. Further, the enactment of solutions through body movement provides opportunities for us to explore the connections between spatiality, physicality and power relations within the classroom.

Boal’s work has been criticized as being idealistic and unpolitical (Callinicos, 1995; Davis, 2000; O’Sullivan, 2010). These assertions might suggest that my use of his forms and methods in my class intended to challenge existing power relationships may be misguided. Ultimately by using Forum theatre methods, I hope to enable students to view acting as a tool for undoing various oppressions and to engage them in a leadership position where they feel in control of a performance. O’ Sullivan contrasts the political theories of Karl Marx with Boal’s *TO*. She suggests that central to Boal’s work is a:

sharing of ideas in response to stimulus. This may take many forms...but it does not conceal the underpinning philosophy that it is the suggested idea that will or

will not determine change in any given situation. Where an idea ‘fails’ or is not deemed ‘progression’ by the spectators, another one is proposed, and yet another, and so the work proceeds. (O’Sullivan, 2010, p. 87)

In this way, *TO* is reliant upon an idealism which “contradicts Marx’s thesis, of which Boal was apparently supportive, that it is not thought that determines social being, but social being that determines thought” (O’Sullivan, 2010, p. 88). And so, while Boal believes that “if the oppressed performs an action...the performance of that action in theatrical fiction will enable him to activate himself to perform it in his real life” (1995, p. 46), Callinicos suggests that:

the belief that a change of ideas will transform reality simply produces a new way of looking at reality, which itself remains unchanged. Idealism is thus a profoundly conservative viewpoint, because it allows us to think that the battle of ideas is a substitute for the struggle to change the material and social conditions of which thought is a reflection. (1995, p. 79)

Others argue there is a deep connection between confronting unequal power relations in our lives and fighting for larger societal change. Boal is providing “tools to achieve change in specific situations” (Osterlind, 2008, p.74), but he believes deeply in the connection between the personal and the political. As such, many of his theatre techniques focus on transforming the body, and engaging in decision-making that connects to everyday experiences. Because:

the smallest cells of social organization (the couple, the family, the neighborhood, the school, the office, the factory)... contain all the moral and political values of a society, all of its structures of domination and power. (Boal, 1995, p.40)

It is at these sites, that *TO* is able to engage participants in an effective problem solving model. *TO* challenges the ways social patterns are reproduced by exposing the forces of oppression and domination at the site of the body, and provides opportunities for participants to practice undoing oppression in a safe and supportive environment.

Embedded within the criticisms of Boal's work is a commentary on the nature of social change that resonates deeply for me in reflecting on my practice. I am optimistic that generating ideas and modeling a more equitable balance of power relations in my class will have a social impact beyond the classroom. However, I am aware that within this framework, my capacity for change is very limited. I cannot organize this kind of drama work without having a profound impact on discourse. Just as the *joker* decides upon the conversation within Forum theatre, I control the ways students are evaluated and the expectations for 'student centered' activities and projects. Further, if students have a degree of agency and control only in our classroom, but not elsewhere within the institution, I fear they will continue to be disciplined in ways that prevent any change in existing power relations.

Near the end of the Forum theatre unit, only a few days before the visiting theatre troupe was to perform, we were using some of Boal's image theatre techniques to create open-ended tableaux that represented a variety of unequal relationships.

Cheyenne, a student of First Nations background who is on scholarship, and who I know comes from poverty, exclaimed after one of our tableau exercises that it looked like a gang initiation. Another student teased her by sarcastically asking if she'd seen a gang initiation, to which she replied that she had. She went on to explain how they worked. The other students were quiet, then quickly and

uncomfortably changed the subject to avoid confronting her personal experiences with gang activity. (Research Notes, September 13, 2011)

While potentially this might have been a chance for some great dialogue, I allowed the conversation to flow into another subject. I have since reflected on the ways that my encouraging the students to communicate without my intervention allows them to discipline each other and to create clearly defined power relations within the group. At times this internal group discipline creates barriers to the kinds of theatre work I wish to do. Socially, Cheyenne is an outsider and does not have a lot of friends in the class. Likewise, in the midst of race, class and gender relations, her identity as a poor First Nations woman separates her from the group in such a way that makes it difficult for her to find acceptance. In the context of *TO*, her perspectives and input within our exercises are particularly informed, and yet shrugged off by the class because of her low status or as a result of the classes' discomfort in confronting difficult issues.

As the Forum theatre performance draws near, I find myself once again being frustrated with a small group of students who are constantly joking or making light of scenes that deal with serious and mature subjects. I decide to approach the situation by openly expressing my frustrations and feelings:

I tried to emphasize to students that the content of the scenes required maturity. I did note to the students that I had been feeling frustrated with the level of maturity of a few members of the group. I told them that I hoped to give them a lot of control over the course, but that I was feeling reluctant. I felt an immediate difference in the group after I said these things. It may or may not last but I think that I showed vulnerability and honesty and this helped the group to see more

clearly how I was feeling. I felt the class went really well, and I am excited for Monday's performance. (Research Notes, September 16, 2011)

Students attend the Forum theatre performance the following week along with all of the Grade 9 students. The Drama 10 class handles the performance really well and is very active in volunteering to be a part of both the play and in leading the debriefing sessions afterwards.

This group was the oldest group to attend the performance, and I felt that this also propelled them to take on a leadership role both within the performance and afterwards during the debriefing session. This could be an important building block for students as we work towards negotiating more equity in future class projects and units. (Research Notes, September 19, 2011)

3.4 Helping students share control

During many in-class reflective discussions early in the semester, students participate with enthusiasm. While I am constantly impressed with their willingness to contribute responses, in their excitement they talk over and interrupt one another. One day in class, I broach the subject directly:

I asked them why they think it happens so often. Students were able to identify many reasons why they talk over the teacher. I asked them whether they would like to change this. Overwhelmingly they seem to want to change the behavior but seem to have difficulty mainly because they have spent a lot of time creating a classroom culture where this is acceptable. (Research Notes, November 22, 2011)

We go on to discuss how this style of communication prevents effective dialogue and violates the guidelines we agreed upon as a group. Exposing the problem in this way implicates students publicly in a way that is non-threatening, and I believe forces them to reflect on the ways they exert power over others. By being overly anxious to participate in activities and conversations, many students do not realize they are in fact silencing the voices of others;

It is always challenging to have some students falling over each other to volunteer and participate in each activity and others who have such difficulty. (Research Notes, September 9, 2011)

One way I am able to ensure all voices are heard is through the use of individual written reflections following each major unit of the class. I am impressed throughout the semester with the level of honesty in the reflections. Reading them is useful for me to revise and adjust my planning for the course to better coincide with the areas of theatre which students wish to pursue. It also makes me aware of issues of power relations between students and between them and me that I was not previously aware of.

Many of the student responses are very insightful. Students write about the things that work as well as their frustrations in a way that I don't think they would have openly in class. I type up a selection of quotes from their responses and read them anonymously to the class. While there isn't a lot of response, I think it is a good idea to make students aware of other classmates' concerns and thoughts. (Research Notes, January 6, 2012)

Reading student responses is useful for me in the process of self-reflexivity. By constantly looking back on my data and implicating myself as a part of the data, I am able to raise questions about the validity of my research but also to validate my research.

If traditional measures of validity are not useful to qualitative researchers, then what are we left with to discuss and determine whether our data and analyses are “accurate?” Thus, reflexivity becomes important to demonstrate one’s awareness of the research problematics and is often used to potentially validate and legitimize the research precisely by raising questions about the research process. (Pillow, 2003, p. 179)

I feel the process of hearing the reflections of others helps students to understand how they have common goals for the class. While this activity proves to be a good way of ensuring all voices are heard, the need to do such an activity reveals that despite appearing to be an open and encouraging environment, the power dynamics within our group prevent certain people from voicing their opinion in group conversations. Reflecting upon this, I think that students would benefit from being given certain power sharing structures that would ensure more meaningful participation from more students. This realization helped to inform the structures I put in place during the project-based learning that would occur mainly in the second half of the semester.

Throughout the first half of the semester, there are moments when I observe shifts in the power relations between students and between students and me. These relations are constructed based on social status, race and ability level. I don’t believe that the students in the class consciously make other students feel unwelcome. However, there are two female students who are recent immigrants to Canada, Grace from Jamaica and Suyin from China, who struggle to participate and with whom other students do not want to work. Both of the students are also very shy, and for much of our early work, refuse to participate in activities. I work hard to create low risk opportunities for them to participate without singling them out by facilitating group exercises that require all

students to participate at once so that no one is watching each other, and to a certain extent this is successful. However, as class activities require students to perform characters in front of others, I find it more difficult to get them to participate. Nearly a month into the semester, Suyin drops the course;

I spoke with Suyin at length about it, and she explained that while she enjoyed the course she found it very difficult to understand, and felt that she was an obstacle to her group's performance. While I tried to dissuade her from leaving the class, she was convinced of her decision. It is disheartening that despite the fact that the class is very welcoming and accepting to some, there are those that find the class alienating. (Research Notes, September 28, 2011)

Grace also continues to have extreme difficulty participating. She was not coming to class, and I thought she was going to drop the class [as well]. I spoke with her about her alienation and how she felt she was being targeted because of her race. The school nurse is a family friend of hers and has agreed to act as a mentor to ensure she goes to class and has the support she needs. The good news is Grace has come back and has attended the last two drama classes. I have also noticed a number of students making an effort to welcome her, and I have seen her participate in group activities. While she is still very reluctant to perform in front of the whole group, I see this recent improvement as an achievement. (Research Notes, October 13, 2011)

In both cases, I believe these students do not feel welcome in our classroom because of race, language barriers, socio-economic position, as well as their inexperience as actors and because of their low status as newcomers to the school. On the surface the class is friendly and welcoming towards each other. The way I structure the class ensures

there are a variety of instructional approaches as well as opportunities for all students to work independently and in groups. Most importantly, our class spends a great deal of time in the first part of the semester explicitly exploring the topic of oppression through our exploration of *TO*. Despite all of these factors, the conditions of our classroom seem to benefit the white, middle-class majority, while alienating the few students who do not, in the eyes of some class members, meet the requirements for viable subject-hood.

While it is too late for Suyin, the act of writing and reflecting on the ways I structure our learning experiences in relation to these students allows me to make minor adjustments to our activities to ensure all students are able to be successful. This requires me to “pay attention to all areas in which some students might be favored over others” (Nieto, 1999, p.169). I begin to see many dividing practices that marginalize these students precisely because I am not carefully structuring the drama work. When students are creating their own work, the very act of being in a minority position in our classroom means that none of the improvisations we explore as a class represent the lived experiences of these students. The immigrant and marginalized body is not represented in the scenes students create. The cultural customs reflected in our creative theatre work are not always familiar to students from diverse backgrounds or cultures. Further, these students are constantly receiving messages about white dominant social norms and values. The messages students communicate while participating in theatre games and activities are defined in terms of race, culture and gender, and make it nearly impossible for these female minority students to participate.

In the context of our classroom, where a group of male students tend to dominate activities and group work, other students’ positions as women make it even more difficult for them to participate in a meaningful way. Our class is made up of thirteen male

students and only six female students. My subject position as a white male teacher does shape my decisions about what voices to include and what experiences to facilitate.

However, my acknowledgement of this imbalance and my desire to make changes to the ways I facilitate drama work in order to ensure meaningful participation for all students is a testament to my critical orientation.

In order to mitigate these issues, I consciously begin “attending to both the interpersonal and the instructional aspects of the classroom life and the relationship between the two” (Richert, Donahue & LaBoskey, 2009, p. 646). I spend a lot of time talking to Grace out of class and develop a closer relationship with her. I also find ways to incorporate her interests by creating opportunities for students to lead the class in areas of theatre they choose, but also provide resources for students to access theatre forms designed by women (Heathcote, 1994; Coburn & Morrisson, 2012; Bogart & Landau, 2005) and by people from different cultural backgrounds (Boal, 1992, 1995). For practical reasons I begin to assign groups for collaborative work, and I always build in roles to each activity that are low risk. In this way, Grace is able to participate more and more in our classroom. By the end of the semester, Grace transforms and becomes a very enthusiastic participant in all of the work we do! I am hopeful the incredible change is a first step for her in being able to participate fully in other parts of student life at the school. I fear, however, that outside of our classroom, the various discourses that construct her as a powerless and marginalized student will prevail. Whatever level of agency students might experience in the context of our class does not necessarily extend outside of our room. My experiences working with Cheyenne, Suyin and Grace exposes the limited agency and impact my actions can have within the framework of the larger institution. It seems I am only able to create a safe space for low status students through

very intentional controls I have placed on the class. Even within our class, once I create spaces for students to lead and facilitate their own theatre work, I begin to notice the ways certain privileged students tend to dominate group work, thus silencing others. Once again, despite their enthusiasm, these students are reinforcing an existing power hierarchy that is partially based on race, gender and socio-economic status.

After completing short units on Forum theatre and improvisational drama, I engage the students in a visioning process in which we negotiate and plan our class for the remainder of the semester. After some conversation a student comes up with an idea to plan our semester using the analogy of the tree. Figure 3.2 represents the culmination of 3 days of cooperative planning.



Figure 3.2 *Drama 10 -Visioning Tree*. October 28, 2011.

We began by studying the curriculum as a class, but also by looking specifically at the Foundational Learning Objectives in the Drama 10 curriculum. I broke the

class into seven groups, each group responsible for one major learning objective. In one corner of the room were piles of drama resources for students to use as inspiration. Student groups brainstormed first on the white board as follows: a) the Outcome, or skills that they would like to develop (“I will be able to”); b) the resources where the activities or ideas came from (book, self, teacher, online, etc.); and c) specific activities that support the objectives. We used the analogy of the tree to help emphasize the design. The Foundational Objectives were the roots, the branches were the activities, rain drops represented the outside resources, and the leaves at the top were the learning outcomes. Once students reviewed their ideas with me, they taped them to the wall. The plan is for the tree to be on the wall for the remainder of the semester. It will act as a flexible, living document to which students can add throughout the semester. It will act as a guide for our work together for the rest of the year. (Research Notes, October 28, 2011)

Although this approach to collaborative planning is designed to maximize student input, the theatre work must also be accountable to the *Saskatchewan Drama 10 Curriculum* (1993). While a more detailed analysis of the ways that power is embedded in this document might expose some of the subtle ways existing power relations are reinforced through curriculum, the Saskatchewan Drama Curriculum does make an attempt to ensure multiple voices are represented. Sections devoted to the importance of incorporating theatre work from aboriginal and female perspectives are included, as are sections that demand teachers embrace the Adaptive Dimension in order to meet the needs of all learners. Additionally, the curriculum encourages a resource-based approach that invites a high degree of student input and leadership. The curriculum focuses on

process oriented creative drama work and gives drama educators a high degree of agency in terms of how the curriculum might translate to classroom practice.

The visioning process is inspired and adapted from Wiggins and Mctighe's Backwards Planning Model (2005). After we as a class study the Foundational Objectives and a model plan for the semester from the *Saskatchewan Drama 10 Curriculum* (1993), the design process begins with exploring the Desired Results; this entails brainstorming learning outcomes and objectives from the curriculum. After we create a number of these, students brainstorm different forms of Assessment Evidence that connect to each learning outcome. Finally, students brainstorm instructional approaches or learning plans. Wiggins and Mctighe suggest that "our lessons, units, and courses should be logically inferred from the results sought, not derived from the methods, books, and activities with which we are most comfortable" (2005, p. 14). This process is outlined on the following page in Figure 3.3.

Entry Points for the Design Process

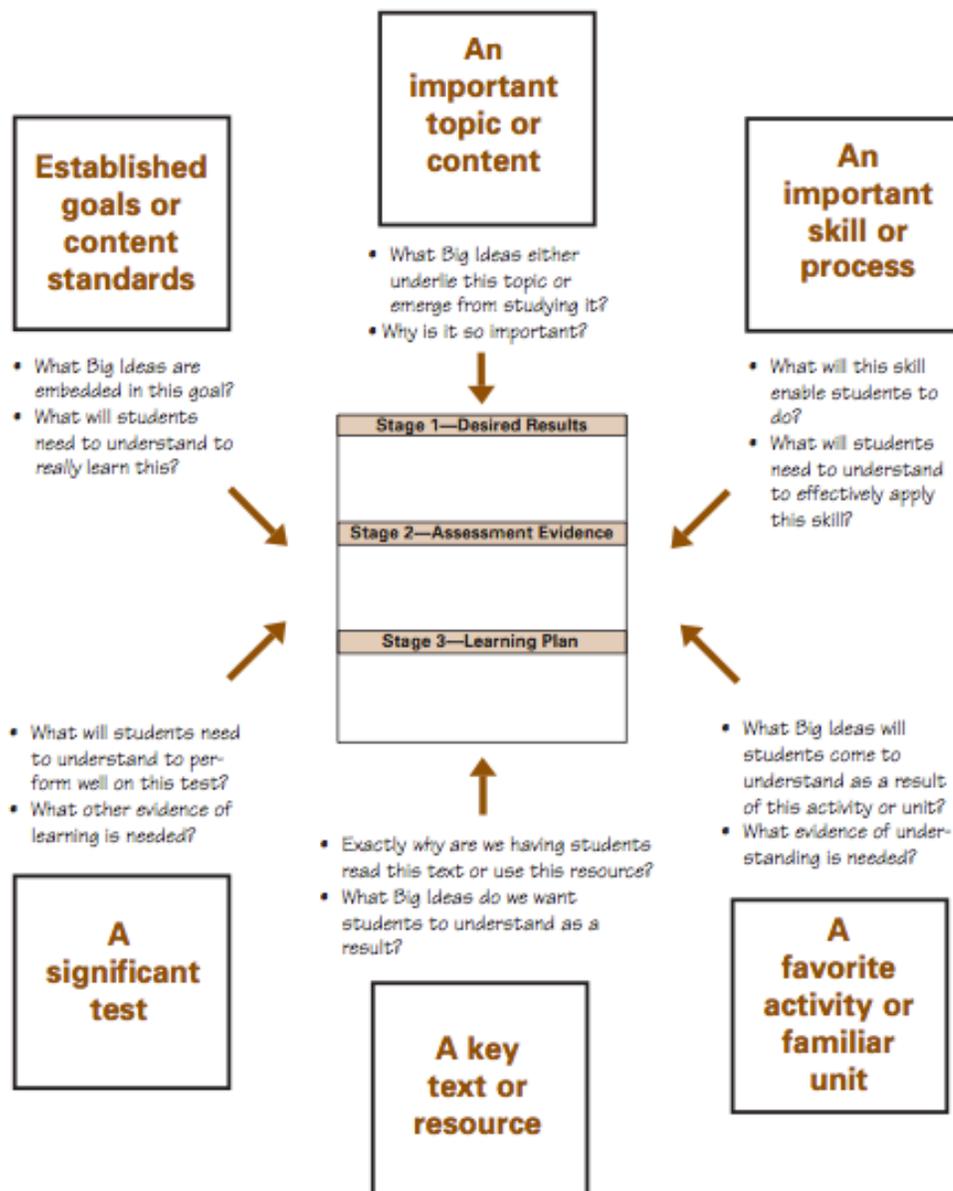


Figure 3.3. Entry Points for the Design Process. Reprinted from *Understanding by design*, by G. Wiggins and J. Mctighe, 2005, p. 257. Copyright 2005 by the Association for Supervision and Curriculum Development.

While this model is useful in achieving my goal of giving the students a degree of control in planning the remainder of the semester, it is also highly structured, and as such, limits the range of discourses regarding possibilities for learning. Further, this model is structured to ensure learning experiences are outcome oriented. This provides a way for

us to ensure we are meeting curricular objectives, but likely limits our ability to let our interests and curiosities truly guide the remainder of the semester. Once again, using this model guarantees I effect the discourse in a very particular way, and through implementing a highly structured planning model, I am in some ways further limiting student agency. I now realize that while the visioning process was intended to act as a tool to give students more control over the remainder of the semester, its design ensured this control was limited.

When the bell rings at the end of the third day of visioning, I stay in the classroom to take a closer look at the ways the tree has grown. The ideas written on the branches and leaves cover a very broad range of theatre forms which would require different levels of teacher facilitation and a variety of instructional strategies. Although many of the:

students struggle to be specific with activities and their outcomes are not measurable, [I feel that] this tendency for generalization is okay, especially since the tree is meant to act as a guide and not a curriculum. (Research Notes, October 28, 2011)

Therefore, I begin prioritizing which ideas could be developed into units and projects and which might be incorporated through warm-up activities or single class workshops.

Despite the fact that I want students to take more of a leadership role in the facilitation of drama work, many of the students, as evidenced by the visioning tree, seem to prefer activities where they participate as I lead them through various activities. Although I try to plan some activities that require more direct teacher facilitation immediately after the visioning sessions, and then work towards projects in which students work more independently, near the end of the semester, I decide to plan more time for student lead

work. There is definitely no shortage of ideas. Going into the mid-term break, it seems the largest limiting factor is the number of classes left to try to fit everything in!

The students ask for the opportunity to have a performance based mid-term, and suggest monologues as an appropriate form. They also recommend during our visioning process that we learn about method acting. The idea for this came out of some of our debriefing sessions after the Forum theatre performance earlier in the year. During one of the sessions, I hear students remark:

that by having emotionally charged and very realistic situations and scenarios, that the students who took on roles immediately were able to embrace their character and stay focused and in role. One student went on to suggest that this is because there was an emotional response to the piece. (Research Notes, September 20, 2011)

And so, in the final weeks before mid-terms, I lead the class through a variety of exercises inspired by the work of Konstantine Stanislavsky (1936, 1949) and more directly from the practical application of Stanislavsky's approach offered by Edward Easty (1966). While the students seem to really enjoy the workshops, and while I have no doubt they are useful for the students' developing acting skills, they tend, once again, to be highly structured, and I feel I am exerting too much control over the students during these weeks. This is comfortable for me as an educator but is not in keeping with my goals for this semester. I need to find ways to ensure the students' ideas are guiding the course, but also that they are learning to lead and facilitate learning experiences more independently.

This realization becomes the basis for the *Student as Educator* unit that takes a month together directly after mid-term exams, as well as a *Production Team Project* and

our *Collective Creation* unit. As I begin to plan the units that will comprise the rest of our time together, I see more clearly that my role is about to change completely from that of a teacher to a quiet facilitator and sometimes-student. I hope my work in the first half of the year has helped to make possible the level of independence and collaboration required in the second half of the semester. I also know that giving students this much space to work together on group projects will illuminate the parts of my teaching practice where I experience discomfort.

3.5 Conclusion

The subject position of both teachers and students is negotiated constantly through discursive relationships and disciplined through the governmental nature of the institutions within which all subjects exist. In the context of my practice, I effect the power relations in our classroom by deciding upon the organizational structure of the course, and by leading and facilitating learning experiences that define what it means for students to be recognized as ‘good’ drama students. They in turn are disciplining me at times, using the agency granted to them through my intentions for power sharing and to request more traditional roles for teacher and student.

By discursively limiting the possible range of student reactions, I am disciplining students to perform a very particular type of subject-hood. This, however, is not necessarily contrary to my goals for sharing power. The subject-identities I have disciplined students to become are those who contribute ideas regularly to collaborative creative processes, who understand something about the way unequal power relations are created and reinforced, and who are aware of the need to allow all voices and perspectives to be heard during group work. At times during the semester when students

are given space and freedom to work in groups independently away from any surveillance, certain members dominate, thus silencing lower status students and reinforcing existing, unequal power hierarchies. As such, putting in place organizational models that ensure a degree of meaningful participation from all students can be seen as an act of enforced power sharing between students at least. Organizing the course in this way becomes especially important in the context of our classroom, where a group of white, middle-class, male students confidently dominate group work and class discussions, while a small group of female students, all who are racial minorities, struggle to participate in the class in a meaningful way.

While my initial goal to facilitate power sharing with drama students remains the same, the way I have structured the class to achieve this end has involved more intervention than I would have initially thought. Fighting against the existing power hierarchies in our classroom requires constant attention. In this way, I will never be just a fly on the wall, watching students lead each other in meaningful experiences. I need to constantly ensure low status students be given opportunities to contribute to all creative work in a way that embodies their lived experiences and perspectives.

CHAPTER IV:

My experiences of discomfort in the classroom space.

I walk into the room, move immediately to the back of the space, and sit down at a table. I take out a rubric and prepare to take notes. Privately I hope the group whose turn it is to lead the class today will get everyone's attention and begin their warm up without my intervention. However, after waiting a few minutes after the school bell rings, I stand and ask the students to sit in a circle. I gesture towards the assigned students. After fumbling awkwardly through a disorganized pile of papers, they begin the first activity.

4.1 Introduction

I would love to be able to proclaim that the drama classroom where I teach has become a place where students and teachers negotiate what they choose to study and how they intend to study it, to describe how transformative the experience of taking control of the learning process has been for students, and to list the ways teachers can effectively organize their practice to encourage or ensure students have agency and input into all of the theatre work they do. At the beginning of this research, that certainly was my goal. I saw a discord between my pedagogy and practice and believed that through careful self-study, I would discover what prevented me from providing opportunities for students to have higher degrees of control. I began my data-gathering semester with some ideas on the desired direction of the class, but I insisted on waiting for students to engage in visioning processes prior to planning. What transpired over the course of the semester with regards to challenging existing power relations did provide insight in the areas of discomfort I have as an educator in terms of designing opportunities for students to have more control. At the same time, however, it also raises questions for me regarding whether creating spaces for students to take a high degree of control of the learning process is the most effective way to support student learning.

Using reflective journal entries as the primary source of inspiration, in this chapter I reflect on my areas of discomfort in the classroom space as a means to identify what prevents me from creating spaces for students to take a more active role in the planning and facilitation of drama work. It is my hope that identifying areas of discomfort will provide a basis for further analysis and reflection on the steps I might take in the future to contribute to more equitable power relations in the classroom. By carefully reflecting on my areas of discomfort, I have also come to redefine an ethical dimension of my practice that is of particular interest to me, which forms a central part of my conclusions in Chapters Five and Six. I also comment in this chapter on spatiality in relation to my areas of discomfort as an educator. Here I refer to the ways that the physical organization of bodies in the classroom impacts the various processes of subjectivation.

I begin this chapter by describing my reactions to a project in which students designed and led skill development workshops. By reflecting on the ways I structure and communicate expectations to student leaders during this project, I am able to identify many of the things I do to ensure that I continue to hold real control over the way students perform their role as subjects. In the second part of this chapter I comment on the ways I attempt to challenge the existing spatial and bodily relationships between students and me by providing them with unsupervised preparation time in different parts of the school. Reflecting on this altered spatial relationship exposes a discomfort I have for leaving students unsupervised, and reveals some of the ways that power relations are inscribed in the bodies of both students and me. In the final section of this chapter, I will describe my facilitation of a play production project in which students engage with the play *The Laramie Project*. Because this play challenges heteronormative behavior, my reactions to student work exposes an inner tension between structuring work so that

students explore the play and its themes independently, and my desire to be positioned against all types of oppression.

4.2 Student as Educator Project

As the students trickle into class on the first day back after the mid-term break, they casually come in and sit down in a circle without any direction from me. The group of male students, who, as a result of their tendency to be raucous and unfocussed, have been the source of many of my worries and reservations, sit down in the circle. Soon after the bell rings they stop their conversations and wait to hear what the plan is for the day.

Reflecting on the ways the expectations for the class have come to condition students' general behavior is evidence of the fact that I have exercised disciplinary power to ensure students perform their role as student in a very prescribed way. At the same time, this display of respectful focused behavior is encouraging. Perhaps these students are ready to take more responsibility in facilitating and leading the class through drama work.

These first few classes are an opportunity to try a number of suggested activities from the student visioning tree prior to beginning a larger, more intensive unit. Students react positively to these activities, partially, I suspect because they chose them, but also because the format of my guiding students through practical exercises became increasingly familiar to them in the first part of the semester.

After a mini unit in which students choose, prepare and perform short dialogues from their favorite films, we prepare for the *Student as Educator* project (Appendix 1). The idea for the project comes out of the visioning process in response to the strand of the provincial drama curriculum that requires students to explore an area of theatre history. I

design a skeleton for a project as a starting place for us to negotiate and decide upon requirements and expectations. Throughout the semester, I use a concept or big idea for an activity, project or unit as inspiration. I then design a more tangible and detailed outline of the assignment or project. I explicitly discuss the project with the class and make changes or adaptations based on student suggestions. While I likely have more input in designing the detailed expectations, by sharing the responsibility for planning with students, I find they tend to have a vested interest in successfully following the directions. By framing this project as a workshop rather than a presentation, I am hoping to ensure that the focus will be on the participants in the class and not on the facilitators:

They have to submit learning objectives, and the workshop is to consist of a presentation that explains a theatre genre, provides a history of the genre as well as explains the conventions of the genre. This is to be followed by an example of the genre. Many groups are writing their own scenes, other groups plan to perform prepared scenes. Third, workshops must have activities that help students practice acting skills typical to the genre. Finally there needs to be a short reflective element at the end of each workshop to ascertain feedback as well as to gauge the extent to which the learning objectives were achieved. (Research Notes, November 29, 2011)

The negotiation of this project results in a set of fairly structured expectations, and the workshops students lead, by design, end up reflecting a lesson planning structure many teachers use. In this way I am letting students in on the rules of a *game of truth*, to use Foucault's term, within the institution of education. By exploring the provincial curriculum together, by showing them how teachers design their lesson plans, I am sharing with students some of the tools teachers employ to enforce disciplinary power on

students. However, within this narrative, I am consciously employing a rhetoric of emancipation. That is, to share openly the intent of the work with students. By regularly encouraging students to change the expectations of the project to suit the needs of their group, it is my hope students can depart from our initial requirements for the project and experiment with new ways of structuring a workshop or exploring a specific area of theatre. It should be acknowledged, however, that sharing the *rules of the game* with students is not enough to subvert the institutional structures that authorize me to hold a degree of power over them. Institutional expectations such as curricular objectives, demands for accountable assessment and the classes' location within the school, mandate that I always will hold a degree of power over students. Any opportunities I create for students to have control are always partial and subject to the confines of the institution. Further, at times, giving students opportunities to lead the class, work independently in groups, or depart from initial requirements for class projects enables some of them to take leadership roles while silencing others.

At the same time, the fact that students have not likely had a lot of opportunities to take this level of control of the learning process means guidelines and structures give students a starting place for planning their workshops. I find that, especially during the early group-planning phase of this project:

Many groups it seems have difficulty getting started. Once they have begun they are able to come up with lots of creative ideas, but I think it is useful to help students at the beginning by providing possible ideas for themes, activities, etc. After providing a few ideas to each group, it seemed that most of them got excited about their workshops. (Research Notes, November 22, 2012)

Sharing the role of teacher with students does not suggest there is an absence of hierarchical power within the classroom. On the contrary, through this project students begin to learn ways to more actively discipline the other students in the class. As students begin to prepare and organize their workshops, they are informed by their past educational experiences as well as by the instructional approaches they have been a part of in the first half of the semester. The result is that many students seek to imitate how their teachers might teach the class. Many of the groups lead the workshops in a very structured and highly disciplined manner. For example, when participants in the workshops are not actively listening, many facilitators are very forceful in their approach to correcting student behavior.

The structure of the project is likely the result of my desire to meet the demands of the curriculum, to ensure students have clear guidelines to make their planning and facilitation more efficient, and a result of my inner discomfort to try something radically different than what I had come to know as best practice. True, our reversal of roles requires me to let go of a degree of control; however, requiring students to form their workshops in a certain way guarantees they will resemble what the students have come to know as a valid classroom experience. This contradiction challenges me to re-evaluate what challenging existing power relations need to look like in our classroom. When I have given students the freedom to plan their own workshops, they tend to mimic the performance of a powerful teacher. In doing so, they are leading activities in such a way that limits the capacity of the rest of the class to contribute meaningfully to any creative processes. My discomfort in witnessing the students' lead in this way causes me to rethink how I might create more guidelines to effectively allow students to step into the role of facilitator. However any structures or controls I put in place regarding

expectations for facilitation is an expression of disciplinary power over students. The power students exert over others when leading and my discomfort with their methods illustrates the paradox that drives much of this research. While my goal is to discover ways to ensure all students are able to contribute meaningfully to the learning process, it is impossible to ensure or even to know what these contributions might be. By acknowledging this uncertainty, I am suggesting that students will always learn different things from each other, and these lessons can sometimes contradict what I intend to teach. One of the ways of creating spaces for all students to contribute is to “conscientiously make visible these hidden lessons and the various lenses students use to make sense of them” (Kumashiron, 2009, p. 41).

4.3 Spatiality

Much of the work that takes place in the second half of the semester challenges existing spatial relationships between students and me and exposes certain discomforts for me as an educator. Space within the institution of school must be viewed for its relational qualities (Soja, 1985; Lefebvre, 1991). “A relational view of space seeks to provide a relative understanding of how space is constituted and given meaning through human endeavor” (Singh, Rizvi & Shrestha, 2007, p.197). Further, Edward Soja asserts “we must be insistently aware of how space can be made to hide consequences from us, how relations of power and discipline are inscribed into the apparently innocent spatiality of social life, how human geographies become filled with power and ideology” (Soja 1989, p.6). For the purposes of analysis it is useful to discuss the spatiality of our drama work within what Paulston and Liebman (1996) describe as a “new unitary theory of space” (p.25) within which:

Space is simultaneously a spatial practice (or externalized, material environment), a representation of space (a conceptual model used to direct space) and a space of representation (the lived social relation of users to the environment). (1996, p. 25)

That is to say human spatiality can be seen as fitting into three distinct categories: the physical, mental and social. The drama classroom's physical space and location within the school where I work sends a clear message about the relatively low status of the course within the larger institution which in turn influences students' decisions about how they approach the study of drama. Thus, this attitude affects the lived daily social experience of the class. As such, the three categories of spatiality directly influence and inform each other. Within this emerging framework of spatiality is a focus on power: "space is never innocent... what happens, happens somewhere, and on a number of levels, or 'scales'. Taking due account of this situated complexity of social practice becomes a matter of principle and urgency" (Green & Letts, 2007, p. 65). While the physical configuration of the school may be interpreted minimally as a space with a physical form, it is also a "complex phenomenon given meaning through myths, language, and rituals that speak to its spatial form" (Singh, Rizvi & Shrestha, 2007, p. 197). As such it is the spatial form of the institution that dictates the possible learning approaches as well as the relations between teacher and student.

By reversing the role of teacher and student and by changing the spatial relationship between students and me, I seek to challenge certain fundamental practices of institutional power such as surveillance. The spatial arrangement is an extension of my broader goal in challenging existing power relations; I hope to facilitate opportunities for students to take more control of the learning process and help them to guide and facilitate

the learning process for others. I should note that in the following descriptions of my reflections with regard to the altered spatial relationship, I will not comment in detail on the ways students react. I am the subject of this research, and so I will record mainly my reactions and inner tensions as I attempt to give students the space required to work independently without surveillance.

As students begin a series of classes intended to give them more time to work together to prepare their workshops, each group moves to a different space in the school to work. Because of the near constant surveillance students are subjected to in schools, I am apprehensive that once this surveillance is absent and there is little threat of being observed by teachers, some students might tend to be less focused or easily distracted. Despite my initial reluctance, I leave groups for entire class periods without checking in with them, preferring instead to watch and offer assistance to one group each class period. I also am apprehensive about the way other teachers might interpret students' noise level and behavior. Unsupervised work time next to other classroom spaces and my nervous response to this suggests I perceive other teachers and the institution itself to be judgmental of the work I am doing. While I am fighting my urge to overly structure and control the outcomes of this project, I am also fighting against my own perceptions that the institution is disciplining me. The same threat of surveillance and governmentality create a mental space of discomfort while I try to reduce the degree to which students are controlled by these forces. Further, while I am aware of the disciplinary forces of surveillance within my school, at times I am also acting as if I am being observed whether or not this is true. In this way I have fallen victim to the panoptic forces that control subjects within institutions using only the impression of surveillance.

Each day I share a physical space with one group. I purposely resist my urge to remind them, or give them direction, though on occasion this becomes necessary. It occurs to me that many groups do not want the degree of independence this project provides them as evidenced by the fact that during the first three days of group preparation I am constantly bombarded with students asking questions and seeking help with ideas. (Research Notes, November 29, 2011)

During the student led workshops, I sit in the back of the class and make notes while students participate in activities relating to a specific genre of theatre. Reading my journal entries that reflect on each day of workshops, I am surprised by the criteria through which I assess the relative success or failure of each class. It seems in many ways I am judging the workshops by comparing them to how I might facilitate and not valuing the unique gifts and new approaches students bring to their own workshops. This is suggested by a number of specific comments I record during the journaling process: “This workshop was plagued with technical difficulties”. (Research Notes, Tuesday, December 6, 2011). “The students were not very charismatic while they were leading the workshop. This led to the response from the class being less than enthusiastic.” (Research Notes, December 2, 2011). While I also make specific comments on the design of the workshops and am also impressed on a number of occasions, I seem to be making more observations regarding the students’ presentation skills and the structure and content of each workshop, rather than focusing on how much students appear to learn by facilitating or how other students respond to being part of the workshops. I do suggest towards the end of our *Student as Educator* project that:

When it comes to the logistics of facilitation, it is true that with practice one improves. As such, it is foreseeable that there will be bumps when students

act as the teacher... I am convinced however that the learning, especially for the group facilitating, is meaningful. (Research Notes, December 6, 2012)

Again, it seems the logistical problems students face when learning to facilitate workshops exposes my discomfort in letting students take control. I can't get over the nervous feeling I have in the back of the classroom, hoping students will lead in a way that engages the other students and allows the whole class to participate in meaningful skill development. While I know the process of creating spaces for students to facilitate work with other students is invaluable in terms of skill building, on a certain level, knowing I likely have the skills necessary to anticipate many possible problems gives way to an urge to step in and take back control over the course. Being mindful of this discomfort forces me to resist the urge to step in, and this I feel, allows students to have more control of their learning.

Throughout this work I attempted to speak openly and plainly with students about reservations I had regarding students leading the class. I also spoke openly about my goals for challenging existing power relations. For me, being open and honest with students about the feelings I have during all theatre work is an intentional and necessary part of changing the discourses between students and myself.

If one is to acknowledge the school as both a site of discipline and subjectivation, of governmentality, discursive power, and of surveillance, then the spatial arrangement of students around the campus—without the supervision of a teacher and planning to take on the role of facilitator—can be seen as a direct challenge to traditional models of education. Despite this supposed freedom, in practice, the workshops follow a fairly familiar format that balances direct instruction, modeling, and practice. This is perhaps partially due to the project requirements given to students, but more likely is a result of

their lived experiences as students which make it difficult for them to imagine instructional approaches radically different from what they have come to know. Finally, my reluctance to give students space to prepare unsupervised, as well as my urges to intervene to help students during the implementation of their workshops exposes key areas of discomforts for me within the classroom space. Reflecting upon and bringing these discomforts to light are an important way to reposition my practice to fully embrace more democratic forms of facilitation.

I have commented in this section about opportunities for students to work independently away from my direct surveillance. Observing the ways that students are able to work effectively and efficiently in groups without my presence suggests that if expectations are clearly set out and students are excited about the work that they are doing, there is no need for constant supervision. Despite my best intentions of creating spaces for students to have control, my presence limits the possible narratives between students and changes the way that students interact with each other. My absence from the learning space is not a prerequisite for students to exert a high degree of agency and control over the theatre work that they do; however, providing some opportunities for unsupervised student work does communicate a level of trust and contributes towards a culture of freedom I hope to create.

4.4- The Body

By this I mean a number of phenomena that seem to me to be quite significant; namely, the set of mechanisms through which the basic biological features of the human species became the object of a political strategy, of a general strategy of power, or, in other words, how, starting from the 18th century, modern Western

societies took on board the fundamental biological fact that human beings are a species. This is what I have called biopower. (Foucault, 2007, p.1)

Reading Foucault's words reminds me of all of the ways our bodies and their relationships to other bodies contribute deeply to the production of power relations. Because the body is the physical vessel through which we experience the materiality of daily life, politics have no choice but to be inscribed in and on the body through discourses of power (Butler, 1989; Allegranti, 2011). While these inscriptions include categories of privilege and marginalization (race, gender, sexuality, etc.), they also include all of our lived experiences that no doubt leave traces both seen and unseen (Chapman, 2001).

Using reflective journals and narrative explorations of my personal history, I hope to take stock of the ways my body, as the object of research, has been inscribed politically, and thus gain insights into ways my body contributes to the subjectivation of students. My motivation in exploring the role of my body in the classroom is to adopt a kind of embodied practice in which I constantly acknowledge the connection between the cognitive, the emotional and the physical in which I understand the inseparability of ethics and bodies (Allegranti, 2011).

The drama classroom provides a unique space to explore embodied practice. The bodies in the drama classroom and the relationships between them are constantly moving and shifting; at any given moment in the drama class, students may be in a circle or standing in front of the class performing. Other times, they are working alone or in groups and often moving to various locations around the school. Further, the work itself demands physicality. Students are embodying characters by exploring the ways

motivation influences physical expression. The entire process of becoming a character acknowledges the connection between the cognitive, the emotional and the physical.

While I describe the role my body plays in the classroom throughout this self-study, I mention it here particularly in relation to both the *Student as Educator Project* and the *Production Team Project* that would follow; in each case, the bodily relationship between students and me changed considerably. The absence of my bodily presence during many class activities during this part of the semester as well as the ways the students took up different physicalities through their leadership roles during the latter half of the semester reveals the ways my physical interventions profoundly change how students react to the class and to each other. Throughout this work, I comment on the location and impact my bodily presence plays in the classroom.

4.5- The Laramie Project: Employing an Ethics of Discomfort

You see, what I want to do is not the history of solutions . . . I would like to do the genealogy of problems, of *problematiques*. My point is not that everything is bad, but that everything is dangerous, which is not exactly the same as bad. If everything is dangerous, then we always have something to do. So my position leads not to apathy but to a hyper—and pessimistic activism. (Dreyfus, Rabinow & Foucault, 1983, pp. 231-232)

For me understanding the limited agency of subjects gave me a feeling of hopelessness. But as I came to read and understand Foucault's work surrounding ethics, I began to see that he seeks to problematize all discourses of power especially those that seek to dominate, to marginalize. To see everything as dangerous, as Foucault suggests above, fuels my desire to help students deconstruct power, to make visible the workings

and effects of power, and ultimately create spaces that, if they do not begin to undo existing unequal power relations, at least start to disrupt them.

On our visioning tree, there are a number of student suggestions that request we study a specific play. The visioning tree also suggests that students explore more technical forms of theatre. The result of these student ideas forms the basis of our next major unit, *The Production Team* project (Appendix 2). Within this project:

Students are split into three groups and each given an act. They are each to take on a role (director, stage manager, advertising, lighting, sound, set) and each member has a specialized task within the group. (Research Notes, December 10, 2011)

This project corresponds nicely with a number of provincial curricular requirements that suggest all students engage in “viewing, analyzing, and interpreting plays” as well as “learning about the artistic and technical aspects of play production and the role of each dramatic artist involved” (Saskatchewan Drama Curriculum, 1993, p. 24). There are a number of suggested plays on the tree, including *The Laramie Project* (Kaufman, 2001). The Laramie project is “a docudrama about a gay 21 year old university student from Wyoming who is brutally murdered because of his sexuality. The play is based on interviews conducted by a visiting theatre group with the citizens of the town” (Research Notes, December 10, 2011).

In light of the areas of discomfort I experienced during our *Student as Educator* project, I would like to primarily comment on the inherent tension between my desire to step back and let students take more control over their own learning and my conscious positioning against oppression. As in the first half of the semester, we used oppression as a topic to explore theatre; this time through using the *Laramie Project* (Kaufman, 2001).

While Foucault (1965, 1973, 1977, 1988, 1980) is concerned with the social structures that discursively produce and define lived experience, his work also interrogates how normalizing social codes are brought into question. His work disrupts and provokes any assumption that there are parts of social life that are neutral. In fact much of Foucault's work can "all be seen as histories that call for social justice by challenging any notion that things in the present are inevitable or natural" (Parkes, Gore & Ellsworth, 2010, p. 165).

It is with this in mind that I approach the facilitation of our *Production Team Project*. While the project's design ensures that once again students will take a high degree of control over the learning process, the play itself demands questioning heteronormativity and acts as a departure point for many students in the class to unpack some of their preconceived views on sexuality. As with our work earlier in the semester on Forum theatre, by using certain oppressions as a topic for drama work, my hope is students will begin to become repositioned into what Freire describes as the ideal Subject; someone who:

perceives historical contradictions in increasingly critical fashion... And while he [or she] recognizes that it is impossible to stop or to anticipate history without penalty, he [or she] is no mere spectator of the historical process. He [or she] knows that as a Subject he [or she] can and ought, together with other Subjects, to participate creatively in that process by discerning transformations in order to aid and accelerate them. (Freire, 1987, pp. 9-10)

While Freire stresses human agency by suggesting our potential to free ourselves from unequal power relations, Foucault reminds us that the constituted nature of the subject, as a product of the various histories and discourses that operate upon our bodies, limits the

little agency of which we may be capable. However, the use of sources like *The Laramie Project* within the drama classroom are intended to expose and disrupt normative subjectivities and to create a space where students can refuse certain subjectivities in order to gain more agency. The introduction of *The Laramie Project* demands students take a careful look at the ways heteronormativity discursively produces certain kinds of subjects and fosters unequal power relations between dominant and marginalized social groups, in this case the heterosexual majority and the LGBTQ minority.

Many of the thematic conversations surrounding the play that take place in the weeks before and after student presentations might be described as adopting what Foucault (1997b) describes as an *Ethics of Discomfort*. Here, Foucault continues to problematize normalizing codes of behavior when he advises, “never consent to being completely comfortable with your own certainties” (1997b, p.144). I was particularly drawn to *The Laramie Project* for its ability to interrogate normative views that can contribute to an environment that marginalizes a social group. The play is situated in the town of Laramie, Colorado just as a theatre group from New York City arrives to interview local people about their responses to the brutal killing of a gay university student in the town. The play is based on real interviews and exposes many of the subtle ways people sit back and allow oppression to take hold within a community. A common response from townspeople who were interviewed was the position of ‘live and let live’. For example, while many of the townspeople had moral objections to homosexuality, they believed that people had the right to make this personal choice as long as it was private and not made public. This position represents a common discomfort within heteronormative communities. Instead of becoming allies for LGBTQ peoples, many who identify as heterosexual, attempt to ignore variations of sexualities. In the case of

Laramie, Colorado, the town's apathy towards the gay community allowed for a very small minority of very aggressive and violent homophobes to commit a hate crime.

Once groups have the opportunity to present their pieces in class, we spend time reflecting and responding to the themes of the play:

Students passionately discuss and debate the reasons for homophobia. There is one student who stands out as being particularly homophobic and who is willing to speak to it. There are others who passionately attack this student. One area of the discussion that draws my attention is regarding one of the lines of the play '*Live and Let Live*' - many of the less vocal students agree this represents what they think of the issue; that they don't necessarily agree with homosexuality but they respect the personal choice. The question "is this enough?" elicits a lot of discussion- "do straight people need to stand out against it? Do we need to debate and talk about these issues?" The conversation is rich. (Research Notes, December 22, 2011)

While our class moves on after the Christmas break to our *Collective Creation* unit, one incident that takes place during our final exam period at the end of the semester exposes the importance of learning through my discomfort regarding one student in the class. Our final examination is mainly an opportunity for students to reflect through writing on a number of the units we have explored during the semester as well as to respond once more to some questions regarding power sharing in the classroom. One of the questions is:

In what ways can theatre and more specifically the Laramie Project be an agent for social change? Consider the theme 'Oppression' as it relates to the Laramie Project. (Research Notes, February 1, 2012)

One student who had been briefly vocal about his stance against homosexuality writes at length regarding his discomfort in taking up the Laramie Project. He expresses his anger that we addressed this issue in class. The tone of his writing is very aggressive and accusatory mainly at me for facilitating work that challenges heteronormativity.

Reading this student's work affects me emotionally. This student did not object publicly during our exploration and discussion of the play [he did briefly prior to being silenced by the rest of the class], but is clearly upset and bothered that we approach a topic that he thinks is morally wrong. Studying the play made him very angry and frustrated. At the same time he did not feel comfortable speaking out against the piece in class as he was in a minority position. (Research Notes, February 1, 2012)

By choosing to take up *The Laramie Project*, I position myself against oppression. Even within larger class discussions, there are many times when my questioning is intended to directly challenge the flawed logic of heteronormative practices. I am attempting to employ Foucault's *Ethics of Discomfort* (1997) as a way to challenge student certainties. My decisions to step in and problematize normative assumptions are made in the context that education is not, as some might contend, a neutral phenomenon. The education system is characterized "by social and political contestations that have led to educational inequalities, especially among marginalized communities" (Ndimande, 2010, p. 89). I am attempting to "bring to light power relations, locate their position, and find out their point of application and methods used" (Foucault, 1982, p. 780). Certainly by positioning myself in a certain way I am contributing to the discursive production of power relations within the classroom, but I am also attempting to serve all students equitably by defending a marginalized position. In response to this student's exam response:

I write a lengthy response that is mainly questions, simply hoping to engage him in a discussion and put a few critical questions in his head. After I hand back the exams I speak to him privately, encourage him to read my comments, and invite him to come and speak with me at any time about the issue. I resist my impulse to argue or challenge the student's position for a number of reasons. I think it is likely that the student did learn through discomfort, and though a complete turn around of the student's moral stance on homosexuality [is unlikely], the exposure to the play is an important step. I hope the student will choose to dialogue with me or others about the issue. But to tell him what to think would oppose the nature of my intentions for the course. (Research Notes, February 1, 2012)

In this case, I resist my urge to argue directly with this student, but adopt a more gentle, questioning approach. I do, however, use my position of privilege as a teacher to challenge this student's position. I do not see this as a departure from my intentions for giving students a high degree of control and agency. I have a degree of power and at times need to be very intentional about exercising it. I step in during this time, because I know it is important for my perspective to be present alongside this student's perspective.

4.6 Conclusion

It seems that as with the *Student as Educator* project and as will be discussed with the *Collective Creation* project, I am giving students the necessary space to create, to learn, and to express their opinions freely, but when their work departs radically from what I have come to define as valid performance or classroom experience, I feel inner tension and at times the need to intervene, to exercise power. This is not something I should always avoid. In fact negotiating a kind of reciprocal power relationship with

students requires that my voice and perspectives be heard. At the same time, being aware of my areas of discomfort helps to challenge me to give students the necessary space to take more control of the learning process. At other times, my discomfort propels me to intervene and exercise disciplinary power over students. I feel that understanding some of my discomfort provides insight into how I have come to define myself as an educator. It also provides me with a number of practical ways to co-facilitate drama work with students. Many of my areas of discomfort stem from the ways I have been disciplined through my past educational experiences and from the institution for which I work. Recognizing these points of discomfort at times requires me to refuse who I have become. As Foucault suggests:

Maybe the target nowadays is not to discover what we are but to refuse what we are... We have to promote new forms of subjectivity through the refusal of this kind of individuality which has been imposed on us for several centuries. (Foucault, 1982, p. 785)

Ultimately, reflecting upon my discomforts as an educator has helped me to realize there are times when I need to refuse my initial desires to step in to improve student performances, to supervise students working independently in groups, to structure projects in a way that predetermines what student-led facilitation looks like. I have also learned there are times when I am called to share my expertise with students, to step in when marginalized students are silenced during group work and to challenge the ways students reproduce normative behaviors, traditional instructional approaches and unequal power hierarchies. Understanding when and how to exert control and when to create spaces for students to take control is a challenging process that requires constant

reflection and analysis. But it is through this careful marriage of reflection and practice that teachers are able to embrace a kind of ethical model within their classrooms.

Through various processes of subjectivation, all people are “brought to embrace the ideals of our socio-cultural milieux. They involve complete ways of life which determine our modes of being, thinking and doing” (O’Leary, 2002, p.108). However, through taking up and reflecting upon the modes of subjectivity that produce us, I have problematized the means through which people are produced as subjects and am therefore called upon to disrupt various subjectivities. Foucault suggests we must refuse the question of the self and “subsequently create [our selves] as piece[s] of art” (O’Leary, 2002, p. 108). In order to do so the agentic subject must embrace Foucault’s conception of critique: “a conception which rests upon a particular concept of the subject and makes possible the practical refusal of that subject in political and ethical terms” (O’Leary, 2002, p. 108). It is Foucault’s ideas surrounding the refusal of certain degrees of subjecthood in order to embrace an ethical practice that will form the basis of my analysis in Chapters Five and Six.

CHAPTER V:

What is the narrative through which I have come to define myself as teacher?

I am sitting in my office, reading once more through my reflective journals, and searching for an excerpt that might support the point I need to make. Despite my assurance that the idea I wish to express is important, I can find nothing in my journal that says what I need to say. Frustrated, I open a new browser and spend 10 minutes reading a local news website. I think I will call it quits for today.

5.1 Introduction

Critique is about backing out of the call to relate to ourselves and to others in a particular way. It is to free ourselves of certain conceptions about ourselves and our conduct. (Masschelein, 2006, p. 561)

In Chapter Two, through an exploration of my intellectual history, I deliberate on the ways I have been discursively produced within my work into a certain kind of subject. In an ongoing fashion, this teacher identity has been and continues to be formed by a series of power relations between students and me, between my administration and me, and between the institution and me. My teacher identity is also informed by a multiplicity of other roles and relationships I maintain outside of the school, and these identities are always shifting and changing through discourse. While the productive nature of these relationships has transformed the way I perform my role as teacher, through my interactions with students, I have also profoundly effected power relations, and as such, have contributed to the subjectivation of students. This is a topic primarily explored in Chapter Three. As I began to understand how my actions contribute through governmentality and disciplinary power to the subjectivation of students, I explored my areas of discomfort in the classroom space. This is the topic of my work in Chapter Four.

By exposing my areas of discomfort, I have begun to find practical ways for me to facilitate power sharing with students in the drama classroom.

In Chapter Five, I focus on the many narratives through which I have come to define myself as an educator. Some of these narratives are contradictory and conflicting, exposing the complex and constantly shifting nature of subject identities. At the center of this self-study is an exploration of the ways I have been produced through discourse into a certain kind of subject (Foucault, 1982). While the processes of subjectivation continue to operate at the site of my body and form an important part of the narratives through which I have come to define myself as an educator, some of these processes have enabled me to question, to expose, and to confront the performative nature of certain subjectivities. Reflecting on the ever-changing nature of my subject positioning suggests the narratives through which I define my practice are “always deferred and in the process of becoming—never really, never yet, never absolutely ‘there’” (MacLure, 2003, p. 131).

As in my observations and deconstructions of classroom experiences, there is more meaning in the discursive construction of my teacher identity than I can express through language: “the meaning of an event or a thing or, indeed, an identity will always exceed our knowledge of it and our capacity to ‘capture’ it in representational systems such as language” (Clarke, 2008, p. 188). As such, seeking to identify the narrative through which I have come to define myself as an educator can be problematic. Further, there is inherent tension between the ways I have defined the self and the practice of self-study. I have been produced as a subject through my discursive relations with society. Upon gaining an understanding of the processes of subjectivation that produce us, I was initially left with the impression that I am devoid of agency. Butler reminds us, “when the ‘I’ seeks to give an account of itself, it can start with itself, but it will find this self is

already implicated in a social temporality that exceeds its own capacities for narration” (Butler, 2005, p. 7). However, the process of careful reflection enables me to take actions to reposition my practice. “Our identities are...partly given yet they are also something that has to be achieved, offering a potential site of agency within the inevitably social process of becoming” (Clarke, 2008, p. 187). The constituted nature of the subject does not suggest we “are passively and inevitably shaped according to one set of discursive practices within a monolithic moral order” (Davies, 2006, p. 426). Instead, as Butler suggests:

the constituted character of the subject is the very precondition of its agency. For what is it that enables a purposive and significant reconfiguration of cultural and political relations, if not a relation that can be turned against itself, reworked and resisted? (Butler, 1995, p. 46)

It is not enough for me to understand the ways power relations produce us as subjects. I need to reconcile my practice with my core ethical beliefs. I need to find ways for my practice to reflect education as the practice of “freedom”; as follows: “For what is ethics if not the practice of freedom, the conscious practice of freedom?...ethics is the concerned form that freedom takes when it is informed by reflection” (Foucault & Rabinow, 1997, p. 284).

In the context of my practice, freedom refers to my ability to become conscious of my teaching as well as my mandate to challenge existing power relations. Foucault’s earlier work tends to focus on the ways people are produced as subjects (1977, 1982). This work was seen “as endorsing the hopeless entanglement of political agency in a mesh of social constraints” (Tobias, 2005, p. 65). In this sense, Foucault seems to acknowledge the impossibility of undoing the institutional constraints that express

disciplinary power upon us. His later work, however, describes ethics as the ‘aesthetics of existence’ (1986, 1988). In these works Foucault’s focus seems to shift to the work that can be done on the self, to live a life that consciously repositions subject identities by refusing certain subjectivities. It is in this light that I seek to become an agentic subject. Through careful reflection and action I am able to better understand the limits of my agency and negotiate my subject position in a way that enables me to challenge existing power relations in the classroom, school, and wider world. This work on the self is motivated by my critical orientation and my desire to pursue ‘the practice of freedom’ in a Freirean sense, as I seek to help students “deal critically and creatively with reality and discover how to participate in the transformation of their world” (Freire, 1970a, p.34).

I have been produced through my relationships with various educational institutions. I believe that in order to practice social justice and equity in the classroom, I am required to refuse these particular forms of subjectivities. In a sense, I am forced to refuse the self. Foucault describes this refusal as “the art not to be governed in this way” (Foucault, 2007, p. 44). This is a process I will explore in Chapter Five.

5.2 Refusing the Self

The teacher education program of my undergraduate education from 2001-2005 required a lot of self-reflection. Through a number of journaling projects and assignments in both my education professional studies courses as well as through my curriculum courses in social studies and drama education, a common component seemed to be the use of personal journals as a means of identifying and defining personal pedagogies. Occasionally, it was suggested that we feel free to critique our past educational experiences, but generally, it seemed that after reading about educational approaches, we

would reflect and respond to the readings by linking the concepts and ideas we had learned to our own lives. While this narrative within the teacher education program encouraged us to express our opinions about learning and decide for ourselves what we believed to be best practice, the program in my experience, tried very hard to be neutral by presuming no political position and by not directly addressing the inequalities and injustices that are core components of the educational institution. While the discourse was one that respected the teacher as professional and allowed room for a variety of pedagogies, we were only free as long as our ideas regarding education could fit into a traditional school and classroom. After all, teacher education programs are designed to move students through four years of education and directly into a classroom teaching position. I believe I have this impression because of the strong links that existed between schools and the education department through internship programs, as well as the many classes that focused on the delivery of the provincial curriculum, which is primarily delivered through classroom teaching.

There is tension within any narrative of freedom. While the discourse within most modern educational institutions is one that emphasizes free will, it can be argued that because of the processes that produce us as subjects, there is no substantial self or centre of free will that makes moral behavior possible. Foucault points out, “there is no sovereign, founding subject, a universal form of subject to be found everywhere” (Foucault & Kritzman, 1988, p. 50).

Foucault’s concept of subjectivation presents an obstacle within the narrative of free will that has formed much of my teacher education. If I am only a subject and all of my actions and reactions are a response to the ways I have been made into a subject, how am I to embrace a critical orientation that resists traditional models of education and calls

for radical and fundamental change? Foucault offers some solutions as he takes up his concept of *governmentality* (2007, p. 44). While the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries saw major developments in the art of governing, it also saw the beginning of a critical attitude that represented a counter culture that explored the art of how not to be governed.

Foucault describes this counterculture as the desire not to be governed “like that, by that, in the name of these principles, in view of such objectives and by the means of such methods, not like that, not for that, not by them” (Foucault, 2007, p. 44). From the mid-eighteenth century on, discipline was transformed to become more concerned with the production of the individual, as opposed to coercion to the group. From this point forward, the disciplinary institution:

seeks not merely to confine but above all to correct, involving what Foucault called 'an inclusion through exclusion': in the case of schools, individuals are only 'excluded' from the rest of society in order to better embroil them in or 'attach' them to relations of power and knowledge. Consequently, a new and more positive disciplinary emphasis gained in influence, with the aim of primary education becoming the development of children's minds and bodies and the improvement of moral attitudes and behavior (Deacon, 2006, p. 180).

If governmentalization subjugates individuals using mechanisms of power that appeal to a truth; “the critical attitude is a movement in which the subject claims the right to question truth on its effects of power and to question power on its discourses of truth” (Foucault, 1990, p. 386). This critique or question is what Foucault describes as ‘de-subjectivation’ (1990). My teacher education program imposed a narrative of freedom on its subjects and therefore: “instills freedom as a central tenet of modern subjectivity and,

having done so... should not be surprised if that installation leads to unexpected and undesired consequences” (O’Leary, 2002, p.14).

Foucault, as cited in O’Leary suggests that there is no substantive self. He writes that forms of life and modes of subjectivity are historically and culturally determined, and secondly, that there is no truth to be discovered (either in the self or the world) which is capable of grounding the way that we live. The subject is not a substance, it is a ‘form’ which is capable of transformation. (O’Leary, 2002, p. 121)

In the context of my teaching practice, these transformations are only possible through certain practices of the self that involve developing an aesthetic of existence to create oneself as a work of art; “couldn’t everyone’s life become a work of art? Why should the lamp or the house be an art object, but not our life?” (Foucault, 1983, p. 350). Here, I am referring less to art as an aesthetic, than to what Foucault might refer to as *work on the self*. “This distinction between work as product and work as process mirrors the distinction I have made between aesthetic as relating to beauty and as relating to techniques of transformation” (O’Leary, 2002, p. 127). In my context, the self-work I have engaged in through this self-study has inevitably been transformative. My reflections on the ethics of my practice are ultimately what will lead me to understand the kind of educator I need to become.

5.3 The four ethico-political axes of teacher identity

...the answer to the question ‘why should I live my life in a particular way as opposed to any other?’ is: because myself and my life have no shape, no purpose,

no justification, outside of the form which I give to them. It is, therefore, imperative... that I think about that form, develop the techniques that will help me transform it, and that I reflect on the ends, the *telo*i, to which I will direct it.

(O'Leary, 2002, p. 138)

For me, the way that Timothy O'Leary frames ethics above seems to acknowledge the post-structuralist position that subject identities are not fixed but are constantly shifting and produced by various forces. However, O'Leary seems to assert that it is ourselves that lend form to our lives if we develop the techniques required to direct them. These words resonate with me and provide hope that I might achieve the kind of agency I seek.

One way to take up the narrative through which I have come to define my practice is through the lens of Foucault's *four axes of the relationship to oneself* (1983). Briefly these can be described as the substance of ethics, the authority-sources of ethics, the self-practices, and the telos, or endpoint, of ethics (Clarke, 2008, p. 190). Using Foucault's *axes*, Clarke illustrates in Figure 5.1 how this ethical model can be a practical tool for understanding the ongoing formation of teacher identity.

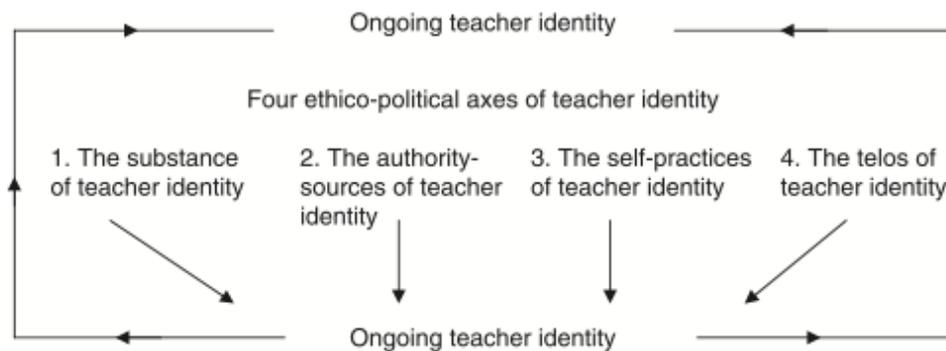
Figure 5.1

Figure 5.1. Four ethico-political axes of teacher identity. Reprinted from “The ethico-politics of teacher identity,” by M. Clarke, 2008, *Educational Philosophy and Theory*, 41(2), p. 191. Copyright 2008 by the Philosophy of Education Society of Australasia.

As a way to demonstrate how these four *axes* have been useful in identifying parts of the narrative through which I have come to define myself as a teacher, I offer three short reflections on specific situations I have experienced during my graduate education, during my experiences as a classroom teacher, and finally during my data-gathering semester with my Drama 10 class. In this way, I will connect the first three *ethico-political axes of teacher identity* (Clarke, 2008) to my own practice. Later, in Chapter Six, I will comment more on the *telos* or end point of my own teacher identity.

5.3.1 The substance of teacher identity

As I have identified in my intellectual history, a particular area of focus within my graduate work involved taking up critical theory and more specifically anti-oppressive education. While social justice education was an area of interest for me prior to entering the graduate studies program, my experiences working as a middle years teacher in a community school during the 2009/2010 school year drew me increasingly towards anti-oppressive education, as I sought to learn more about the ways inequality was produced

through the power relations that existed within the classroom. I was deeply affected by my practice, partially because I was dismayed by the injustices many of the students were forced to face daily, but partially, I was upset with myself for responding to students in ways that reinforced inequitable power relations, and prevented me from developing more meaningful relationships with students. While I make mention of some of these experiences in chapter two, here, I reiterate the powerful impact these experiences had on my practice, contributing especially to my critical orientation, and to my desire to embrace ethical practice.

During this time when I was experiencing extreme stress and frustration with my teaching practice, I was also taking my first graduate education course at the University of Regina. The class was an introduction to critical pedagogy and explored a variety of forces that create and reinforce inequitable power relationships between dominant and marginalized groups within the institution of education. Each article I read and each lecture I attended seemed to mirror the injustices I was seeing and reacting to on a daily basis through my practice. I began to closely look at my teaching in relation to my graduate work, and little by little, started to adjust my practice in the classroom; I changed the way I spoke to students by focusing on building positive relationships; I took on projects that required students to work in groups and that required a high degree of creative control; I even took up the subject of oppression directly with my class through a number of projects, lessons and role playing activities which dealt with the forces of oppression in their lives. While the remainder of my year teaching in this class continued to be challenging, my first graduate class reminded me constantly of the imperative to continue in spite of my natural inclinations and to create a classroom that embodied ideals of democracy and social justice. As a result, I was able to build a strong

relationship with many students and see many of them develop more respectful relationships with each other.

Clarke describes the substance of teacher identity as addressing:

issues of what part of myself pertains to teaching and what forms of subjectivity constitute—or what forms do I use to constitute—my teaching self?... For example, does my teaching self concern primarily my rational mind...or does it involve intellectual and emotional parts of my being? (2008, p. 190)

My experience teaching middle years in a community school and my first graduate class reinforced the important distinction that my teaching practice embodies all parts of my being. I cannot separate the tasks required to perform the duties of a teacher from my political positioning. Likewise, I cannot separate my emotional response to the injustices in the classroom from my instructional strategies. Especially since beginning my graduate work, my teaching practice has become increasingly intertwined with my personal identity. Denying this separation and accepting how personal and political my teaching practice is has provided fuel for me to continue to do the important self-work required in transforming my teaching. If I am driven to tears by my reactive responses to students in crisis, then there is an ethical imperative for me to find ways to change the classroom.

5.3.2- The authority sources of teacher identity

As I continued my graduate studies and read more within the field of critical pedagogy, I felt I was in the process of discovering an academic defense for the kind of teacher I wanted to become. As a result of my teacher education program, I was drawn to approaches of teaching that were student-centered and justice oriented but was always

careful to ensure lessons derived some form of political objectivity. My graduate studies allowed me to defend what I think I already knew; that:

In the name of the respect I should have toward students, I do not see why I should omit or hide my political stance by proclaiming a neutral position that does not exist. On the contrary, my role as a teacher is to assent the students' right to compare, to choose, to rupture, to decide (Freire, 1998, p. 68).

Towards the end of my teaching middle years and increasingly in my current position teaching high school, I am incorporating oppression as a subject for study into all of my classes. An important part of this work requires that together we are both learning about and inquiring into oppressions in which we are experiencing or are complicit in. Taking up oppression as a topic for study cannot and should not be neutral. For oppressions such as racism, sexism, homophobia and ableism to be undone, very real political changes are necessary. Critical pedagogy recognizes that systematic inequality creates institutions that reproduce hierarchical power relationships by privileging some groups while marginalizing others. It also calls upon educators and students to participate in social action that addresses institutionalized unequal power relations (Freire, 1970a, 1998; Giroux, 2011).

The second *axes* of the relationship to oneself (Foucault, 1983, 1985) concerns “the mode of subjection, referring to the issues of why I should cultivate certain attitudes, beliefs and behaviours and what sources of discursive authority I recognize as a teacher” (Clarke, 2008, p. 191). In the context of my teaching practice, I increasingly recognize critical pedagogy (Freire, 1970a, hooks, 1994, Kellner, 2003, Giroux, 2011) as an important source of discursive authority. This critical approach ensures I continue to

question the institutions in which I work. Becoming a critical educator also demands a constant interrogation of my own teaching as well as an unpacking of my identity.

At the same time, I have come to understand my identity relies upon mutual acts of recognition as a viable subject. This process involves the performance of the constitutive acts that produce us as subjects. Davies suggests that:

the agentic subject disavows this dependency, not out of a flawed capacity for reflexivity, but because the achievement of autonomy, however illusory it might be, is necessary for the accomplishment of oneself as a recognizable and thus viable subject. (2002, p. 427)

I feel much of the self-work I have done through my graduate studies has changed what it means to be a viable subject. In the eyes of my peers, who include activists and anti-oppressive educators, viable subject-hood requires I practice social justice in the classroom. It also has inspired me to look closely at my practice and to make inroads for my teaching to more closely align with what I recognize as sound pedagogy. What I recognize as sound pedagogy is in turn produced and reinforced by the discursive sources I value. These sources include my friends and peers as well as my university professors, students and my school administration. In addition, my views on teaching pedagogy are shaped by the research others and I have done and by my experiences in the classroom.

Butler suggests in order for subjects to have agency, they require certain *conditions of possibility* (1995, p. 45). While I may comment upon the forces around me that dominate and subject me, I am also dependent upon these forces for my existence. This requires the simultaneous enactment of submission and mastery:

The more a practice is mastered, the more fully subjection is achieved.

Submission and mastery take place simultaneously, and it is this paradoxical

simultaneity that constitutes the ambivalence of subjection. Where one might expect submission to consist in a yielding to an externally imposed dominant order, and to be marked by a loss of control and mastery, it is paradoxically marked by mastery itself...the lived simultaneity of submission as mastery, and mastery as submission, is the condition of possibility for the subject itself. (Butler, 1995, pp. 45–46)

For example, when I applied to be a teacher at the high school where I currently work, I required certain training, experience and qualifications to be considered for my position. My education and years of experience, combined with references from others who had worked with me, ensured that I understood ‘what it meant to be a teacher’ and that I was qualified to perform the role of teacher sufficiently in meeting the expectations of the administration. To retain my position, I need to demonstrate that I am capable of performing the duties required of a teacher. If I experiment with certain teaching methodologies that are not recognized by those around me as required for viable subjecthood, I am in contradiction to the expectations of the institution. The more I understand the institution and its relation to my practice, the more I am able to change my practice within the boundaries of the institution. And so, the forces of submission and mastery and the interplay between them constitute my identity within the institution. They create the conditions necessary for my participation in the school, but also allow for the conditions of possibility required for me to change the way I define myself as an educator. Teacher identity represents a paradoxical complexity as described below:

It is at once a complex matter of the social and the individual, of discourse and practice, of reification and participation, of similarity and difference, of agency

and structure, of fixity and transgression, of the singular and the multiple, and of the synoptic and the dynamic. (Clarke, 2008 p. 189)

Thus, while identity work is most important in creating the conditions of possibility necessary for the transformation of my practice, it must be done within an awareness of the limited agency teachers have in the context of the various forces that produce us as subjects.

Within the context of Clarke's *ethico-political axes of teacher identity* (2008), while I may recognize critical pedagogies as a most important source of discursive authority, my continuing existence as an educator requires me to negotiate the discourses of education and the expectations of 'good teachers' within my current institution and within the teaching profession. At the same time, the more confident I become in defending my practice, and the more practical ways I find to effectively incorporate critical approaches into the classroom, the more agency I have in becoming a more ethical educator.

5.3.3 The self practices of teacher identity

The combination of my introduction to critical pedagogy through my participation in the first classes of my graduate program and the personal difficulties I was having in my teaching practice during the 2009/2010 school year acted as a catalyst for me to engage in a variety of self-practices that would ultimately change the way I would define myself as a teacher. Many of my early graduate classes tended to employ reflective journals and reading responses that were intended for me to define and redefine my practice. Further, some of them demanded I implicate myself as a part of all the work that I do. This involves an unpacking of power positions, and ultimately a dissection of the

ways power relations are discursively produced and negotiated within the classroom and school. While part of this work forced me to acknowledge my own privilege, it also exposed my relationships to elite power strategies. Each time I make decisions about which resources to use or what historical events to study with students or when to exercise power during group work, the choices I make are in part informed by my role as a member of many elite categories of privilege. Any hope in minimizing the ways that my various subject identities impact the way I exercise power in the classroom requires constant self-work and reflection.

The daily journaling of my data-gathering semester allowed me to keep a critical record of my practice. The act of recording my initial thoughts and feelings about my participation in the class in relation to students motivated me to be mindful of the ways I was affecting discourse and being affected by the discourse in the classroom space. Through this process, I was able to create spaces for resistance where existing power relations could be challenged. By reframing the ways that I spoke to students; by designing opportunities for students to act as facilitators of workshops; by challenging spatial relationships between students and myself during the creative process; by speaking openly and honestly about my feelings and desires for the course; by collaboratively planning the semester's activities; by engaging in theatre work that exposes unequal power relations through the use of TO and studying the play *The Laramie Project*; by choosing resources that represented a multiplicity of voices, I was able to challenge existing discourses of power with students in the classroom. Clarke describes the self-practices within his *ethico-political axes of teacher identity* (2008) as follows:

The third axis concerns the techniques and practices we use to fashion and shape our teaching selves. Practices commonly used in teacher education programs, like keeping a reflective journal, would fall under this aspect of ethical identity. For practicing teachers, these shaping practices will often occur outside the classroom through, for example, engaging in particular forms of ongoing professional learning. These self-practices can open a space for discourse and an awareness of the contingency and constructedness of teachers' knowledge and thinking.

(Clarke, 2008, p. 191)

Ultimately, coming to an understanding that my teaching practice was both personal and political led to my valuing various self-practices as a means of defining my teacher identity. Many of the methods described within this thesis required me to be critical of my approach and to think about my practice in terms of its ethical dimension. "Ethical deliberation is bound up with the operation of critique. And critique finds that it cannot go forward without a consideration of how the deliberating subject comes into being and how a deliberating subject might actually live or appropriate a set of norms" (Butler, 2005, p. 8). Britzman (1994, p. 71) makes a similar point: "the politics of identity refers to questions of what it is that structures identity and how identity is narrated." She further writes:

Unless the narrations of practice are read through theories of discourse—that is, as representing particular ideological interests, orientations, communities and meanings, and as deploying relations of power—there remains the danger of viewing the teacher's practical knowledge as unencumbered by authoritative discourse and as unmediated by the relations of power and authority that work through every teaching and research practice. (Britzman, 1994, p. 72)

Reflecting on the daily journaling process, I can now see instances where, despite my best intentions, by creating opportunities for students to lead workshops and work independently in groups, I was in fact ensuring that certain students would dominate over others. Sometimes, by structuring learning experiences in certain ways, I am able to ensure a degree of participation and agency by all class members. If I do not provide certain roles and structures within project-based learning, many students do not participate in a meaningful way, as more vocal or enthusiastic group members tend to take control of group work. For example, during the *Student as Educator* project, I did not give students within each group formal roles. Later, I found myself struggling to motivate and involve certain students during the group preparation phase of this project. At the same time, I found it difficult to prevent other members from dominating the decision-making process. By reflecting on these experiences by reading my journals through the post-structuralist theories of discourse I was becoming familiar with, it became clear to me that power relations within the classroom were connected to categories of gender and race. In short, the students who tended to dominate the class were white and male. Meanwhile, the three students who had the most difficulty contributing to project based learning were all women of color. While the reasons for these students' reluctance to participate fully within their groups are complex, there can be no doubt of the corollary relationship between gender, race and status within the drama classroom. As a result of this and because I was made more aware of this problem through journaling, during our *Production Team Project* that came later in the semester each group member was given a role and list of responsibilities within the group. I observed students who had difficulty contributing during the *Student as Educator Project* become excited by the autonomy they were granted by being responsible for a specific

portion of the project. Making small changes within the design of each project to make each group member accountable spread the responsibility among more group members and gave students who otherwise might have let others take the lead contribute in a meaningful way. This is only one example of realization I gained through the self-practice of daily journaling.

5.4 Conclusion

At the beginning of this chapter, I briefly described an incident that was and continues to be common place during the process of writing this thesis. Being certain of an idea or thought and sure that numerous examples of classroom experiences from my data-gathering semester would support what I needed to say, I would struggle to find any record of the right observations in my daily journal. The incomplete nature of my journal demonstrates the reflexive nature of critical self-study research (Giroux, 2004). Because research and data collection happen simultaneously, my understanding of the nature of power relations continues to grow and is informed by both my lived daily experience in the classroom as well as literature research. My research helps to shape my practice and the way I record my reflections. As a result, my journal constantly falls short of accurately describing important comments made by students during class discussions, descriptions of how certain students dominate group work, observations regarding the participation of marginalized students. This is partially because subjectivity is produced through minute and unacknowledged discourses that are impossible to trace at every moment.

The narrative through which I define myself as a teacher is ongoing and incomplete. It is shaped by the discourses that have produced me as a subject, but also by the ways I have learned to refuse certain subjectivities in order to gain agency in the way

I perform my role as a teacher. Foucault describes the actions of the agentic subject as being concerned with the 'art of existence' (Foucault, 1985). The formation of the self is aesthetic, not because we seek to make ourselves beautiful, but that we "relate to ourselves and to our lives as to a material that can be formed and transformed" (O'Leary, 2002, p. 138). My choices about when and how I exercise the limited agency I have are informed by an understanding of ethics which suggests that reflective self-work allows subjects to redefine the way they perform their roles as subjects. If my life is to be seen as a material that I have the required agency to form, then "it is imperative.... that I think about that form, develop the techniques that will help me transform it, and that I reflect upon the ends, the teloi, to which I direct it" (O'Leary, 2002, p. 138). It is this end point that I will reflect on in more detail in Chapter Six.

CHAPTER VI:

Telos

I sit at the back of the gymnasium as our entire student body trickles in to take their seats facing the stage. My non-existent fingernails are evidence of the struggle I have gone through over the past month to let students take more creative control. The lights dim, and I take my seat near the back of the crowd, as a student steps out from behind the curtains to introduce the show.

6.1 The Collective Creation

What transpires during the last part of the semester through our Collective Creation unit represents the culmination of hard work. It also represents the most advanced form of student led work we experienced as a class. The Collective Creation (Glenys & Reinbold, 1985) process by definition is democratic. It was created as a practical method for enabling students to create, practice and perform their own creative work centered on a common theme. In Chapter Two, I explored my past experiences working with the Collective Creation (Glenys & Reinbold, 1985) format with drama classes, and explained areas of discomfort surrounding the form. I also described the success I had with this form with a previous group of students. In this chapter, I will describe The Collective Creation as explored during my data-gathering semester as this experience represents my strongest effort to provide opportunities for the class to take a very high degree of control over the creative process.

Handing over complete authority to students is not the approach I wish to pursue. Instead, by being aware of the need to structure work in such a way as to maximize student input into the creative process, by maintaining the focus on growth and learning as opposed to performance, and by constantly being aware of my internal struggle not to take control over the process, I hope to become a more effective and democratic facilitator of this kind of theatre work.

Reflecting on the ways I respond to students during the preparation phase of our Collective Creation, I believe there are subtle but important differences in negotiating control with students during this project this semester. While the process follows the same basic structure as before, this time I feel more comfortable in letting students take full ownership over the creative process. Many groups create scenes I privately think are not very strong, but when I see the enthusiasm the groups display towards the scene, I have very little difficulty stepping back and letting students run with certain ideas. In the past, I would have stepped in and suggested that students try other directions.

There are many times during this Collective Creation process where I step in and exercise power over students. As a way to ensure that students explore a variety of theatre forms and to give students the opportunity to work with as many people in the class as possible, I add certain structures to our scene creation phase:

After the first day of this process I realized that I need to give more guidance and so I have given groups a new challenge each day (use of tableaux and mime, use of inner voice, physicalization, breaking the fourth wall, personification, etc). This really helped to improve the quality and variety of the scenes. Each day, groups would go to the list of brainstormed scenes and either choose one or create a new scene from scratch, leave the class and go to a part of the school to work as a group. Each day I chose a different group to work with and so far have ended up giving quite a bit of guidance. After creating a planned improvisation of their scene and practicing it, they return and for the last 15 minutes of the class, groups share their scenes. Twice I have arranged the class in groups, and twice I let the class choose their own groups. (Research Notes, January 12, 2012)

There are obvious times when teachers need to step in to offer ideas and support to help supplement and improve scenes within the collective process. The key difference in my responses this time around is that the core ideas for each scene come directly from students. I make some suggestions to help improve certain scenes, but the focus for me becomes very much about the process instead of the inevitable product. While I have always made process oriented drama work the backbone of my program, in the past, when public performance opportunities arose, I became increasingly concerned with the aesthetic of the performance. Often, as performance dates grew closer, I would adopt the role of director as I sought to tie the pieces together. This time, I find it much easier to step back and allow students to take the leading role in workshopping and perfecting their scenes.

During the scene creation phase, as I observe different groups, I am sometimes required to take action to ensure certain students do not dominate the creative process. I advise groups to choose a director for each scene. This is usually the person who has the vision or idea for the scene. While this does create hierarchies within the group, the logistics of all people taking on the role of director are problematic. Informally, I request groups give new people the opportunity to act as director in each class and that all members also have the right to contribute ideas and input.

Our class is to perform our collective in front of the entire student body during our daily chapel time. In past collectives, as the performance day approaches, I take on more of a directorial role to help ensure smooth transitions and to help refine the performance. I am aware of the need for someone to take on this role, but because of my goal for students to take a leadership role, I hope it is not necessary to do this without their input.

I have one student who, for a variety of reasons, has been missing from class during our scene creation process. She has quite a lot of experience acting, and so for two classes this week we broke into two groups and one group workshopped scenes independently while I workshopped scenes with the remainder of the students. This student acted as a facilitator/director during these times. (Research Notes, January 18, 2012)

Having a student with the experience and confidence required to give feedback to the whole class allows me take a step back during this time. This student is not in many scenes as an actor due to her absence during our scene creation process and in many ways is able to approach the performance with fresh eyes. The students know she is an experienced actor, and for the most part, the final workshopping of the scenes seems to be a respectful negotiation between her and the students who originally created the scenes.

Though the scenes are far from perfect, they represent the students' ideas and work and they are proud of the work they have created. At first they were very reluctant to perform their work, but as the week has gone on, they have been more and more confident. I am really glad that the students have chosen to perform. The performance has demanded a level of focus I have not yet seen from this group. I am excited to see how tomorrow goes! (Research Notes, January 18, 2012)

Certainly, the relative ease with which I am able to let students take more control within the collective process is the result of a semester of gradually giving students more and more opportunities to have a high degree of creative control. Likewise, the more students take this control, the more comfortable I become with stepping back. Further, my daily written reflections focusing on discourses of power and my areas of discomfort allow me to take note of times when I feel the need to use disciplinary power within the

classroom space, as well as times when I experience discomfort with the level of control students have. These reflections allow me to stay focused on my personal goals for the semester and in many cases resist my impulses to exercise power over the class. In short, careful reflection allows me to begin the process of refusing the self.

6.2 Telos

For an action to be “moral,” it must not be reducible to an act or a series of acts conforming to a rule, a law, or a value. Of course all moral action involves a relationship with the reality in which it is carried out, and a relationship with the self. The latter is not simply “self-awareness” but self-formation as an “ethical subject,” a process in which the individual delimits that part of himself that will form the object of his moral practice, defines his position relative to the precept he will follow, and decides on a certain mode of being that will serve as his moral goal. And this requires him to act upon himself, to monitor, test, improve, and transform himself. (Foucault, 1985, p. 28)

Above, Foucault uses the idea of *telos* to suggest that subjects consider the ethical end point they seek, however, achieving this end point remains impossible (Foucault, 1985, p. 85). The aesthetic nature of my ethical practice is to be understood as a “work that is realized over time, which employs a number of techniques which are designed to create a particular kind of order” (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 118). Seeking to embody ethical practice “involves difficult and ongoing work, or craft, which can be practiced by any member of a social body. It is also a work that is undertaken within a specific cultural and historical context, never in isolation” (O’Farrell, 2005, p. 118).

In Foucault's ethics:

philosophy... can be an important technique for self transformation. In the face of, or in opposition to, the forms of subjectivity to which we find ourselves fixed, critical philosophy is a tool that can help us untie the knots of our identity.

(O'Leary, 2002, p. 154)

It is the very nature of approaching my teaching with a critical philosophy that will enable me to enact an ethical practice, in so far as my practice will inevitably become more reflective of my beliefs. Davies suggests that:

Agency is never freedom from discursive constitution of self but the capacity to recognize that constitution and to resist, subvert and change the discourses themselves through which one is being constituted. (1991, p. 44)

In attempting to summarize some of the key understandings that have come to comprise the *telos* of my teaching practice, below I describe some of the things I have learned about the ways power is expressed in the context of schools.

Identities are discursively formed through various subject performances. It is through the discourses that operate within schools that students define the appropriate range of acceptable actions. By situating students in such a way as to present them with a number of acceptable options for conduct, the illusion of freedom is created, while technologies of power ensure a certain type of individual is produced. Within the context of the classroom, students discipline each other and their teachers through various processes of subjectivation. Likewise, teachers exert disciplinary power over students, which in turn influence their subject position and performance.

The body is a site where discourses of power inscribe themselves. As such, bodies are not neutral and are informed by gender, ethnicity, sexuality, class and many other

forms of identification. As such, teaching is a personal and political act. Teachers need to understand the connection between their teaching practice and their political positioning in order to gain a degree of agency over the way they perform their roles. Further, embodied practice requires the recognition of the body as a site through which discourses of power operate. It is important for teachers to be reflective of the ways their bodies contribute to the subjectivation of students.

Subject positions in schools are negotiated through various categories of privilege and marginalization including race, language, gender, sexuality, and socio-economic position. Examples that have been discussed in this work include the ways that international dorm students are relegated to one end of the gymnasium during the school's chapel time or the way the majority of classmates dismiss the experiences relating to gang violence of Cheyenne, a female First Nations student in the Drama 10 class. Educational institutions express disciplinary power on all subjects by creating hierarchical power structures, through the spatial organization of schools, through a real and imagined threat of surveillance, and through various governing practices that oversee and define the performance of all subjects. These power structures allow for the majority position to be constructed as positive, and the minority position to be overlooked or seen as negative.

All of the ways that teachers and students are discursively produced within the larger institution points to the limited agency subjects are able to express. Subjectivities are constituted through institutions through various forces of governmentality, requiring all subjects to perform in prescribed ways. Despite the limited agency of subjects, through constant and ongoing critical reflection, subjects can exercise a degree of agency. This requires the agentic subject to refuse particular subjectivities, to define their

position, and to decide on a mode of being that will serve as their goal.

Providing less structure and giving students more freedom in the work they do benefits some students while magnifying the marginal position of others. The invitation to openness and vulnerability in any form is always a risk for non-dominant participants because the invitation alone is never enough to overcome the social structures that are so predetermining that they can hardly be seen by normative groups, let alone named and changed, no matter how good the intentions or careful the planning.

Finally, it is worth noting that Drama as a subject in high schools offers a unique space to challenge and explore subject positions by focusing on the lived experiences of characters and their emotional processes.

Through reflecting upon my practice, both through a narrative self-study into my intellectual history and through a careful analysis of one semester's work, I have new understandings about my subject identity and my practice. Below is some of what I have learned about myself as a teacher through this self-study:

1. My initial goals regarding power sharing were misguided in that I expected to find effective ways to give near complete control over the learning process to students. I now know there are times when I need to create spaces of freedom in the classroom to support creative processes, and there are times when I need to structure student work and even exert disciplinary power over students in order to share certain skills to ensure students can all participate in a meaningful way. Further, the way power circulates within institutions is complex and expressed from a variety of sources. This suggests that a student having complete control over the learning process is never possible.
2. Tracing my intellectual history brought to light many of the processes of

subjectivation that were instrumental in producing my teacher identity. Writing this narrative reinforced my pedagogical beliefs about learning, as well as my positioning against oppression.

3. At times the disciplinary power I exert over students should be to ensure that students who have less status within the class are able to contribute in meaningful ways, especially in the context of a classroom where status is connected to race, gender, and socio-economic status.
4. Exploring my areas of discomfort has made me more aware of the ways I have been discursively produced as a teacher. Being mindful of these discomforts, forces me to resist certain subjectivities.
5. Students in the classroom do not always seem comfortable with taking control of their own learning. This is partially, I suspect, because they have come into the class with expectations regarding how schooling works and are not accustomed to having a high degree of control. Having control is not necessarily easy. When students do not respond well to projects and assignments where they have a high degree of control, they exert their agency by giving the control of the class back that requires me to do most of the work and decision-making.
6. The more students become accustomed to having control over their own creative processes, the more effectively they are able to work independently and in groups with little guidance or surveillance. I have learned that students need to be introduced to these opportunities gradually. It is unrealistic to expect that students have complete control over their work. My role is to support students in such a way that ensures a high level of participation from all students, and to encourage and engage students to approach theatre forms that challenge normative

assumptions.

7. Many of the inequalities that are discursively reproduced in the classroom stem from the institutionalized ways school promotes competition. The binary division of winner and loser is reinforced through pressures to succeed academically; by the value placed on competitive sport within school cultures; and through all the seen and unseen ways that construct some students as successful and others as failures. While the existence of the drama class within a competitive framework means I cannot eliminate the ways I reproduce competition, I can begin to reduce the competitive framework by focusing on creative processes over final productions, by encouraging students to participate in their own grading process and by carefully using language that focuses on growth and skill development. I can also begin to use the drama class as a space to foster the development of emotional intelligence, a skill set that is not valued within traditional modes of education. Unpacking the ways power relations are produced involves teaching that develops emotional intelligence, especially work that fosters critical empathy. The drama classroom could be an important space to do this kind of work.
8. Language is but one of the ways discourses of power effect unequal relations in the classroom. Bodily and spatial relationships between students and between the students and teacher define and reinforce power relations and contribute to the subjectivation of students. Changing traditional spatial relationships and exploring power through exercises on the body, as in image theatre, which allows students to simulate different power relations through tableau and silent movement exercises, can help to undo and challenge unequal relationships.

This self-study has been transformative for my practice. It has changed the way I think about teaching and learning, and the ways I structure learning experiences. I feel the gap between the teacher I am and the teacher I would like to become is getting smaller. I feel more empowered to embrace a critical orientation, positioned against forms of oppression, and I have learned ways of approaching anti-oppressive education with students in the drama classroom. I feel ready to create opportunities that support more students to participate meaningfully in their own creative processes. I am able to acknowledge the ways that I occupy powerful positions of privilege. My body is inscribed with discourses of power through my role as a teacher within the institution of school, through the categories of privilege I embody as a white male, as well as through the choices I make about how to occupy physical space in the classroom in relation to students. Further, these bodily relationships between students and me contribute to the subjectivation of students. I feel prepared to refuse certain subjectivities, to challenge my areas of discomfort, and to adopt a kind of ethical and embodied practice that recognizes the connection between mind, body, and emotion and which requires agency as a necessary tenet of its own subject-hood.

6.3 Recommendations for further study

By examining forms of disciplinary power enacted on subjects by the educational institution where I work, I am exposing many of the ways schools reinforce hierarchical power relations. Understanding the institutional discourses that produce subject identity exposes a number of ways for critical educators to transform their practice. Though this thesis represents my perceptions and experiences, it is likely reflective of the concerns facing many teachers. I have spoken with countless teachers who are frustrated with the

education system. They want to change the way they teach, but feel the limitations of the institution are so great that they are forced to perform their role without reflecting their beliefs about learning. This work is not a model for other teachers to follow to change their practice. Instead it is a description of how I have learned to become grounded in the politics of unequal relations, including my intellectual history, my understanding of literature that is critical of inequality and my reflection on practice. The complexity of this process requires others to make their own way. It is my hope that this thesis can serve as one instance of a teacher researcher doing self-study research.

Future studies might take into account student responses and perceptions to experiments in power sharing in the context of the drama classroom. During my data-gathering semester, I often asked students to respond orally and through their writing to the various exercises and projects we did together. I was often impressed with the thoughtful responses and how easily students were able to identify problems that arose and to speculate possible reasons for them. Of note were the ways students could identify the existing power hierarchies in the context of our classroom. Within traditional models of education, the role of student is to be a passive recipient of teacher knowledge. Disciplinary power is expressed on students so as to place them at the bottom of the hierarchical power structure of educational institutions. Students feel the effects of this domination, and as victims of this oppression, are able to provide valuable insights regarding the way disciplinary power is expressed upon them through the institution. In short, students come into the classroom knowing about power; they have invested themselves heavily within existing power relations. By organizing opportunities for them to exercise freedom, they are experiencing education differently than what they have previously become accustomed to. Sometimes this is exciting for them, but often they

react against this relative freedom, because it makes them uncomfortable. Likewise, in the context of a group where certain students tend to dominate, many of my students expressed concern at the prospect of freedom through their written reflections. Because I am the focus of my own research, I am limited in the ways I could utilize my student's written responses. As such, future studies focusing on the ways students negotiate their own subject positions in the drama classroom might be especially useful.

6.4 Final Words

Charting my journey in this way has provided the nourishment I require to continue exploring, troubling and redefining my teaching practice. I am only just beginning to see the multiplicity of ways that discourses of power circulate in the classroom as well as opportunities to challenge my practice in order to embrace what I define as ethical behavior. Embracing the uncertainty required by a post-structuralist position can be both frustrating and exciting. If I am to assume the fixed position that “teaching is successful when students learn exactly what we said beforehand that they must learn” then teaching becomes impossible. However, If I am to define teaching as “ a process that not only gives students the knowledge and skills that matter in society, but also asks students to examine the political implications of that knowledge and skills, then we should expect that there will always be more to our teaching than we intended” (Kumashiro, 2009, p.128).

I must navigate the constantly shifting terrain of my teaching practice carefully, questioning my every move, being prepared to change course to adapt to the changing subjectivities in the classroom. I cannot hope to achieve an ethical end point where I become the teacher I seek to be. Instead, I must find joy in the journey of becoming:

learning new ways to trouble my practice, and of renegotiating my subject position.

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Appendix A

Ethics email conversation

>>> Carol Schick 8/15/2011 2:46 PM >>>

Hi Meigan,

I am inquiring about the request I sent you a short time ago concerning whether my student needs to seek ethics approval for his research. I realize this matter may not have been discussed yet, but in case it has, I was wondering about the outcome. Kris and I are meeting later this week and will talk about courses of action in any event.

Perhaps you can let me know when I might expect a response.

Best regards,

Carol Schick, PhD
Associate Professor
Faculty of Education
University of Regina
Regina, SK S4S 0A2
306-585-5147

>>> Meigen Schmidt 8/16/2011 8:57 AM >>>

Hi Carol,

I have just returned from holidays, hence the delay in responding to you. The acting Chair and I have discussed your message and have agreed that the project does not require ethical approval. As the student has mentioned any identifiable information that may enable others to identify individuals should be anonymized in the research paper.

Good luck with the project.

Regards,
Meigen Schmidt
Senior Research Officer
Office of Research Services
Research & Innovation Centre Room 109
University of Regina
Regina, Sask. S4S 0A2
(306) 337-2372
F (306) 585-4893
meigen.schmidt@uregina.ca

Appendix B

Drama 10 Theatre History Workshops - Student as Educator

You are going to be assuming the role of an expert in a specific genre of theatre from history. Your job is to plan a workshop that will allow your classmates to learn some skills and content related to the genre.

In groups of 2-4 you will choose a genre of theatre from history to focus on. Your job will be to educate the class on this. You will not simply do a presentation on the history of this genre of theatre. Remember this is drama class! Your workshop will consist of 4 parts:

I. Presentation- A presentation is not simply about telling your audience about something. It is about engaging and involving your audience in something. This means finding creative ways to involve your audience in the learning process while giving them key information. Examples of this are providing visual representations (pictures/ sounds/ videos), it might mean giving them handouts, or asking them key questions, and drawing out learning through Socratic questioning, brainstorming, or small group discussions. The possibilities for instructional strategies are endless. Be creative. In your short presentation, be sure to include

- * A description of key elements of this type of theatre
- * The societal context for the evolution of this type of theatre.
- * Purpose for this type of theatre (Social/Political/ Entertainment).
- * A short history of the form or genre.
- * Other interesting information/facts regarding this information.

II. An example of this type of theatre- This could either be through the performance (through the production of a scene either written to emulate the form, or from an actual play that would fit into this form)

III. Skill building - Also as a part of the presentation, your group will be responsible for conducting a range of activities and skill building games that relate closely to the form of theatre. Your group is free to look online for inspiration, but are encouraged to invent your own activities which relate in some way to your genre. Be sure to provide the rationale for the activities connection to the genre.

IV. Reflection- This can be very short. This is simply a short time with the class at the end of the workshop to touch base, and reflect upon the learning experience. What are some of the key things to remember? What things did you learn? What was successful about the workshop? Areas for improvement?

You are to provide the teacher with a lesson plan for your workshop that includes:

1. A list of Objectives- what is you would like the students to learn or be able to do as a result of your workshop?

2. A written description of the genre or form with all required elements described above. This is to include a list of sources used, cited in MLA format.
- 3 A sequenced plan of the workshop as well as estimated times for each portion
4. A script for the sample scene

***Length of workshop 20-25 minutes.**

You may choose from the list of forms and genres below. There are of course, many other genres of theatre. If you have an idea for a genre that is not on the list below, please pass it by me first.

***Mime (Mr. Bean, Charlie Chaplain, Marcel Marceau)**

***Comedia del arte (stock character theatre)**

***Elizabethan (“Do you bite your thumb at me sir?”)**

***Bertolt Brecht (“theatre as collective experiment”)**

***Theatre of the Oppressed and Forum theatre (Augusto Boal)**

***Stanislovski and the Moscow Art Theatre (Method Acting and Realism)**

***Theatre of the Absurd (“Logical construction and argument gives way to irrational and illogical speech”)**

***Musical Theatre (“When emotion is too strong to speak you, sing, and when emotion is too strong to sing you dance”)**

***Guerilla theatre (“the act of spontaneous, surprise performances in unlikely public spaces to an unsuspecting audience”)**

***Greek Theatre (Tragedy/ Satire)**

You will be graded based on the attached rubric.

Appendix C

Drama 10 - Production Team Project

In our study of the Play *The Laramie Project* you will be placed in a production team.

Each group will be assigned an act of the play. As a group you will have to set your own reading quotas and deadlines, and coordinate roles and responsibilities with each other. Provided for each group is a worksheet that describes the roles of each member of the production team. You have the choice whether to split up and divide responsibilities or do all the work together.

Process

1. Read through all the job description worksheets as a group.
2. Do a complete read through of your Act of the play. Stopping to discuss important moments, ideas for staging, character observations, etc.
3. Choose a few scenes from your Act to produce (designate roles, develop detailed stage blocking for, practice and perform).
4. Complete role specific requirements as listed below.
5. The project will culminate with a group presentation in which you will share your **1) plot synopsis 2) analysis, 3) set and 4) costume designs and drawings 5) staging suggestions 6) posters and play bills 7) as well as a presentation of your selected scenes.**

Director: You are responsible for coordination of tasks for your entire group. You need to compose a letter to school teachers bringing their classes to your production. The letter will outline what your vision for the play is, including commentary on staging, thematic analysis, brief plot synopsis, etc.

Production Crew: 1) Stage manager - Create a list of required props, 2) lighting and sound director - selections for musical choices, a lighting plan with a cue list for lighting, 3) costume designer - detailed sketches of costumes for each character, 4) set designer - detailed sketches of set design.

Advertising Group: Design an advertising poster, create the playbill, write the production notes – including some historical references both for the context of the play but also on the plays history and the playwright’s biography.

Actors: Write a back-story on their characters, provide a written subtext for the scene you are performing for the class.

Your group will be assessed using the following rubric: