

UNSETTLED
Embodying Transformative Learning and Intersectionality in Higher Education:
Popular Theatre as Research with International Graduate Students

by

Catherine Etmanski
B.A., Simon Fraser University, 1999
M.A., University of British Columbia, 2003

A Dissertation Submitted in Partial Fulfillment of the
Requirements for the Degree of

DOCTOR OF PHILOSOPHY

In the Department of Educational Psychology & Leadership Studies (EPLS)

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University of Victoria

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(Studies in Policy and Practice)

Dr. Shauna Butterwick, External Member
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Abstract:

This dissertation documents an action-oriented, arts-based doctoral study that used popular theatre to investigate graduate students' experiences at the University of Victoria (UVic) in Canada. The research question asks, *what are the contradictions between the welcoming multicultural discourses of Canada and the experiences of international graduate students?* This question is explored with a total of twenty-four graduate students, representing fourteen countries, including Canada, and ten departments across campus. These students participated in pilot work, interviews, focus groups, in-depth theatre workshops, and a public performance entitled, UNSETTLED. The process of creating interactive forum theatre with six graduate students and one student's infant is outlined in depth, as is performance at UVic on November 8, 2006. The community impact of UNSETTLED and the researcher and actors' learning-healing experiences are highlighted.

The key contributions of this research are practical, theoretical, and methodological. Practically, this research contributes to the ongoing dialogue and concrete efforts around already identified challenges of internationalization. The outcome

is an entirely student-driven effort that is unique both in content (due to the graduate student perspective represented) and in form (theatre). Theoretically, this research contributes to the areas of transformative learning and intersectionality. These theoretical insights reposition the ‘international student’ from being a person solely in need of services, to being one of many potential agents of change. An intersectional analysis points to a need to simultaneously address the diverse struggles of other graduate students, staff, administrators, and faculty in increasingly globalized universities and communities. Methodologically, this study expresses the catalytic and dialogical power of the intersection of research with art, education, community development, and activism, contributing to the fields of both arts-based research and action-oriented, participatory research and the places where these overlap.

Table of Contents

Supervisory Committee.....	ii
Abstract.....	iii
Table of Contents	v
List of Tables	ix
List of Figures	ix
Acknowledgments.....	x
Dedication	xiii
Epigraph.....	xiv
Frontispiece: Epistemology of a Record Collection, the Opening Act.....	xv
Act 1 Setting the Stage.....	1
Act 2 Introducing the Context.....	6
Internationalization at the University of Victoria	6
Conceptual Framework.....	10
Graduate Student Experience.....	10
The Welcoming Multicultural Discourses of Canada.....	12
Diversity and Difference.....	14
Racism.....	16
Research Focus and Question	21
Locating Myself in the Study.....	22
Limitations and Contributions of the Study.....	24
Summary	27
Act 3 Intersectionality.....	28
Emergence of the Intersectional Perspective	30
Challenges of the Intersectional Approach	33
Overcoming Hierarchical, Binary and Centre-Margin Thinking.....	39
Horizontal and Internalized Oppression	41
Embracing Intersectionality: One of Many Ways Forward	46
Summary	49
Act 4 Transformative Learning.....	50
Mezirow's Contribution: Perspective Transformation	51
Interaction with Art.....	53
Cultural Immersion	56

Pedagogy of Transformative Learning	60
Spiritual Dimensions of Transformative Learning	63
Transformative Pedagogy as an Act of Love.....	65
Summary	68
Act 5 Methodology	69
An Orientation toward Action and Participation	70
Arts-Based Research	74
Art as Method	75
Art as Representation	80
Validity	85
Summary	90
Act 6 Theatre as Method.....	92
Popular Theatre	93
Theatre of the Oppressed	94
Theatre for Living	97
Research Methods	99
Interpretation.....	100
Balancing.....	101
Image Theatre.....	102
What's inside this for you?	103
Circles.....	105
Summary.....	106
Act 7 Data Collection Process	108
Summary of Research Process.....	109
Participant Engagement	112
Workshops	116
Application of Methods	119
Summary	120
Intermission.....	122
Announcement on Representation	122
Act 8 Collective Process of Analysis.....	128
Accumulation.....	129
Generating Themes	130
The Initial Plays	131
Transition to Character Development.....	138
Developing the Scenes	144
Summary	146
Act 9 UNSETTLED.....	147
Programme.....	147
Cast	147

Act 10 Individual Analysis	148
Sources of Data.....	148
Analysis of Data.....	151
Seeking Contradictions.....	152
A False Start.....	153
‘Sitting With’ the Data.....	154
Generating Themes.....	156
Analysis Through Reflexivity and Writing.....	158
Expanding Dichotomies.....	160
Further Reflexivity and Finally Letting Go.....	162
Summary.....	163
Act 11 The Potential for Transformative Learning.....	165
Learning the Lesson in the Struggle	166
Learning to Laugh.....	170
Learning Empathy.....	174
Learning to Push Back.....	180
Learning to Raise Your Voice	183
Learning in Community.....	188
Summary.....	192
Act 12 An Intersectional Analysis of a Globalized University.....	194
Knots.....	195
Acknowledging the Diversity of Racialized Students	196
Acknowledging and Engaging Diversity	203
Acknowledging the Antagonist’s Struggle	209
Playing the Antagonist.....	211
Replacing the Antagonist.....	214
Understanding the Antagonist.....	216
Acknowledging that We are all Connected	218
Summary.....	220
Act 13 Embodying Transformative Learning and Intersectionality in Higher Education	
.....	222
International Students as Transformative Learners	223
Building Community through Relationship.....	224
Active Listening and Inclusion.....	225
Intentionally Uncomfortable Learning Opportunities.....	226
The Reality of Cultural Adjustment.....	227
Boundary-Crossing Methodology.....	228
Transformative Research as an Act of Love.....	229
Summary.....	229

Drawing the Curtain: The Final Act	230
References.....	234
Appendix A: Frame.....	250
Appendix B: Director’s Notes	251
Appendix C: Participant Consent Form for Actors in the Final Performance	258
Appendix D: Audience Member Consent Form	261

List of Tables

Table 7.1	Timeline of Key Events	109
Table 7.2	Contact with Participants Throughout Research	115
Table 7.3	Summary of Pilot Workshop	117
Table 7.4	Summary of Summer Workshops	118
Table 7.5	Summary of Weekend Play-Building Workshop	119
Table 10.1	Initial Analytic Framework for Student Struggles	159

List of Figures

Figure 7.1	Departments Represented by Participants	116
Figure 8.1	List of Themes Identified by Weekend Workshop Participants	131
Figure 8.2	First Initial Scene Presented by the Group of Two	135
Figure 8.3	Second Initial Presented by the Group of Two	136
Figure 8.4	First Initial Scene Presented by the Group of Four	136
Figure 8.5	Second Initial Scene Presented by the Group of Four	137
Figure 8.6	Transcript of Group Transition to Character Development	141
Figure 10.1	Excerpt of Early Notes from Research Journal	153
Figure 10.2	Initial Themes	157
Figure 10.3	Semiotic Square Used for Expanding Dichotomies	161

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What are the qualities of a supportive learning community for graduate students?

Allow me to describe some of the people in mine:

They are people who nourish you from conception, and support your decisions even when they mean you won't be living close to home. They are people who encourage creativity. They are people who are not afraid to tell you, respectfully, when you are wrong. They are people who tell others about your attributes so that you will be welcomed with excitement instead of ignored or met with suspicion. They are people who take your ideas seriously. They are people who fight for you behind closed doors. They are people who know that the purpose of feedback is to help you learn. They are people who admit when they don't know the answer. They are people who know when to offer to help and when to let you make your own mistakes. They are people who forgive you when you do make mistakes. They are people who recognize that being a student is *work* that needs to be funded. They are people who understand that you are on a journey that extends beyond the walls of academe. They are people who don't laugh at your idealism, but use it to enrich their own. And they are people who encourage you to do the very things of which you are afraid.

This degree will be awarded in my name, but I *know* that the efforts behind this award are not mine alone. If I could list all the individuals from whom I have learned, what each person has taught me, and how each has made this work possible, I am certain the number of pages in this document would double. We truly are interconnected.

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Well everyone, ***we did it!***

Dedication

To Darlene, who opened the door.

All the world's a stage,
And all the men and women merely players;
They have their exits and their entrances,
And one [woman] in [her] time plays many parts.

~ *Shakespeare, As You Like It*

Act *vb* **1** : to perform by action esp. on the stage
 2 : to take action
(Merriam Webster)

I had to tell my ordinary life we were growing apart;
I was falling in love with magic.

~ *Amy Rubin, Vancouver Island Artist*

(Formerly a Researcher in Psychology and Epidemiology)

Frontispiece: Epistemology of a Record Collection, the Opening Act

SIDE A:

Over the last five years I have been exploring the mountainous territory of Academe, an inter-national traveller of sorts, with a doctoral student visa. My guides for this expedition—people called Academics, or the more powerful ones called Committee Members—have generously been trying to acculturate me to the norms, values, beliefs and practices of their land. One of the rituals they have shared is a practice called naming your Epistemology. I have encountered this ritual a few times now and, from what I can gather, the objective is to search through the literature written by the ancestors of this land to discover which of them have written theories about knowledge I believe to be true.

Although I try to engage with an open mind and a sense of cultural relativism, this process of discerning how I know what I know according to what has been sanctioned in the land of Academe is still a somewhat foreign process to me. The implicit message is that knowledge is created in this land and somehow radiates outwards into the experiences of hinter-communities, families, and individuals. I have always assumed this flow of knowledge to be more reciprocal sharing between Academe and other lands.

My guides on this journey *know* that many theories of knowledge exist elsewhere. It seems, though, that the long and arduous process of obtaining Academic Citizenship (indicated to others by the letters p, h, and d) makes other Academics more apt to defend this ritual—a sentiment I am beginning to understand as my visa is nearing expiration. Perhaps, some

people have forgotten the knowledges of the lands from whence they came, or else they have replaced these with the knowledges accepted here. Others and still 'Others' have had their own knowledges Validated and Credentialed, a process I have noticed is sometimes ridiculed and possibly feared by some inner circle members of the Faculty Club.

A few years back, during a late night shopping errand, I was pondering this dilemma when somewhere midway along the soup aisle I unthinkingly burst into song in unison with the overhead speakers: *"you can spend all your time making money... you can spend all your love making time."* In that moment, I *knew* something to be true. You see, I was not told about the wonderings and wanderings of Western Academic philosophers at my mother's breast. Instead, I was brought into this world in the presence of my parents' Record Collection.

SIDE B:

I remember the exact location of this collection in the nineteen forties-style, stucco-covered Vancouver rental home where I lived until I was eleven years old. Walking into our home, just past the piles of rubber boots, second-hand coats and cross-country skis in our entrance, you could immediately see the bamboo-blinded front window of our living room. This window overlooked West 33rd Avenue—the street where I learned to ride my training-wheel-equipped, rusty red bicycle and the same street that, in the springtime, turned pink with cherry blossoms. Against the eastern wall rested our sagging but cozy, brown and beige, paisley-print foam couch. Directly opposite the couch, the western wall hosted a *rea*/fireplace surrounded by faded taupe and yellow tiles with a mantelpiece and oversized mirror above. On that mantel sat a family heirloom: an antique, ebonised wooden clock, which, as much as I would

it, never did work properly. (In fact, it was prone to chiming at obscure moments of the day, particularly, I recall, after I had been playing with it.) Then, to the right of this fireplace, below a small hexagonal window, under a stained-glass lamp, in the corner of the room sat... the treasured Record Collection.

The cabinet that housed this collection, and upon which sat the Record Player, was made from 1" by 3" planks of yellow pine. The two doors slid back and forth along grooves carved into the front of the cabinet and could only be pushed open to one side or the other. Finding my record of choice in this cabinet required careful manoeuvring of my little arms. If my record was not on one side of the cabinet, I would have to place one hand between the last two records I could see, while gently sliding both doors over and reaching my other arm around until my hands met in the middle. With my other hand in place, I could then push the doors aside with my first hand and continue flipping through the dog-eared cardboard covers.

I spent hours in that Site of knowledge discovery. Sitting on the floor in front of that cabinet I learned the connection between the colours, images, and faces on certain album covers and the sounds of my favourite songs. In the same way that I later learned to use the index of a book, I remember learning that each concentric circle in the vinyl meant the beginning of a new song and that, with a steady hand and accurate referencing and counting skills, I could place the needle at the exact point where my desired song began. I remember being indoctrinated into the ritual of wiping away dust and fingerprints from the album by pouring a few drops of record cleanser into the back of a velvety brush and then applying gentle pressure with the brush on the spinning disk.

I didn't just learn the workings of a record player in that Site, however. When I acquired new forms of literacy, I also learned the difference between A Side and B Side, which songs could be found on each, and how to gain a greater awareness of the song-writer's *intentions*, instead of only my own *interpretations*.

For example, wearing my favourite blue dress while spinning in circles and waving my hands in the air, I was certain that I was

The *double* with the blue dress, blue dress

Double with the blue dress on!

Until I read Bruce Springsteen and the E Street Band's rendition of this song and they convinced me that, in fact, I was

The *devil* with the blue dress, blue dress, blue dress

Devil with the blue dress on!

As I was not raised in the Christian faith, that realisation was not as devastating as it might have otherwise been!

While not explicitly Christian, many of these songs did contain specific social and cultural values. Protest was a recurrent theme, although many of these songs' teachings only became relevant in the context of my own life.

And it's one, two, three

What are we fightin' for?

Don't ask me I don't give a damn

Next stop is...

Well, *Afghanistan* has more meaning for me than Vietnam ever did.

(Country Joe & the Fish)

At times during the summer months I was towed in a wagon to hear some of the songs from the Record Collection live at folk festivals. At these conferences I learned that music was not only a means of conveying knowledges about the world, but also a means of inspiring people to come together and work for change.

Listening to these records as a child I also absorbed many messages about love, which had little significance until someone broke my dramatic teenaged heart:

Now come on, come on, come on, come on and

Take it!

Take another little piece of my heart now, baby

Break it!

Break another little bit of my heart now, darling, yeah (Janis Joplin)

Then, moving on from this first love I found solace knowing that

Life don't clickety-clack

Down a straight-line track

It comes together and

It comes apart (Ferron)

And the next few times around I tried another strategy

All I really, really want our love to do

Is to bring out the best in me and in you too...

Although I am still challenged in finding a balance between

Oh I hate you some, I hate you some

I love you some

Oh I love you

When I forget about me (Joni Mitchell)

Over the years I have also filtered other kinds of struggles of the heart through the messages in these songs. During the process of my parents' divorce some of our family's assets became liquidated in order to pay for years of legal fees. One of our so-called assets is the small cabin my parents built (my father through the labour of construction and my mother through the labour of child-rearing) in the woods just off the power line road that runs along Anderson Lake, BC. Having lived in cities most of my life, this is the only Site of Knowledge where I know the smell of the earth, the depth and sound of the creek during specific seasons, and the cyclical growth patterns and colours of the surrounding plants and trees. This land holds deep spiritual and emotional value for me and for all members of my immediate family—a relationship that cannot be described using rational language.

When the possibility arose that this land and associated knowledges might be liquidated, the only words that held meaning were

I have dreamed on this mountain

Since first I was my mother's daughter
And you can't just take my dreams away – not with me watching
No you can't just take my dreams away – without me fighting
No you can't just take my dreams away (Holly Near)

We still have access to this Site of Knowledge, for which I am thankful.

Over the years, I have begun to wonder about other people who share a connection, perhaps an even deeper and longer historical connection, with this land. As the cabin we built is midway between the places I have learned to call D'Arcy and Seton Portage, I do not know whether it is in In-SHUCK-ch N'Quat'qua or Lillooet territory, or both, but I do know I need to find out. In this way, the teachings of love that emerged partly through song have become more universal.

Thinking about my own struggle on this land in the context of the surrounding Treaty Negotiations, I have become astutely aware that many albums were missing from my parents' Record Collection. As I have come to understand the limitations of many Academic forefathers, I can now hear that most of the musicians of my childhood were also bearded 'white' men. And, the few women among them sang primarily from the location of Eurocentric (North American) feminism. Therefore, these songs and the album cover images to which they are connected in my mind carry an implicit worldview, one that produced, for

example, the mystic representation depicted on the cover of the very Eagles record that inspired this piece (Eagle Feathers and all).¹

Alas, in my own fumbling way, I have tried to find new albums—new knowledges and understandings—in order to add to the collection passed on from my parents; although I realise, too, that much knowledge cannot be captured between the spherical ridges of a record, a realization that brought me to the land of Academe. At the same time, I must acknowledge the place from which I have come. The knowledge generated through this Record Collection has continued to be transmitted to me long past the point of memory in my Vancouver living room. Hearing these songs, whether in grocery stores or projecting from the media player of my home computer, causes a deep physical reaction in me: a slight clenching of my heart, swelling of my throat, and, on certain occasions, tears. This is an embodied sense of knowing. Since I trust this way of knowing, when an Academic's words cause the same bodily response, I *know* I should pay attention.

This is *my* epistemology and it has prepared me well for my journey in this strange land.

¹ This playful auto-ethnography was originally written for an Aboriginal Research Methods class in the Faculty of Education. The original piece of art was positioned inside the 1975 Eagles album "One of these Nights" (distributed by WEA Music of Canada). Thank you to Dr. Peter Cole for his inspiration.

Act 1 Setting the Stage

On the weekend of September 8 to 10, 2006, seven adult learners and one infant came together for the first time. At that point, our only common experience was of being (or being the child of) graduate students in an increasingly globalized university context. Fuelled by passion, increasing relationship, and a smorgasbord of treats, we worked together—on a shoestring student budget, but with much goodwill—to produce a poem and interactive theatre production in three parts. We titled our performance, UNSETTLED.

This group came together as a result of a call for participants for my doctoral study. The people who became the cast of UNSETTLED and who responded to my invitation to play, experiment, and do this work together, included:

Zhou He: an ecologist and animal rights activist researching the intersection of Chinese literary works about nature with Ecological Philosophy. Reading Farley Mowatt's "Never Cry Wolf" helped inspire her to become a vegetarian and come to study in Canada.

Susan: an educator who has worked to advance international perspectives in curriculum at UVic and who is researching the impact of BC high school ESL curricula on student achievement. She is a *foodie*, a sports enthusiast, and a novice fashion designer.

Lawrence: a poet and documentary film maker in China who is researching how the current generation of Chinese film-makers uses the venue of international film festivals to

overcome censorship laws. His daughter was born in Canada; he and his family members are transnational citizens.

Coco: a Linguist and cultural ambassador with a passion for teaching. She challenges her students to perfect their language skills and, at the same time, gently encourages Canadians to become better listeners. She is also an avid cyclist.

Maria-Luisa: a child advocate researching how women who have experienced sexualized violence use tattooing as a means of reclaiming their bodies and gendered identities. She was born in Canada, but she self-identifies as bicultural.

Phyllis: a teacher who has worked in Rwanda, Zanzibar, and in a Dene Tha community in Northern Alberta. She is exploring ways to design curriculum that is less prescriptive, less Euro-centric and better able to incorporate teachers' abilities to learn along with their students. She is also the proud mother of baby Margaret.

Margaret: an occasional actor in this production who was part of the play-building process. She reminded the troupe to maintain balance by taking the time to eat, cry, rest, and get to know one another better over unstructured conversations. Over the course of this research she acquired her two front teeth.

In addition, many people did essential behind-the-scenes work to help this production come together and deserve an introduction. The most prominent of these members of the backstage crew were:

- Nelson, Margaret's father and Phyllis' partner who was there throughout.
- Maria-Luisa and my partners who, in addition to moral support, also lent a hand with set up, clean up, and driving.
- Lawrence's partner and daughter, and many other friends also supported us from near and far.

On November 8, 2006 exactly one hundred members of the Greater Victoria Community, predominantly University of Victoria (UVic) students, staff, and faculty, gathered together to participate in UNSETTLED and dialogue about multiculturalism in Canada, international education, and internationalization at UVic. I targeted educational audiences in my advertising for the performance and, as a result, the majority of people in the room self-identified (by show of hands) as educators in some capacity: as professors, sessional instructors, teaching assistants at UVic, or as arts-based or community-based educators and teachers in the public school system. The November performance of UNSETTLED was the major outcome of this doctoral study, though the ripple-effects have lasted much longer and may continue still.

Finally, although the students described above gave over thirty volunteer hours to the creation and performance of UNSETTLED, prior to this group coming together I also conducted pilot work, interviewed, held focus group discussions, and in-depth theatre workshops with eighteen other international and immigrant graduate students. In total, the

students who participated in this study represented ten departments on campus and originated from fourteen countries around the world, including Canada.² The pages and images of this dissertation contain the story of this research.

This document is organized as follows:

Act Two introduces the reader to the context of this study, locating me and my research focus in the contradictory relationship between the welcoming multicultural discourses of Canada and the experiences of (international) graduate students.

Acts Three and Four give an overview of the two key concepts that emerged through this study: intersectionality and transformative learning.

Acts Five and Six introduce the action-oriented, participatory, arts-based methodology and the specifics of the theatre methods.

Act Seven provides an overview of the data collection process and is followed by an intermission in which I describe how the results of this study have been represented.

Acts Eight and Nine relate to the embedded participatory process that was part of this research. Act Eight describes the collective process of analysis, while Act Nine provides a video representation of the results of our collective efforts.

Acts Ten through Thirteen relate to the larger structure of this study, the individual pursuit of a doctoral degree. Act Ten describes the individual process of analysis, while Acts Eleven and Twelve present the lessons learned as they relate to the two key concepts: transformative learning and intersectionality. Act Thirteen weaves the theoretical and methodological themes together with a discussion about what an

² Geographic regions are discussed in Act Seven.

institution that supports an intersectional approach to transformative learning might entail.

In the final Act I recount key aspects of the journey before finally drawing the curtain.

Act 2 Introducing the Context

Many Canadians are proud to live in a culturally diverse nation. The concept of multiculturalism is enshrined in the Multiculturalism Act (Government of Canada, 2004) and has become further embedded in institutional policies at national and community levels, for example in University equity policies for students, staff, and faculty. Despite the hope of equality that is at the heart of multiculturalism, there is a growing body of literature that exposes the difficulty and inconsistency of achieving equality in practice (Abu-Laban & Gabriel, 2002; Bannerji, 2000, Lee & Lutz, 2005, Razack, 1998; 2002). Proponents of Critical Race Theory and Transnational Feminism suggest that there is a contradiction between the welcoming discourses of diversity and multiculturalism and the myriad of real challenges endured by people outside of the 'Euro-white', English-speaking North American norm. Goldberg (1993) describes this contradiction as a key paradox of modernity: "the more open to difference liberal modernity declares itself, the more dismissive of difference it becomes" (p.6). This so-called blindness to differences has implications for how people learn and teach, as standardized pedagogical and evaluative practices are often used to teach and evaluate an infinitely diverse range of people who bring an equally diverse range of knowledges to the classroom.

Internationalization at the University of Victoria

The subtle integration of education into the global marketplace, coupled with trans-national (im)migration patterns, means that student demographics at the University of Victoria are changing. There are growing numbers of immigrant and international students whose first language is not English and who are not familiar with mainstream

Canadian norms. For example, 15% of students in 2004 were not Canadian citizens, translating into 1,595 people studying at UVic on student visas in 2004, compared to 595 students in 1994 (Institutional Planning & Analysis, 2005; Thomas, 2004). While a recent study by the Faculty of Graduate Studies encouraged supervisors to recognize and appreciate the diversity of their students (Ricks, Kadlec, Corner, & Paul, 2003), I identified a need to investigate in more depth how the welcoming multicultural discourses of Canada played out in the lives of international and immigrant graduate students on campus.

Throughout my participation in graduate courses in the Faculty of Education, and particularly through my involvement with the Association of Graduate Education Students (AGES), I became aware of a number of different experiences, tensions, and equity matters related to international students. On many occasions, students disclosed stories of what they (and I) perceived to be inappropriate and/or racist treatment by fellow students, administrators, instructors, and supervisors at the university. Apparently, such experiences were not housed solely in the Faculty of Education however; the effects of changing student demographics were being felt campus-wide.

In 2003 the Office of International Affairs initiated a campus-wide working group on the internationalization of UVic. This group produced a number of key documents on the subject, including 'Making a world of difference: A strategic plan for furthering internationalization at the University of Victoria' (2005a) and 'Rethinking diversity: A cornerstone to building a diverse and welcoming learning community' (2005b). These two documents pointed to the reality that universities have always been sites of international study and, in particular, that Aboriginal peoples have experienced what is

now called 'internationalization' for over 500 years. In 2006, a 'Survey of International Graduate Students' was also conducted by members of this working group, the results of which are yet to officially be released.

In addition to these documents, a number of practical actions were initiated, not so much to address systemic issues of racism, but as attempts to support international students nonetheless. In my faculty, AGES launched a monthly international and Canadian student coffeehouse and a project of curriculum redesign is underway in the department of Curriculum and Instruction (H. Raptis, 2007, personal communication). Efforts to include global perspectives in curriculum are further supported by both the Office of International Affairs and the Learning and Teaching Centre. Across campus, Counselling Services created a support group and later an ESL student thesis completion group; the International and Exchange Student Services office created a buddy system and international student listserv; the Graduate Student Society held an international student breakfast; the Student Transition Centre hosted an introduction to academic writing workshop with international students in mind (which, incidentally, I facilitated); and finally, Student Affairs included specific workshops for international students in their yearly new student orientation.

It is worth noting that this new student orientation included an interactive forum theatre production in the Septembers of 2005 and 2006. I became aware of these productions after my research proposal had already been approved and was invited to attend the 2006 performance. A key point of difference from UNSETTLED was that a local theatre company was hired to put on these performances and as such, the stories did not emerge directly out of the actors' lives. The theatre company was informed of several

challenges that international students often report and created scenes based on this information. The purpose of these performances was to educate students (in a creative way) about how to behave under specific, potentially dangerous, or uncomfortable cross-cultural circumstances. While pedagogically similar, this performance was ideologically different from UNSETTLED, especially as the intended audience for this production was students alone, not the university and community at large. This upward instead of downward looking perspective on social change is further described by Vanderplatt (1997).

Finally, several public forums on the subject were also held during the course of my studies. For example, in March of 2005, the School of Child and Youth Care hosted a lunchtime panel discussion on *International Student Experiences: Community Response and Responsibility*. This panel of university and community members working with international students spoke to the following statement:

Victoria is host to approximately 7500 high school and post-secondary international students. Panellists will examine whether the contemporary approach to international education is reproducing colonization or if we can take this opportunity to engage in global transformation. How does Victoria respond to international students? What is the community's responsibility when accepting to host these youth?

Subsequently, in October 2005, the Office of International Affairs hosted a staff and faculty workshop on the internationalization of the university.

In this potentially supportive climate for change, I endeavoured to use the time and energy allotted to my doctoral research to take action and I proposed to do so in a

manner that had not previously been explored: using theatre. The November 8, 2006 performance of UNSETTLED was the contribution this research made to the ongoing dialogue around internationalization at the University of Victoria.

Conceptual Framework

While the next two Acts go into depth on the key concepts related to this study, the following section frames the internationalization of UVic in a discussion of graduate student experience and multiculturalism in Canada.

Graduate Student Experience.

International students are not alone in their struggles as graduate students. According to a 2003 report published by the Graduate Student Association of Canada, fewer than seventy-eight percent of all students beginning graduate work complete their degrees (Elgar, 2003). This number decreases according to level of study (i.e. fewer Doctoral students complete their programmes than Masters students) and to discipline (44.7% of Doctoral students in the Arts and Humanities complete their degrees, compared to 66.7% of their counterparts in the Natural and Applied Sciences, for example, who also tend to complete within a shorter period of time).³

Graduate student retention and completion rates are attributed to a loosely defined quality of educational experience, which includes such characteristics as “more external grant funding, more cohesive and competitive...research environments, and more frequent contact between students and supervisors” (Elgar, 2003, p.10). Corner’s (2006)

³ These statistics are based on data collected from a cohort of students across Canada between 1985 and 1988 and published by the Canadian Association for Graduate Studies (cited in Elgar, 2003)

Master's study suggests that a sense of community, for example through involvement in student associations, is related to quality of educational experience as well. Navigating the unfamiliar territory of a new organization is not an easy task for anyone; however, achievement rates such as these suggest that completing graduate studies is a uniquely challenging undertaking. With the tasks of becoming familiar with a new culture and working in a second or third language, the challenge of this undertaking increases.

While words such as 'increase,' or double/triple burden, connote a quantitative change, Bowser, Auletta & Jones (1993) describes this change as being more qualitative in nature:

There is a special burden that accompanies people when they invade traditionally all European-American institutions. The invaders are seen by some as tokens, sometimes as affirmative action [recruits], and sometimes even as threats to the academic integrity of the institution. They are seen by others as the proverbial missing link to quality higher education. (pp.xiii-xiv)

To exemplify this special burden faced by international students, it is worth noting that at least three recent Masters students in the Faculty of Education have conducted research to this effect: Bao (2004), interested in Chinese students' perceptions of the ESL program at UVic, Zhang (2005) interested in the implications of 'culture' in English language learning and teaching, and Shi (2007) interested in how students learn in a different language.

All potential international students must write a Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) before gaining entrance to UVic. In spite of a certain expected level of language proficiency, many students use the opportunity of studying abroad to

improve their English competency. Given the globally hegemonic dominance of English and as linguistic and cultural learning are intricately connected (Dlaska, 2000; Holme, 2002; Ndura, 2004; Ruan, 2003), international education is inherently value-laden. As Greenfield (1984) states, “language is power. It literally makes reality appear and disappear. Those who control language control thought, and therefore themselves and others” (p.154). Guilherme (2002) adds that learning a foreign language entails “the clarification of one’s own and others’ ideological perspectives on social/cultural matters” (p.155). She further suggests that only critical language education can create an awareness of the structural influences on foreign language learning, drawing links between personal experiences and larger social forces. Without such links being drawn, students are at risk of internalizing racist ideologies.

The Welcoming Multicultural Discourses of Canada.

The federal government’s department of Citizenship and Immigration states that “Canada has a proud tradition of welcoming immigrants.” In addition they claim that

More than 130,000 students come to study in Canada every year and even more come to Canada to learn English or French. Foreign students bring a rich culture to our classrooms. Your knowledge and skills are *welcome* in our schools.

(Government of Canada, 2005, paragraph 1, my emphasis)

The same official website *used to* state that, “Canada *values* the skills and experiences that foreign professionals and workers bring with them” (Khawaja & Associates,⁴

⁴ Note that in the time between September 2005 and July 2007, this statement was removed from the official Citizenship & Immigration website. The exact quote is still found on private immigration and study abroad websites, such as Khawaja & Associates cited above. Perhaps the privatization of immigration services is a research topic for another day.

2007a, paragraph 4, my emphasis). Despite these official claims of welcoming and valuing knowledge, skills, and experiences, an April 2007 Statistics Canada report stated that 46% of immigrants report finding adequate work as the most significant challenge in Canada (Government of Canada, 2007). As a result, in addition to the active recruitment of international students, lack of adequate work motivates some immigrants to enter the Canadian university system to increase their employability.

The Multiculturalism Act aims to “ensure that all individuals receive equal treatment and equal protection under the law, while respecting and valuing their diversity” (Government of Canada, 2004, Section three). Yet, the fine print of the same Citizenship and Immigration documents cited above *used to*⁵ state:

There is no guarantee that you will find work in your preferred occupation. You should know that, in order to work:

- you may need to have your credentials (degrees and diplomas) assessed and recognized;
- you may have to be licensed;
- you may need to take additional courses;
- you may need to successfully complete examinations; and/or
- you may need to take a job specific language test.

(Khawaja & Associates, 2007b, Paragraph 3)

The details of the fine print present a contradictory reality to Canadians’ self-congratulatory discourse around multiculturalism.

⁵ This statement was also removed from the official Citizenship & Immigration website. See footnote 3 above.

While in principle the values of multiculturalism may be worth working toward, in practice the ‘valuing of diversity’ could be better be likened to patterns of ‘consumption’. Arguing that multiculturalism in fact serves the dominant culture, hooks (1992) warns that

When race and ethnicity become commodified as resources for pleasure, the culture of specific groups, as well as the bodies of individuals, can be seen as constituting an alternative playground where members of dominating races, genders, sexual practices affirm their power-over in intimate relations with the Other. (Cited in Razack, 1998, p. 5)

Razack (1998) goes on to suggest that the denial of racism has become “integral to white Canadian identity” (p. 11). Lee & Lutz (2005) further contend that “liberal multiculturalism does not address racism systematically, because racism is viewed as an individual pathology and not seen as part of the social order” (p.17). In this way, people tend to either deny that discrimination exists, or construct the results of ideological systems of discrimination as the anecdotal actions of ignorant individuals. Therefore, the multiculturalism and diversity rhetoric is so powerful that it can render the majority of Canadians ignorant to current and real interpersonal and structural acts of racism.

Diversity and Difference.

As I have written elsewhere,⁶ differences from dominating social norms are often interpreted as weaknesses, and people are sometimes socialized to minimize, or hide those differences in order to compete within dominant groups. Debates continue around whether any kind of difference is biological or socially constructed, but inevitably,

⁶ I make this point in my ‘Editor’s Note on Language’ in Etmanski (2006).

‘difference’ is measured against an unspoken, preferred norm. This norm is referred to by Pajaczkowska & Young (1992) as the ‘absent centre.’ With reference to North American culture, they argue:

If we take three aspects of ‘ordinary’ identity in our culture, those of being White, being middle class and being male, we find processes which maintain this identity as a cultural norm, an absence...with the power to define itself only in terms of what it designates its opposites. (Pajaczkowska & Young, 1992, p.202)

Said differently, whiteness presides as “the unmarked category against which difference is constructed, whiteness never has to speak its name, never has to acknowledge its role as an organizing principle in social and cultural relations” (Lipsitz, 2002, pp.61-62).

While “even individuals who most closely approximate [this mythical norm may] experience a dissonance” (Ellsworth, 1992, p.114), the point is that social organizations unconsciously reproduce such patterns of privilege.

Through various kinds of collective organizing and empowering educational processes, people begin to reclaim the power to name themselves and their worlds, and express how their knowledge and differences from dominant norms can be assets, rather than weaknesses. For example, Gilligan (1982) and Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger & Tarule (1986) explained how women’s ways of knowing could be the key to understanding and acting in the world in a new, more balanced way.

However, Lubienski (2003) argues that when framed only in a positive light, discourse surrounding diversity gives us neither the language nor the analytical tools to acknowledge and address systemic social inequities. Drawing on Pierre Bourdieu’s theory of Reproduction, Lubienski reminds us that despite any good intentions to level

the playing field, some individuals are born into families that give them not only economic resources, but the socio-cultural capital, that is, the

high-status cultural resources (including beliefs, knowledge, and practices) that can be employed to gain economic capital and social prestige. Such resources are not inherently better than other cultural resources, but in a hierarchical society they are ‘worth more’ because they are valued by those in positions of power.

(p. 33)

In Bourdieu’s own words, institutions that are created and perpetuated by the dominant culture, including schools, reproduce inequitable social hierarchies because “possessors of the prerequisite cultural capital...continue to monopolize that capital” (Bourdieu & Passeron, 1990, p. 47).

Indeed, Ferguson (1984) reiterates this point when she writes about the limited successes of women (and other minorities) in bureaucratic institutions, where the rules of engagement have long been established according to white, male, heterosexist, English-speaking, upper, and middle class (etc.) norms. As such, feminists and other activists are somewhat paradoxically required to seek intellectual revolutions that will transform the very institutions in which they work (Reinharz, 1992).

Racism.

While the axis of ‘race’ is only one aspect of diversity, creating a context for the experiences of international students at UVic is incomplete without some conceptual understanding of racism. Some of these points will be further developed in Act Three.

Bowser, Auletta & Jones (1993) describe three interconnected definitions of racism: “a cultural presumption in one race’s superiority and another’s inferiority; institutional practices that reinforce and fulfill the cultural presumption; and individual beliefs in the racist cultural presumption and institutional practices” (p.xii). Blatant acts of violence committed by one group or individual against another (for example many actions of colonial settlers against indigenous populations, the Ku Klux Klan, the Third Reich, the Hutu rebels in Rwanda and Tutsi soldiers elsewhere), are easy to pinpoint as racist.

However, the manifestations of racism that come about as a result of institutional practices and individual preferences are more difficult to detect and, *at times*, open to debate. According to a UVic Office for the Prevention of Discrimination and Harassment brochure (n.d.), there is a difference between individual and institutional racism, but the latter is “more difficult to identify” because “sources of racism are hidden in laws, policies and institutional practices which enforce oppression based on a belief that one race is superior to another.” Such preferences and practices often fall victim to the normative fallacy; the pattern of everyday experience causes people to believe that because procedures *are* carried out in a certain way and according to certain norms, they *ought* to be done this way. As such, “institutional and structural issues that create exclusion based on race, gender, or physical ability” (Bowser, Auletta & Jones, 1993, p.xiii) among other characteristics, are less frequently noted in the media or addressed in general discussions of racism and diversity.

Weber’s concept of instrumental or means-end rationality (*Zweckrationalität*) is useful here. In their critique of the Enlightenment era, Frankfurt School Critical Theorists

Horkheimer and Adorno saw their particular historical conditions as exemplary of when such rationality “infiltrates economic, judicial, administrative and cultural systems...in place of the concrete realization of universal freedom comes the ‘iron cage’ of bureaucratic control” (Duvenage, 2003, p.38). Bureaucracies, according to Weber (1958), are “among those social structures which are the hardest to destroy” (p.228) because once set in motion, bureaucratization is the ultimate mechanism for harnessing power for those at the top of the bureaucratic hierarchy. Thus, despite any good intentions founding visionaries may have for their organization, bureaucracy propelled by instrumental rationality runs the risk of alienating people from the objects or people they seek to control. Horkheimer and Adorno believed that only such alienation could lead to the atrocities of their time, i.e. the rise of Fascism across Europe, as well as the horrors of World War II concentration camps.

Internalized racism is a concept that refers to the psychology of individuals outside the dominating culture, particularly colonized peoples, who accept the barrage of racist messages in their environment and come to believe that their differences from the dominant group truly are deficits or weaknesses (Fanon, 1967). For example, hooks (1994a) argues that “light skin and long, straight hair [as opposed to tight curls] continue to be traits that define a female as beautiful and desirable in the racist white imagination and in the colonized black mind set” (p.179). hooks prefers to use the phrase ‘white supremacist capitalist patriarchy’ rather than racism because it speaks to the interconnectedness of racism, capitalism, and patriarchy, a concept to which I return in Act Three. Moreover, she specifically uses the term ‘white supremacy’ not only to conjure up images of the KKK alluded to above, but to more subtly denote that in the

Euro-white culture of North America, it is those people who best assimilate to dominant aesthetic standards and cultural characteristics who are most successful.⁷

White supremacy is perhaps a more useful concept in this context because, “even though [people of colour] may have the ability to practice individual racism, they rarely have the power or position to engage in institutionalized racism or to change the culture” (Bowser, Auletta & Jones, 1993, p.xii). As such, combating racism is not a problem solely for minority groups to resolve, there is an urgent need for ‘white’ people or people of the dominant group to participate in the struggle. Of course, the same is true of the feminist or the anti-ableist/heterosexist/etc. struggles as well.

It is important to acknowledge that the acceptance of immigrants by the dominant members of Canadian society—particularly of non-English speaking immigrants—has never been a given. To illustrate this point, Barrett & Roediger (2002) and Brodtkin (2002) have discussed how ‘whiteness’ as a concept has changed over time: Irish, Jewish and other (non-British or French) European immigrants only came to be seen as ‘white’ through subsequent waves of immigration patterns, increased wealth and education, and intermarriage.

Finally, as suggested by hooks above, racism in Canadian society cannot be considered in isolation from the context of globalized capitalism. Marxist analyses suggest that under the capitalist mode of production, the “material conditions of life through which humans produce and reproduce their existence...can be found in the system of work organization where certain individuals employ others for the purpose of

⁷ While I am speaking here of the aesthetic dimension of white supremacy in a North American (specifically, Victoria BC) context, it is worth noting that through cultural hegemony and ongoing imperialism, the aesthetics of whiteness is a global phenomenon. For example, I have seen ‘whitening creams’ for sale in several African and Asian countries and have experienced how the colour of my skin affects how I am received/perceived abroad.

making a profit and accumulating capital” (Morgan 1997, p. 286). The inequitable distribution of power and capital required in a capitalist mode of production is increasing at an unprecedented rate: rich countries are now largely dependent on poor countries to produce commodities and goods at a speed necessary to sustain the consumption patterns of *our* populations. For example, Chomsky (2007) has criticized the current focus on ethanol production since the use of food (i.e. corn) for energy has raised the price of tortillas in Mexico by over fifty percent. Increasingly, factories where goods are produced (not to mention call-centres and other workplaces) are being moved out of Canada to majority world countries where labour and environmental laws are relatively weak, and therefore, the labour costs relatively low.

At home, we are likewise dependent on immigration not only to sustain our population levels, thereby sustaining our tax intake, but also to fill the labour and service jobs unwanted by the upwardly mobile middle class. Both of these trends result in some members of the Canadian-born working classes feeling threatened when their jobs are ‘stolen’ either by immigrants or by factory workers in other parts of the globe. Yet, at the same time, we are ‘stealing’ some of the most educated members of majority world countries through our immigration policies—a phenomenon frequently referred to as the brain drain. In the sense that the benefits of globalization are unevenly distributed, “globalization is not really global” (Korsgaard, 1997, p.17).

Despite these trends, when confronted with the reality of racism in Canada, the qualification I often I hear is that at least Canada is better than most countries, or that at least we are making progress. Perhaps there are some elements of truth in these statements; however, even if we in Canada reach a point where we can claim absolute

truth in our discourse of multiculturalism and diversity, this truth would only be contained within the borders of our nation-state. An end to racism in Canada would completely disregard the inequitable systems we perpetuate, the poverty we create, and the ‘differences’ we do not tolerate at a global level. In this sense, we are all implicated in a global capitalist system that privileges some forms of diversity, while discriminating against others. The University of Victoria is no exception.

Research Focus and Question

The context outlined above presents a tenuous, if not contradictory relationship between the welcoming multicultural discourses of Canada and the experiences of international students. The purpose of my doctoral study was to investigate how this contradiction manifests in the lives of UVic graduate students, through action-oriented, participatory arts-based research, using popular theatre as my main research method. The research question that guided this study asked, therefore:

What are the contradictions between the welcoming multicultural discourses of Canada and the experiences of immigrant and international graduate students at UVic?

Originally, I focused on three settings of student experience: the application period, the classroom, and the student-supervisor relationship. As the research progressed, however, these settings proved too constricting both for the stories the participants wanted to share and for the nature of the methodology.

As this study does not specifically attend to the differences between immigrant and international students, from this point forward I use the term ‘international student’ to

refer to the majority of participants in this study. Note that I problematize this categorization in Act Twelve.

Locating Myself in the Study

While my motivation to conduct this study emerged through my participation in the UVic graduate student community, there are, of course, always many factors that influence decisions. I describe here a little of my personal history to give the reader an understanding of how my interest in the subject developed.

One of my two younger sisters, Elizabeth, is a person with Down Syndrome. This reality has had many influences on me, including the lesson at a very young age that life simply is not fair. My parents taught me that my sister, like other people with disabilities, deserved a good quality of life—and a good quality of education—by virtue of being human. They also taught me that I would receive many unearned privileges in this life that my sister never would, so it was okay if sometimes she received ‘special’ treatment. In this way, I learned the principle of equity at the age of two, a principle I have refined and now generalize to a global level. Finally, I learned that all people have the capacity to make social contributions; it is the disabling structures of this society that prevent members of the mainstream from accepting many of these contributions.

When I was eleven years old, my family moved to Richmond, an ethnically diverse, notably Asian suburb of Vancouver, British Columbia. The 2001 Statistics Canada census states that approximately 40% of Richmond’s population identified as being of Chinese descent while 7% were of South Asian descent, 4% Filipino of descent, and 2% of Japanese descent, a trend that was well underway when I lived there from

1988-1998 (Government of Canada, 2001). In my secondary school context, I became involved in anti-racist organizing. In addition, my family hosted several Japanese exchange students, which inspired me to spend an additional year attending a Japanese secondary school after my graduation in Canada. The experience of being an international student myself, I believe, heightened my sensitivity to the challenges of studying abroad.

I am fortunate to have had many other opportunities to travel, live, work, and study abroad, but most notable of these was my participation in Canadian Crossroads International (CCI), a volunteer-sending organization through which I travelled to Botswana on a four-month internship. Perhaps more importantly, this is where I first learned the techniques and values of adult and popular education. In particular, I was introduced to some popular theatre tools in the context of my positions as an ‘Animateur’ (community animator) and Development Education Coordinator for subsequent CCI volunteers in the years following my return. I took several professional development courses related to facilitation and around this time I also became aware of the work Headlines Theatre was doing in Vancouver.

In addition, the interdisciplinary nature of my formal education was useful in preparing me for this study. Through my degree in Linguistics, I also became certified to teach English as a Second Language (ESL). During my Master’s programme I learned several strategies for participatory planning and community organizing in local and global contexts. My Master’s research critically examined the attraction of ‘single white females’ to international development work. As the organization I was researching was attempting to foster greater diversity amongst volunteers, I argued that it was ‘right there

in front of us' and that we should start by valuing and better attending to relationships with partner country volunteers and organizations.

In recounting this brief history, my intention is to alert the reader to how lessons from these various experiences converged in my mind and body to produce the study about which you are reading. While the details of this research came out of the specific UVic context in which I was living, working, and studying, the seeds of inspiration had long been sown.

Limitations and Contributions of the Study

This study did not include, nor did it intend to include a representative sample of international students at UVic. The experimental and creative nature of the methodology, as well as the requested time commitment of over thirty hours, meant that in this research, as in life, those of us who *were* willing to make the commitment to each other needed to figure out how to work together. Moreover, as should become clear to the reader/viewer, with arts-based research, as with other forms of research, it is up to the viewer to interpret the art/research and generalize lessons to other contexts, not learn the precise state of reality through potentially homogenizing samples.

That said, the fact that twenty-four graduate students, whose ages ranged from their twenties to forties, from ten departments on campus, originally from fourteen countries around the world, including Canada, participated in this study speaks qualitatively to the diversity of students involved. In addition, two of the workshops were with women only, one of which was with Asian women only.

My own limited experience with popular theatre was a challenge and I recognize that this might be perceived by more experienced practitioners as a limitation. I speak more about how arts-based research is riddled with questions of aesthetic quality in Act Five. For now let me challenge such experienced practitioners to consider the multiple forms of validity that transcend the gate-keeping boundaries of fine arts⁸ and enter into the territory of action-oriented participatory research and education. What I may (or may not) have lacked in theatrical ability, I believe I made up for in community organizing skill in generating broad support and impact. In addition and curiously, some audience members commented that our limitations in aesthetic mastery added a certain authenticity to the performance, driving home the point that we were *real* students, presenting *real* issues on the stage. Nevertheless, through this research I learned that art (theatre direction in particular) like research itself truly is a learned skill and one that can only be developed with further practice, a point to which Clover (2006b) also alludes.

Finally, the research question and the research design it entailed became limiting as the research progressed, the implications of which I describe in more detail in Act Twelve. For example, as this was designed as standpoint research, it only included graduate students as participants. The point of standpoint research is to tell subaltern stories and to this effect we were successful; however, I learned that this in itself was not sufficient for addressing the problems of increasingly globalized universities. Consequently, the limitations of the question were productive as they ultimately provided new theoretical insights around the concept of intersectionality, which will be described in Act Twelve.

⁸ I acknowledge that the Fine Arts have a rich theoretical and practical history, but as my studies were in the Faculty of Education, this is not the history in which my work was grounded.

With these limitations in mind, it is also customary to point out the key contributions of the research, which are practically, theoretically, and methodologically-oriented. Practically, this research made a unique contribution to the dialogue and concrete efforts around internationalization, which, as I have already described, are currently underway at UVic. This was an entirely student-driven effort that was unique both in content (due to the graduate student perspective represented) and in form (theatre).

Theoretically, this research makes contributions to the areas of transformative learning and intersectionality. These theoretical insights reposition the 'international student' from simply a person in need of services, to being one of many potential agents of change. The benefits and dangers of this repositioning are discussed in Acts Eleven and Thirteen.

Methodologically, this study makes contributions to the fields of both arts-based research and action-oriented participatory research and the places where these intersect. In the former it challenges readers/viewers to consider how art can be used as method and means of representation and dissemination. In the latter it challenges researchers operating from less participatory paradigms to consider the merits of collective, relationship-based, action-oriented processes. It also challenges participatory researchers to refine their/our thinking about the nature of participation. Ownership and control of the whole process by the group was not possible in the context of a doctoral study, therefore, the areas of more authentic forms participation are discussed in Act Eight.

Summary

This Act has introduced readers to the context of this study in terms of current actions underway at the University of Victoria. It has also presented a theoretical framing of the research focus and question, which demonstrates the contradictory relationship between graduate student experiences and the welcoming multicultural discourses of Canada. As any study is always biased by virtue of the researcher's involvement (Mason, 1996; Ristock & Pennell, 1996), I have attempted to locate myself in the study by demonstrating how my own experiences generated an interest in the subject. Finally, I have presented a discussion of some of the limitations and contributions of this work, also reflecting on where points will be elaborated upon later in the dissertation. With this frame of the research solidly in place, I now turn to a more in-depth discussion of the first of two key concepts: intersectionality.

Act 3 Intersectionality

The human experience is complex and constantly in motion. Our unique positions in axes of difference influence, though do not predetermine, both our experience of the world and our life chances. These axes are comprised of attributes such as emotional, physical, intellectual and language ability; Indigenous family history; ethno-cultural background, country, region and city of birth and residence; education level; birth order; number and nature of dependents; marital status; phenotypical (e.g. hair, eyes, body) features; age, religion, sexual orientation, sex, class, and so on. As some attributes hold more social power than others, individuals who are born with dominating aspects of identity are socially privileged through no effort or choice of their own.

Yet, while some attributes are seemingly fixed, others are more fluid. For instance, sexual orientation and specific disabilities may be superficially invisible, though the reality affects one's experience. The aging process and experiences that come with the passing of time are inevitable and "one may become disabled through accident or advancing age, or cease to be illiterate through language training" (Hum & Simpson, 2003, p.4). Similarly, attributes such as sexual orientation and class can shift or become more fully realized (Cole & Omari, 2003), women can give birth and people can be violently abused at any point in their lives, all of which can greatly alter their experience of the world. Advancements in transport and medical technology also give opportunities to those with access to the right capital to dramatically change their place of residence, physical appearance, and biological sex organs to more closely match their self-concept or create a new identity. Through this inevitable or selected motion and fluidity, one can acquire more or less social privilege.

In addition to natural and social attributes and to the fluidity of such attributes, seemingly simple categories such as ‘sex’ or ‘race’ in fact have porous boundaries. We now know that ‘race’ is a social construct, perpetuated by Western scientists and that “there is greater genetic variation within every ‘racial’ group than there is between any two of them” (Harding, 1993, p.10). Although “human beings actually differ from each other phenotypically on a wide range of characteristics,” and *racism* truly exists as an ‘ideological phenomenon,’ there is only one *human* ‘race’ (Miles, 1989, p.71). Furthermore, post-colonial (Loomba, 2002), diasporic and hybrid (Anthias, 2002; Ifekwunigwe, 1999), trans-national (Grewal & Kaplan, 1994) and hyphenated (Rattansi, 2005) identities are real lived experiences. The same could be said for multi- or bi-cultural, poly- or bi-sexual, androgynous or gynandrous identities. In sum, each human being embodies and enacts a complex intersection of biological, social, phenotypical, spatial, and experiential identity attributes that can and do shift over time.

Intersectionality is a concept that attempts to address the multiplicity of complex power dynamics embedded in human relationships, organizations and global social structures, as well as the oppressive or enabling circumstances to which these dynamics give rise. It is defined as “the interweaving of oppressions on the basis of multiple social identities as well as marginalization that [is] both relational and structural” (Moosa-Mitha, 2005, p.62). In the following pages I discuss the emergence of this concept vis-à-vis feminist, anti-racist, post-modern, and post-structural theory. I consider some of the critiques, challenges, and dangers of intersectionality as well as its usefulness, productivity, and potential. The theoretical insights, in terms of the need for an

intersectional analysis of the increasingly globalized context of UVic, are discussed in Act Twelve.

Emergence of the Intersectional Perspective

Social theories that focus on conflict as the means of change invariably position groups of people against each other, fighting or otherwise competing over *allegedly* scarce resources and power-over positions (McDonald & Coleman, 1999). Social conflict theories that emerged out of Europe drew significantly from Karl Marx and positioned workers against those who had control over the means of production (i.e. Capitalists), the proletariat class against the bourgeoisie. These theories have had and continue to have far-reaching influence, inspiring small and large revolutionary actions around the world, most notably in Eastern Europe, Asia, and Latin America.

Adult educators, labour organizers, and critical theorists—particularly members of the Frankfurt School of Critical Theory—from many parts of the world have continued to apply and theorize about the implications of class-based social relations of power. In particular, Marxist influence can be found in Paulo Freire’s and many other critical educators’ beliefs that a ‘neutral’ form of education cannot exist. That is, “education either reproduces inequities—and, as such, is an instrument of domination—or critically analyses the forces perpetuating such inequities, and contributes to fighting against them” (Finger & Asún, 2001, p.77). Of course, experiences of education might contain elements of both reproduction and emancipation, but educators who follow this tradition have typically been labelled ‘critical educators’ or advocates of ‘critical pedagogy’ and almost unconsciously adopt the belief in social conflict as a means of social change.

Proponents of this tradition generally share the ontological position that an external truth/reality exists and that this reality is systematically and intentionally organized in ways that benefit some people more than others (Neuman, 1997). For researchers within this tradition, the purpose of research is not only to draw attention to this inequitable external reality, but also to change it. As Becker (1970) aptly stated, “the question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but rather whose side we are on” (p.204). Nevertheless, as social conflict theories were applied over time, educators, organizers, scholars, politicians, and artists who grew up in this tradition had their eyes opened by critiques from within.

The ways in which reality was described and the proposed ways to change it were significantly flawed in that they ignored, misunderstood, dismissed, or unwittingly overlooked the experiences and labour of the global majorities, particularly women and racialized groups. Harstock (1983), for example, pointed out Marx’s original failure to recognize women’s work as labour and theorized that like Marx’s proletariat, “women’s lives make available a particular and privileged vantage point on the male supremacy, a vantage point which can ground a powerful critique of the phallogocentric institutions and ideology which constitutes the capitalist form of patriarchy” (p.284). Standpoint research thus developed from solely class-based positionality to a gender and class-based positionality.

In addition to feminist critiques, the Civil Rights movement and changing immigration patterns to North America shifted the primary focus away from class analysis towards an analysis of other forms of difference, such as ‘race’. As Mann & Huffman (2005) suggest, “while the former [i.e., class] mirrors the decentering of the first

world industrial proletariat, the latter [i.e., 'race'] mirrors the changing composition of the labor force at home and the increasingly global nature of the division of labor" (p.80). As 'white' women and racialized women and men gained access to the means of *knowledge* production (i.e. entry into academic and other public spheres) they began speaking and theorizing about their own experiences and critiquing pre-existing social thought.

The work of racialized, or so-called 'women of colour' is particularly relevant to the subsequent theoretical developments. Such theorists critiqued the feminist movement from within, arguing against the essentialist tendencies of viewing all women as the same, thereby ignoring or downplaying the differences in experience between mainstream ('white') feminists and the specific struggles and actions taken by racialized women (Sandoval, 2000). For some women, second wave feminist movement(s) were spaces of further marginalization rather than the spaces of liberation they were intended to be. Out of this historical and cultural development emerged a positioning of the 'holy trinity' of gender, race, and social class analysis, which

Were acknowledged as the central characteristics influencing the life chances of individuals and were arguably the markers most likely at the root of various inequalities in Canadian society. Other identities such as Aboriginal status, ability/ disability, age, sexual orientation, ethnicity, religion, language, immigration, and region were seen as important, but often considered secondary characteristics owing to a perception that their power to shape various social outcomes was not as great as that of the three primary characteristics. (Wilkinson, 2003, p.3)

Yet, positioning these ‘other’ identities as secondary mimicked the earlier dismissal of uniquely gendered and racialized struggles and, as such, was inherently flawed.

The progression of this line of thought brings us to the point of recognizing a truism that oppression is complex: Multiple aspects of identity intersect with circumstance and structural ideologies to create unique struggles of the body, mind and spirit. To move forward from this point, I began to wonder whether theory with an appended, instead of inherent analysis of gender, race, class, nationality, disability and other dimensions of difference, is sufficient for analysing today’s society where such oppressions are so thoroughly imbricated.

While affirming the importance of having an historical sense of the development of Western critical thought, I suggest that social analysis should begin with an acknowledgment of the multi-directional nature of power relations and articulating (Miles, 1989) systems of oppression. Examples of such theories include hooks’ ‘white supremacist capitalist patriarchy’ (1994a & b) mentioned above in Act Two, or Brah’s (1992) attention to the specific ‘positionality’ of individuals within oppressive ideological hierarchies, such as racism and global capitalism. While incomplete themselves, these theories do start with an understanding that no one structure is sufficient for analysing relations of oppression (Wharton, 1991). Theorists such as these encourage readers to conceptualize an intersectional social analysis.

Challenges of the Intersectional Approach

As can be inferred from the above discussion, intersectionality recognizes the overlapping elements and shifting, fluid boundaries of identity. This section situates

intersectionality in post-structural and post-modern discourses. It then examines some practical implications for research and policy, stresses the post-nation-state unit of analysis, and discusses the tendency toward essentialist thinking.

The concept of intersectionality has been influenced by post-structural analyses of power relations that see any attempt at categorizing identity as an essentialist enterprise (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p.62). Yet, while deconstructing identity categories, intersectionality simultaneously maintains focus on individual and group positions in structural systems of discrimination such as classism, racism, sexism, ableism, heterosexism, ageism, and so on. In this way, it also incorporates elements of both modernism and post-modernism in that “the postmodernist approach emphasizes the multiple and overlapping identities (subject position) of all actors. The modernist materialist approach emphasizes individual political and group (class) action and resistance” (Lee & Lutz, 2005, p.11). While attempting to avoid essentialism or privileging one or even two forms of oppression over all others, intersectional approaches attempt to simultaneously analyse both individual and collective struggle and agency in local and global contexts.

Considering these (fluid) dimensions of difference all at once can appear overwhelming and the practical implications of an intersectionality framework are currently being debated by researchers and policy-makers alike. And yet, the world *is* complex; ignoring different dimensions of power can lead to irresponsible or limited analyses. Quantitative researchers, who generally study the effects of specific variables on social phenomena, can quickly become overstretched with the unique variables resulting from any combination of race/class/sex/ability, etc. Likewise, qualitative

researchers, who tend to use smaller, more in-depth samples, cannot study more intersections than their participants embody, nor can their results be immediately generalizable to other populations that comprise their own unique constellation of individuals.

As Wilkinson (2003) suggests, “it would appear that an intersectional perspective implies the use of triangulation and multiple methods in order to take advantage of the benefits of both [quantitative and qualitative] methodologies and to be flexible enough to be used in a variety of disciplines” (p.5). I would add that while discipline-based social studies can and do provide significant insight, interdisciplinary ventures are equally useful in that they can provide a more holistic understanding of the human experience and our relationship to the Earth. As such, multi-method, multi-disciplinary approaches may become central to future intersectional socio-economic and ecological studies.

The specificity of individual experience also poses challenges for policy and programming. Given the challenges to both quantitative and qualitative research mentioned above, at “a more practical level, a narrowly constituted group may be ineffective in marshalling voice for their circumstances or garnering political support to influence policy” (Hum & Simpson, 2003, p.4). As such, a central concern of intersectionality is akin to an earlier, or concurrent, feminist concern: “how feminists could retain collective categories and simultaneously avoid essentialism” (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p.63). An overly narrow focus on individuals or tightly defined groups risks undermining the political potential of the collective.

Wilkinson (2003) proposes and Burman (2004) implies that better cooperation and communication between existing groups—not further isolation, individualism and

competition—is required to assist us in developing policies, programs, and practices that better support the specific needs of uniquely positioned individuals. Consequently, intersectional analyses can be used as a means of generating new forms of solidarity across perceived or real differences instead of a means of fracturing social movements.

Wilkinson (2003) provides an example of how “cooperation and communication between government, service providers, and academics and between all levels of government is required,” (p.8). I quote this example at length as it relates to the overarching context of this study described in Act Two:

The issue of the recognition of foreign credentials is one where an intersectional perspective would be valuable. This problem involves many different stakeholders. Governments are concerned with attracting skilled labour to Canada. Professional organisations are interested in creating regulated systems to assess professional credentials and work experience in a fair and consistent manner across occupations. Universities and other educational institutions must consistently evaluate educational credentials and identify gaps in education. Immigrants will benefit from programs that recognise their skills and professional qualifications. Should this level of cooperation be achieved between governments, professional organisations, educational institutions, and immigrants, not only will immigrants face fewer barriers to full labour market participation, but productivity in the Canadian economy will also increase. (Wilkinson, 2003, p.8)

Whether or not one agrees that productivity in the Canadian economy and continued recruitment of skilled immigrants are worthy goals, this example suggests that issue-based organizing opens up opportunities for various stakeholders, interest groups and

uniquely positioned individuals to work together toward mutually beneficial outcomes. Learning to fully acknowledge the real, lived effects of difference and how to work together in a respectful way that does not further marginalize, isolate, and dominate will invariably take time, but is a challenge laid out by intersectional analyses.

While the above example speaks to a contemporary national concern, a further limitation of this example is its continued focus on the nation-state as the key unit of analysis. As the unequally distributed benefits of global Capitalism are becoming increasingly apparent, recent developments in global and trans-national feminist thought have transformed the “macro-unit of analysis from a societal to a global level” (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p.66). From Marxist theory we already know that Capitalism requires masses of wage labourers to assist those who control the means of production to acquire capital. Yet the global nature of Capitalism, along with (im)migration patterns and often unregulated working conditions, give rise to new forms of oppression resulting from Capitalist ways of organizing. For example, “by examining the changing conditions of garment production,” Ng argues that “we see concrete ways in which sexism, racism, and class exploitation intertwine and intersect to keep minority women workers captive” (Armstrong & Ng,⁹ 2005, p.38) both in Canada and abroad.

When considering the global implications of intersecting forms of oppression, we are reminded to again be mindful not to essentialize the experiences of people with whom we have never come into contact, or about whom stereotypes tend to run wild in the

⁹ This chapter is entitled “A Conversation Between Jeannette Armstrong and Roxana Ng” and is indeed laid out as a conversation with each woman speaking in turn. As it is clear that these particular comments belong to Roxana Ng, I have attributed this argument to her. The full citation for Armstrong & Ng is provided in the References. I have used a similar method for citing Jeannette Armstrong’s concept of *Enowkin* later in this Act.

Western imagination. Of particular interest, Mohanty (1991) has deconstructed the homogenous impression of ‘Third World Women.’ She has demonstrated

How women in the third world are often portrayed not only as a singular or essentialized other, but also implicitly as lesser – as ignorant, tradition-bound, and victimized. This portrayal is contrasted with an equally singular representation of Western women as educated, modern and having control of their bodies and lives.

(Mann & Huffman, 2005, p.68)

Recent and current graduate studies by women in Leadership Studies at the University of Victoria are making similar arguments, three examples of which I will describe here.

Shinaba (2006) argued that Nigerian women, in particular ‘Market Women’ (female leaders and vendors in the market-place) hold forms of power unrecognized, misunderstood, and underappreciated by Western feminists. She contended that such women hold influence not only in the market-place, but to a certain extent over the national economy as well. Likewise, Umpleby (2007) documented the oral histories of Aboriginal women in Northern Vancouver Island, British Columbia. Through these women’s powerful narratives, Umpleby demonstrates how they are respected leaders in their communities, helping to transform unhealthy communities into healthy ones.

Finally, Dragne (in progress) is currently investigating the experiences of Romanian female academics, hypothesizing that the 1989 revolution and subsequent transition to Capitalism and integration into the European Union have not necessarily improved women’s status or everyday experiences, as women held power differently under the so-called repressive socialist era. In light of such misunderstandings between people in multiple global contexts, Mohanty has called for “the urgent political necessity

of forming strategic coalitions across class, race, and national boundaries” (1991, p.52). I would add that this is particularly urgent in the current political climate of systematically generating fear and ignorance about the terrorist Other. Recognizing multiple differences and learning to work in respectful solidarity to overcome such essentialism and harmful stereotyping is vital to the intersectional approach.

Overcoming Hierarchical, Binary and Centre-Margin Thinking

How do we begin to speak about intersectionality when the English language and, as a result, English-speakers’ imaginations are full of implicit or explicit hierarchies, dichotomies, and binaries? We already know that “binary thinking implicitly entails ‘secret hierarchies’ – a dominant group and a marginalized group, where the latter is viewed not only as other, but as lesser. Examples of this include such dichotomies as male/female; heterosexual/homosexual; or white/black” (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p.68). We further know that hierarchies are often revealed by the order in which words are placed.

We cannot ignore that such classifications can be useful insofar as they help us to simplify and therefore make sense of the world via heuristic categories. They can also facilitate an understanding of how power operates in certain contexts. Yet, they are simultaneously dangerous in that they cannot account for the real, shifting identities outlined above, or the ways in which people hold power differently in different contexts. For example, as this research will demonstrate, students may hold *less power* in academic hierarchies, but they/we are not *powerless*.

Wilkinson (2003) posits that “any attempt at an intersectional perspective therefore avoid binary oppositions” (p. 6). She contends that comparisons between people along binaries succumb to benchmarking, which implies a normative standard to which those who are somehow different should aspire, for example the absent centre of whiteness (Pajaczkowska & Young, 1992) discussed in Act Two. McDonald & Coleman (1999) add to this critique of binary, centre-margin thinking with an extensive discussion of simple and complex hierarchies. Simple hierarchies, comprised of two strata (e.g. a rich/poor comparison) are equivalent to the binaries already described and insufficient for analysing real experiences. Complex hierarchies comprise multiple strata that reflect multiple binaries of abled/disabled, white/black, etc. and it is argued that individuals’ experiences are strongly influenced by their location in these multiple and complex hierarchies.

Yet, as McDonald & Coleman suggest, “when subject to close examination, complex hierarchies tend to collapse under the weight of their internal inconsistencies” (p. 21). To illustrate this point they ask, “on what coherent basis could one attempt to construct a ‘complex hierarchy’, composed of more than two strata (i.e. value-laden attributes), positioning a black, non-disabled, gay man in relation to a white, disabled lesbian, for example?” (p.21). These hypothetical individuals’ experiences would be qualitatively, not quantitatively, different and, as implied by the earlier discussion, the markers of identity themselves are porous. What kind of ‘disability,’ for example, or what kind of ‘black’? “One cannot merely count the number of ‘centre characteristics’ or different oppressions to determine the degree of privilege or restricted life chances an individual will experience” (p.27), they argue. Without closer examination or the

automatic privileging of one form of oppression over another, it is difficult, if not impossible to predict or compare the experiences of such hypothetical human beings. Nevertheless, such predictions and comparisons may have implications for the distribution of social services.

Horizontal and Internalized Oppression

When moving away from binary, hierarchical, and oppositional thinking, it is useful to consider the implications such thoughts have for social organizing. Taking the hypothetical example described above, McDonald & Coleman (1999) suggest that often such individuals (or similar groups) end up competing with each other “over which of them is most oppressed and which of them is least oppressed, creating yet another hierarchy while fighting for the moral high ground” (p.24). The result is that “the dominant group faces only disorganised and relatively weak opposition groups, which are more likely to fight each other, or else, seek to imitate the habits of the dominant group in the hope of receiving some of their privileges” (p.22). For example, Ng (2005) mentions the “contemporary tension between immigrant groups and aboriginal peoples” in current Canadian anti-racist struggles (Armstrong & Ng, 2005, p.35). Such fighting amongst marginalized groups is often referred to as ‘horizontal’ hostility, discrimination or oppression and poses a worthy challenge to intersectional analyses and actions.

For activists, horizontal oppression may stem from the attachment many people have to beliefs that some attributes *truly* do give rise to more serious forms of oppression. Marxist scholars, for example, refuse to let go of the fundamental material base of oppression. *Certainly* class-based oppression is real and has real implications for people’s

life chances all around the world. By no means is it appropriate to romanticize people who live in poverty; class analysis remains part of an intersectional analysis. However, class mobility alone does not liberate individuals from oppression. Cole & Omari (2003) have shown how the upward mobility of African Americans is not necessarily “associated with greater happiness” (p.794) due to the guilt of leaving family and friends behind, the extra responsibility of caring for ‘poor’ dependents, and the chronic stress and increased experiences of discrimination associated with success in ‘white’-dominated professions. Drawing from original critiques by feminist scholars, even after the most levelling of class-based revolutions it appears that the multiple arms of oppression would continue to extend their reach.

Likewise, feminists—myself included—are not quick to give up what little territory has been gained through the history of various feminist struggles. Patriarchy has not yet been abolished and as such, in taking an intersectional approach, we ought to be mindful not to throw out the feminist baby (‘artificially’ conceived or otherwise) with the bathwater. Instead we can look more closely at the unique identities and complex global socio-economic relationships between the baby and the person responsible for giving the baby a bath. Perhaps because of (or perhaps in spite of) my position as a white woman, I, like Johnson-Odim (1991), hesitate to give up the term feminist. The society in which I live continues to deny the fundamental importance of the work/power of reproducing the human species, of nourishing and teaching children, and the emotional labour and values of caring, relationship-maintaining, and non-violence—work and values that continue to fall biologically and socially in women’s terrain (Gilligan, 1982). While I recognize the essentialist, heterosexist, and other counter-arguments to this claim, a shift that would

place this work and these values at the top of social hierarchies would be an improvement for all of humanity, not for women alone.

Yet, the ability to name oppression is itself a form of power and, as discussed above, many feminists have already learned to be cautious not to use that power to reproduce other forms of oppression. As people are often politically mobilized by personal experiences of oppression or by the experiences of those closest to them/us, attachment to specific attributes as the most important or foundational aspects of oppression can stem from the pain of having experienced oppression in that way. When people are abused, violated, humiliated, undermined, or otherwise hurt, it is difficult and at times impossible to cope with the immediate repercussions, let alone become politically mobilized. Yet, in cases where that politicized identity emerges, an intersectional analysis challenges people to rid the world of all forms of oppression, not just that particular form of oppression that affects them/us most directly (Mann & Huffman, 2005).

A reframing of this dilemma suggests that “it is not an excuse to relativize oppression by simply claiming, ‘we are all oppressed’ ” (Ellsworth, 1992, p.114). Expressed differently, not “all forms of oppression are equally important at any given time and place in history” (Mann & Huffman, 2005, p.77). Although these latter authors continue to claim a Marxist Feminist identity, their assertion is consistent with an intersectional approach. This idea demonstrates that no matter which identity label has served us and our work to date, be it feminist, disability advocate, anti-racist, etc., the overarching goal of any person claiming to work for social justice can ultimately be to rid the world of *all* forms of oppression, not merely the oppression to which their/our

particular positionality relates. In addition, although one person may experience oppression in a certain way, labelling others as similarly oppressed can at times serve to further marginalize rather than liberate, as demonstrated by the discussion of Second, Third, and Fourth World Women above.

Clover, Follen & Hall (2000) suggest that an appropriate transformative goal is “a better quality of life, not a higher standard of living” (p.22). Since we know that the Earth cannot sustain the ecological footprint (Wackernagel & Reese, 1996) of the globally rich in terms of our consumptive, polluting and war mongering habits it would not be prudent for intersectional action to promote further greed and over-consumption instead of sustainable alternatives. A global system that respects and honours *everyone*, and that more equally distributes the global resources necessary to meet basic needs, is ideally required.

Resisting the urge to reproduce horizontal oppression means that people can also become aware of how they/we are unwittingly implicated in systems of oppression. Lorde (1984) has famously warned against using the master’s tools to dismantle the master’s house, and Ferguson (1984) likewise discussed women’s collusion in their/our own oppression through adherence to bureaucratic forms of organizing. Like Fanon (1967), this theme was taken up in Freire’s early work (2003, rev. ed.), where he discussed how people internalize oppression through daily living in oppressive societies:

The oppressed suffer from the duality which has established itself in their innermost being. ... They are at one and the same time themselves and the oppressor whose consciousness they have internalized. ... Only as they discover themselves to be ‘hosts’ of the oppressor can they contribute to the midwifery of

their liberating pedagogy. As long as they live in the duality in which *to be is to be like*, and *to be like is to be like the oppressor*, this contribution is impossible.

(Freire, 2003, p.48) [emphasis in original]

Through internalizing, accepting, and normalizing the oppressive behaviours that surround us, we in turn become unconscious conduits of oppression. As McDonald & Coleman (1999) maintain, “ ‘the oppressor within’ each of us can be said to be socially conditioned to ‘act out’ the oppression perpetrated upon us, much in the same way that an abused child who has not been able to heal or work through their own experiences may become an abusing adult” (p.31). Similarly, the concept of internalized oppression helps us to understand why new generations of feminists, including both feminists ‘of colour’ and so-called ‘third wavers’ have rejected repressive elements of ‘second wave’ feminism (Mann & Huffman, 2005).

As I have stated elsewhere, as educators we “must at all times be vigilant so as not to reproduce the very hierarchies we aim to dismantle” (Etmanski & Pant, forthcoming 2007, Paragraph 6). This means that we can work on developing an awareness of the ways in which we, ourselves, are oppressors and similarly work to overcome this socialized propensity toward domination and unconscious reproduction of oppression.

Mann & Huffman (2005) have attributed increased numbers of “self-help groups, feminist therapies, and feminist spirituality” (p.86), particularly in the 1980s and 1990s, to an exploration of how internalized oppression reproduces itself and a desire to overcome it. Such activities tend to position personal transformation as the foundation for social change. While I will discuss this further in Act Four, for now I will suggest that one should not become overly focused on the individual. The personal *is* political; the

rationale for working through internalized oppression is to not reproduce violent hierarchies in personal relationships and through misguided political action. I believe that a balance is needed between working on internalized and external sources of oppression; action uninformed by reflection and theory can become unintentionally harmful or oppressive, while too much self-help can become self-centred, apolitical navel gazing.

A balanced, symbiotic, and energizing relationship between reflection and action is the essence of praxis (Freire, 2003). It is also essential to what Arnold, Burke, James, Martin & Thomas (1991) refer to as the ‘spiral design model’ for experiential education, an iterative process for group consciousness-raising and action informed by theory and reflection. Were an intersectional approach to action to create spaces for self-reflection, healing, and overcoming internalized oppression, the result might enhance people’s capacity to work for better informed social transformation.

Embracing Intersectionality: One of Many Ways Forward

In the above discussion I have alluded to several fears, challenges and dangers of an intersectional approach. These include the potential for fractured social movements, the difficulty those with unique intersections face in mobilizing political support, the fear of losing all the history and territory gained by previous structurally-oriented movements, including the fear of giving up power and resources to other marginalized groups. I have also suggested that instead of increased competition and isolation, such challenges call for increased solidarity, cooperation, and empathy amongst marginalized people and groups. Action based on mass solidarity that takes into account the inherent need to respect all stakeholders will undeniably be a slow process. As intersectionality posits that

we consider the multiple dimensions of power and privilege, it follows that moving forward with an intersectional approach includes multiple ways of organizing and acting. The following is but one example.

In her conversation with Roxanna Ng, Jeannette Armstrong (2005) describes the Okanagan Nation's concept of *Enowkin*. Both a process and a principle used in decision-making, *Enowkin* refers to building consensus.

But it's not consensus as understood by the dictionary definition, or the way that it's used today, which seems to mean everybody coming to an agreement, the idea being that if everybody sort of agrees with each other then they've reached consensus. Well, when we talk about that principle of *Enowkin*, we're saying that everybody doesn't have to come to an agreement, but that everybody recognizes the common ground upon which our differences rest. So when our traditional chiefs used to call for *Enowkin* they were asking people, when there was a decision to be made or a choice to be made, to gather together with the realization that each person has a different interest. (Armstrong & Ng, 2005, p.31)

As all members of the community will be affected by community decisions, the broadest range of views should be solicited and heard so that the decision can achieve maximum benefit.

Expanding on the principle of *Enowkin*, Armstrong adds that at an individual level, it is each person's responsibility to actively seek out the view we perceive to be the most different from our own and attempt to communicate across that difference. In this way difference, like biodiversity, is constructed as normal and an essential and enriching element of humanity.

When we do not operate from the philosophical idea that difference is not only natural but of critical importance, where are we operating from? In other words, where are we operating from if we do not start with the view that your difference informs and enriches me, gifts and honours me? In return, it is my responsibility to try to figure out a way to incorporate that difference so that we can build on it. By the same token you have the same responsibility toward me if we're in this together, if we're in the community together. (Armstrong & Ng, p.32)

While mindful not to appropriate a concept of which I have limited experiential understanding, as a guiding principle, *Enowkin* seems to me to reinforce the idea of intersectionality. It encourages overcoming stereotypes about the 'most different' Other in order to find points of connection and work in solidarity. Assertions such as these even begin to question the Left/Right political binary in which many activists are deeply entrenched, an assertion that feels risky indeed. Yet, as we potentially have points of connection and points of difference with *every* member of the human race, the corollary of an intersectional approach is an acknowledgment that we are all connected and interdependent in our shared global community, on a shared planet. Learning the principle of *Enowkin* at a community level might be instrumental in figuring out how to work in solidarity to affect change at a global level as well.

As I understand it, the action that stems from *Enowkin* rests on the development of relationships. Relationships can not only give rise to understanding, but also to a sense of reciprocity, trust, and a desire for community betterment. In addition to language-based communication, experiential learning methods, particularly arts-based methods, are well suited to developing relationships, as will be discussed in Act Five. The theatre-

based research described in this dissertation is one way that a group of people intentionally came together across difference to work toward change in a specific community: the University of Victoria.

Summary

This Act has traced the emergence of intersectional analyses via social conflict and critical theories. It has outlined practical challenges in terms of policy and action, as well as conceptual challenges in terms of the propensity toward binary thinking. It has also argued for the need to rid ourselves of internalized oppressions in order to work toward liberatory collective social change. Finally, it has presented a way forward through consensus, relationship, and the arts. As will be discussed particularly in Act Twelve, the need for an intersectional analysis as well as the challenges of intersectionality became increasingly important as the research progressed.

While this Act has given an overview of the definitions, debates, challenges, and potential embedded within the concept of intersectionality, it accounts for only part of the theoretical contribution of this research. The following Act discusses the second key concept: transformative learning.

Act 4 Transformative Learning

Liberation is thus a childbirth, and a painful one. The man or woman who emerges is a new person, viable only as the oppressor-oppressed contradiction is superseded by the humanization of all people. Or to put it another way, the solution of this contradiction is born in the labor which brings into the world this new being: no longer the oppressor nor longer oppressed, but human in the process of achieving freedom. (Freire, 2003, p.49)

I open with this quote by Paulo Freire because it usefully connects the previous Act to this one; that is, it connects the concept of intersectionality to the concept of transformative learning. In the previous Act, I proposed that an intersectional analysis helps us to understand that oppression exists in multiple formations, that in any given situation we can be both an oppressor and oppressed. The purpose of such an analysis, of course, is not simply to *understand* the nature of oppression, but to transform it—both within ourselves and within our global society. Indeed, this is the purpose of transformative learning. Yet, as Freire suggested, the process of liberation—of transformation—can be painful. It is a reconstitution of self that involves pain just as much as it involves the joy of becoming more fully human.

This Act introduces the reader to the theory of transformative learning. In particular, it draws from Mezirow's (1991) idea of 'perspective transformation' and how this has been applied to cross-cultural learning and the arts. It gives an overview of the pedagogy of transformative learning and then relates this pedagogy to a discussion of how spirituality is framed in transformative learning literature. It then takes a more in-

depth look at how a deep love of humanity motivates transformative pedagogues. Finally, it draws to a close by connecting the previous discussion on intersectionality with transformative learning.

Mezirow's Contribution: Perspective Transformation

During the early 1970s, a woman by the name of Edee Mezirow, who had spent many years away from formal schooling, made the decision to pursue an undergraduate education. Through this educational experience, Edee's perspective was so transformed that she subsequently made significant changes in her lifestyle and career. Witnessing this transformative process fascinated and enlightened Edee's husband, Jack Mezirow—so much so that he was inspired to undertake a national US-based study about women, like his wife, who similarly decided to return to college and the work force (Mezirow, 1991). This study made a landmark contribution to the theory of transformative learning, at the heart of which was the concept of perspective transformation.

As an adult educator, Mezirow's ideas were shaped by theories and history of his field and as such, perspective transformation entails a similar relationship between reflection and action as I mentioned in the previous Act: both praxis (Freire, 2003) and the spiral model of experiential learning (Arnold, et al., 1991). In his own words,

Perspective transformation is the process of becoming critically aware of how and why our assumptions have come to constrain the way we perceive, understand, and feel about the world; changing these structures of habitual expectation to make possible a more inclusive, discriminating, and integrative perspective; and,

finally, making choices or otherwise acting upon these new understandings.

(Mezirow, 1991, p.167)

This three-tier process of developing critical consciousness, undergoing perspective transformation and taking action was further elaborated through the use of a ten-phase model.

Based on his fieldwork with the women returning to studies or the work place, Mezirow suggested that ten possible phases of perspective transformation were as follows:

1. A disorienting dilemma;
2. Self-examination with feelings of guilt or shame;
3. A critical assessment of epistemic, sociocultural, or psychic assumptions;
4. Recognition that one's discontent and the process of transformation are shared and that others have negotiated a similar change;
5. Exploration of options for new roles, relationships, and actions;
6. Planning of a course of action;
7. Acquisition of knowledge and skills for implementing one's plans;
8. Provisional trying of new roles;
9. Building of competence and self-confidence in new roles and relationships; and
10. A reintegration into one's life on the basis of conditions directed by one's new perspective. (Mezirow, 1991, pp. 168-169)

Through this model, Mezirow was able to make sense not only of his wife's experience, but also provide a template from which adult educators could design potentially transformative pedagogy.

It is worth paying some attention to the starting point: the first phase of experiencing a disorienting dilemma. Like Freire, Mezirow (1991) cautions that the circumstances that lead to perspective transformation can be painful because “they often call into question deeply held personal values and threaten our very sense of self” (p. 168). Mezirow points out that perspective transformation can begin as a result of a series of smaller disorienting dilemmas, or “in response to an externally imposed epochal dilemma such as death, illness, separation or divorce, children leaving home, being passed over for promotion or gaining a promotion, failing an important examination, or retirement” (p.168). In other words, the devastating or ethically challenging experiences one inevitably encounters throughout a lifetime contain the potential for transformative learning. The reader may be familiar with the mythological image of a phoenix rising¹⁰ from the ashes; in this sense, perspective transformation is akin to a similar kind of creative destruction and rebirth.

Mezirow does not contend that perspective transformation *must* be the result of a painful experience, however. I will discuss two other kinds of events that can ultimately result in perspective transformation that relate to this study. These include interaction with various art-forms and immersion into a new culture.

Interaction with Art

Critical theorists, such as Marcuse, have argued that art with no overt political agenda can invoke critical consciousness and therefore should be considered a potentially dissenting force. Marcuse (1978) contended that interaction with various art forms can

¹⁰ For a different use of this metaphor, see Greenfield (1993), *Re-forming and re-valuing educational administration: Whence and when cometh the phoenix?*

create an intense aesthetic experience, or ‘shock’ whereby the onlooker comes to understand the subjection of truth in everyday experience. This aesthetic shock can cause a desire to “explode the given reality in the name of a truth normally denied or even unheard” (Marcuse, 1978, p.7). In other words, the potential for perspective transformation and revolutionary inspiration is found in the interaction between an individual and ‘high’ art, not necessarily art with an overtly political intent.

This preoccupation with individual consciousness and emphasis placed on non-political art forms presents a significant challenge to the adult education movement. Brookfield (2002) argues that if adult educators can move away from the tendency to negatively evaluate ‘high’ art as a privileged form of self-indulgence, we could entertain the possibility that “a powerful, private, estranging response to a work of art is a transformative moment for adult learners” (p.267). In comparison, because openly critical artistic expression—and Brookfield specifically cites Augusto Boal’s *Theatre of the Oppressed* as an example—is necessarily grounded in “an existing discourse of political reform” (p.268) it cannot create a truly novel or revolutionary experience. This insight is important because it distinguishes between a mandate of social change that seeks reform, versus one that seeks revolution—a topic expounded upon in Welton (2001).

One of the key weaknesses of Marcuse’s aesthetic theory is its dualistic division between ‘high’ and ‘low’ art forms, where one form inevitably has more emancipatory potential than the other. Not only does this division reinforce the longstanding classed, gendered, and racialized hierarchy in the art world that feminist aesthetic theorists have fervently critiqued (i.e. the hierarchy that determines what counts as high, good, beautiful or simply ‘art’, see, for example, Bovenschen, 1985; Lippard, 1984; Nochlin, 1988), it

also erases from discussion the reasons why other art forms are considered potentially liberating.

Advocates of art as a liberating force have constructed arguments from several standpoints. For proponents of interventionist popular theatre (such as Forum Theatre as described by Boal, 1998; 1979), it is not the passive reception of a play that is potentially liberating, but the critical and *physical* engagement with its content (i.e. a spectator coming on stage to replace one of the characters in an attempt to change the course of events). In practising their ideas with real people who have real experience with the issues, the spectators can examine which ideas are feasible, which are not, and why.

For other popular educators, quite simply, the act of creating art demystifies the otherwise highly regulated or elite art world and is therefore potentially liberating (marino, 1997). Still for others reminiscent of Marcuse, the arts need not serve any utilitarian purpose: as humans need both 'bread and roses' to flourish, access to the arts should be a fundamental right in self-proclaiming free and democratic societies (Thompson, 2002).

The angle from which one approaches the aesthetic experience, for me, was not the key theoretical puzzle at the outset of this research. I was and still am willing to accept that for Marcuse's subject, a moment of highly personal introspection may be pivotal, whereas for Boal's 'spect-actor' personal transformation may occur in the context of collective action. All art forms, including theatre, have the potential to serve both dominating and subversive roles. The point here is that aesthetic experiences do contain the possibility of moving participants beyond a rational acceptance of the *status quo*, which opens the subsequent possibility of acting for social change. In this way,

interaction with various art forms can serve as the “art gestalt” (Huss & Cwikel, 2005, p.8) or disorienting dilemma necessary to begin the process of perspective transformation.

Clover (2006b) provides an example of the power of participatory photography as a method of transformative learning. Artist-activists working in two separate community-based projects gave cameras to a group of children (in Victoria) and women (in Toronto). Both of these groups were encouraged to take photographs during their daily lives. The children’s efforts resulted in a photo installation, while the women’s effort resulted in a calendar. While there were some limitations in these projects’ respective capacities to influence structural change, worth noting were the effects the projects had on the participants.

Through the commitment and push of both the artist-educators, the women and the children came to see themselves as artists, with a new eye for taking, analyzing, and choosing photographs for public display. This new skill has instilled a much greater sense of confidence in all of the participants that in turn fosters a type of power comprising agency, skill, and identity. (Clover, 2006b, p.287)

Through risk-taking and practice, these children and women began to transform their self-concepts and see the world in a new way.

Cultural Immersion

As Mezirow (1991) suggested, coming into contact with a new culture can also give rise to a disorienting dilemma, as people from different cultures may have “customs

that contradict our own previously accepted presuppositions” (p.168). Witnessing and participating in different ways of being in the world can call into question our firmly held beliefs and this, in turn, has the potential to inspire transformative learning.

Several volunteer-sending organizations and training programs for intercultural awareness alert those about to intentionally embark on a cross-cultural experience to the disorientation that may come from this process. For example, my work with Canadian Crossroads International and other international organizations alerted me to various tools, including the ‘cycle of cultural adjustment’ and the ‘iceberg model of culture’ (Centre for Intercultural Learning, 2006) or, in literary terms, the ‘hero’s journey’ (Campbell, 1968). Over time, as we become increasingly familiar with a new culture, we go from a state of blissful ignorance, not knowing that we don’t know, to the disorientation of knowing that we don’t know something, but not being able to figure out what is going on around us— what it is that we don’t know.

The cycle of cultural adjustment suggests that gradually, as people stay in one place and continue to learn, we begin to understand some of what we did not know before and regain a little of the confidence lost through the process of disorientation. International students or others on short term international placements take those insights back home with them and learn how to integrate them into their home identities. People who relocate permanently to a new place become increasingly aware of the new culture and can sometimes achieve the same level of cultural literacy as locals, though they will always have the knowledge that different *normals* exist.

Viewed through the frame of transformative learning, we can see that cross-cultural interactions are rich opportunities for perspective transformation. However, these

tools, like Mezirow's ten phase model, should not be taken as prescriptive—no two people are alike and some international interns I have supported claim their experience contains several cycles, rather than one overarching cycle of adjustment. For others, though, learning about these models has proven to be very useful simply because they *acknowledge* the struggle of adjusting to a new culture and through this acknowledgement people do not feel as isolated in their pain. In this way, cultural adjustment models acknowledge some of the struggle that comes with perspective transformation.

Chamberlin-Quinlisk (2005) rightly points out that the potential for perspective transformation through cross-cultural interactions does not necessitate travel to another country. Especially in nations that attract immigrants from around the world, there can be equal immersion in diversity 'across the street' as there can be 'across continents.' This "access, however, does not translate directly into opportunity" (p.470). This study intentionally connected third and fourth year university students in her course on Intercultural Communication either to first and second year ESL students in a Composition and Rhetoric course, or to co-workers, neighbours, or parents of friends.

Chamberlin-Quinlisk found that such intentional connections often led to perspective transformation that had ripple effects in other parts of her students' lives. From evidence that many of her students' assumptions and prejudices were brought to the surface through these encounters, she relates these students' experiences to transformative learning. Students were subsequently better able to reconstruct a new identity and "reposition themselves as members of an intercultural community" (p.477).

Meaningful, intentional, respectful dialogue with people they perceived as ‘other’ helped these students to overcome some of their fear and discrimination around difference.

While I am able to generalize insights from Chamberlin-Quinlisk’s study to Canadian classrooms and neighbourhoods, some questions remain about who benefits, and how, from such encounters across difference. The data she analyzed came from her own students only, not from the ESL students or the neighbours and colleagues who became the students’ partners in this exercise. It should be noted here that her students were not described as coming from one ethnic group; they came from a variety of ethnic backgrounds, as did their learning partners.

In their journal entries and class discussions, however, these students claimed that their partners also reported some benefits or attitudinal changes. For example, as a result of this course, one student initiated a conversation with an immigrant colleague in his workplace. This initial conversation between two people gradually led to more congenial relationships in the workplace:

Since I began talking to [my immigrant colleague] more consistently, my coworkers also would begin to talk with him. It ended up getting to the point where he would walk over to our side for something and everyone would kid around with him and be very friendly. (Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2005, p.476)

Similarly, another student discussed how her learning partner was frustrated with how some people treat him due to his limited ability to express himself well in English. This learning partner admitted to overcoming some of his own personal prejudices: “He said that he should learn more because some things that he learned from me made him start to think that [he] was stereotyping all Americans” (p.475). As the student was a young

mother with over fifty body piercings, she implied that some of her learning partner's stereotypes may have related to an assumption that 'someone like her' was not capable of being a good, responsible mother. Though the above two examples were secondary data reported via the students' interpretations, they nevertheless suggest that both parties (in a relationship across perceived differences) can potentially benefit.

Pedagogy of Transformative Learning

Mezirow's work on perspective transformation has been widely applied in adult education circles, where educators aim to design pedagogy that intentionally causes learners to experience a disorienting dilemma in a safe environment. As Clover, Follen & Hall (2000) contend:

Adult education must take into account the structures and practices of exploitation and more deeply explore the beliefs citizens have about themselves, their workplaces and communities in terms of how these have been shaped. This also requires examining the ways in which education institutions and systems have reproduced social inequities. (p.13)

The main challenge of applying Mezirow's work has been in drawing a connection between the individual and society, between beliefs and the organizations in which these beliefs have been shaped.

Critics have pointed out that Mezirow's original work neglected "the relationship between individual and social transformation (Tibbitts, 2005, p.108). Similarly, and in light of the above discussion on the perspective shift that can occur through cross-cultural relationships, discussions in anti-racist circles have been questioning how to move

beyond individual awareness to action. There has been much discussion about how 'white' people can contribute to anti-racist struggles, for instance Rothenberg's (2002) edited collection on 'white privilege'. McIntosh's (2002) influential work on 'unpacking the invisible knapsack' of privilege has helped many people understand how "whites are carefully taught not to recognize white privilege, as males are taught not to recognize male privilege" (p.97). Through work such as this, it is generally acknowledged that people racialized as 'white' should develop an awareness of their unearned privilege as a starting point for acting against racism.

Yet, a significant critique has been launched toward 'confessional' anti-racist strategies that encourage 'white' people to "confess and apologize for their unearned privileges, which does little to dismantle the structures of white supremacy" (Lee & Lutz, 2005, p.19). I would add that neither do such models dismantle inequitable organizations resulting from other, intersecting aspects of oppression.

Drawing from Derman-Sparks' (1994) model of 'identifiable stages of self-development in confronting racism,' McDonald & Coleman (1999) further suggest that anti-oppressive work takes on different forms according to where people are positioned in structures of privilege. The model they discuss is essentially three-fold. It includes 1) acknowledging the intentional or unintentional harm done to others, or the harm that has been done to ourselves; 2) moving through the emotional states involved in this acknowledgment (e.g. pain, guilt, shame, anger, rage, despair); and 3) creating a new, politicized, action-oriented identity that entails working in solidarity across difference. The authors propose that the application of the first stage is different for those with

privileged attributes, as they overcome the denial of having *done* harm, while others overcome any denial of having *experienced* harm.

While continuing to acknowledge the ideologies of racism, homophobia, ableism, sexism and so on, a more nuanced, intersectional approach would imply that for transformative education models such as these to be effective, we should acknowledge both the ways in which we have done harm and the ways in which we have experienced harm. As I have already quoted from Freire (2003), the goal is to become a “new being: no longer the oppressor nor longer oppressed, but human in the process of achieving freedom” (p.49). Then, of course, as this new being we must also learn how to act.

As was suggested in the previous Act on intersectionality, it is difficult to let go of those aspects of oppression we consider to be most fundamental. Yet as Ellsworth (1992) argued and Laramée (2006) implied, the people often perceived to be in the mythical centre of privilege—the successful, able-bodied, hetero-‘white’ males—can also be oppressed by the nature of the very systems in which they live and work, for instance, the ‘Universe-ity’ (Etmanski, 2005). In light of this reality, Freire (2003) concluded: “hence, the radical requirement—both for the individual who discovers himself or herself to be an oppressor and for the oppressed—that the concrete situation which begets oppression must be transformed” (p.50). Pedagogical models of transformative learning, then, ought not to be limited to individual consciousness or behaviour change when they can serve to transform the social systems that create oppression in the first place.

Spiritual Dimensions of Transformative Learning

Many educators have risked drawing a link between spirituality and transformative learning. Here I intentionally use the word ‘risk’ because the legacy of Cartesian dualism, positivism and Enlightenment thinking is still upon us in Academe, where talk of spirituality is strictly forbidden in most circles, marginally accepted in others, and gladly embraced in a few.

While some authors make the link explicitly (English & Gillen, 2000; Hirji, 2006; O’Sullivan, 1999; Tolliver & Tisdell, 2006) others broach the subject more indirectly via ecology (Clover 1999; Clover, Follen & Hall, 2000; Hill & Clover, 2003), the arts (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks & Kasl, 2006), Indigenous ways of knowing (Apffel-Marglin with PRATEC, 1998; King, 1993), religion (Fleischer, 2006), hope (Freire, 1992; Lander, Napier, Fry, Brander & Acton, 2005) and love (Freire, 2003; Guevara, 1965; hooks, 1994a). Furthermore, these dimensions of spirituality are not, of course, mutually exclusive; educators can and do draw upon any combination of these to promote transformative learning.

Not to be mistaken with religion, Tolliver & Tisdell (2006) provide a useful definition of spirituality as it applies to transformative learning. They suggest that spirituality

is about meaning making and a sense of wholeness, healing, and the interconnectedness of all things. Spirituality is different from religion; it is about an individual’s journey toward wholeness, whereas religions are organized communities of faith that often provide meaningful community rituals that serve as a gateway to the sacred. But because there is a spiritual dimension to all

religions, spirituality and religion are interrelated for many people, particularly if their conscious manifestation of spirituality takes place primarily in the context of an organized religion. (p.38)

While the act of religious conversion itself can be framed as a radical perspective transformation (Fleischer, 2006), for the purpose of this study, I am more interested in a spiritual transformative learning that assists learners (both teachers and students) to come to understand their more authentic selves and foster relationships based on this authenticity (Cranton, 2006, p.5).

Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks & Kasl (2006) posit that expressive ways of knowing (e.g., the arts) can serve to foster this kind of authenticity because they can bring into consciousness elements a person's identity from which they might otherwise not think to draw. Because we are trained to do so, we tend to compartmentalize different aspects of our identity for separate occasions and this can limit our ability to engage in authentic relationships. Moreover, the reality of inter-personal and structural power differentials can further inhibit authenticity.

Nevertheless, expressive techniques such as the arts can accelerate the process of getting to know each other or building group trust as we can “learn about each other in ways that [do] not come out when [we simply ask the question], ‘tell me about yourselves’ ” (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks & Kasl, 2006, p.30). That said, Cranton (2006) warns that there are structural constraints—externally imposed policies, human limitations, and the reality of power dynamics—that prevent or undermine authentic relationships in the classroom and that these should be openly discussed with students.

The simple fact that educators actively seek to create conditions for transformative learning, particularly spiritual learning, also raises some ethical questions. For Ettlign (2006), such dilemmas come from an understanding that “altering basic assumptions is fraught with fear and resistance even when the outcome may be a desired expansion of consciousness” (p.59). This understanding leads to questions such as:

Do educators have the right to ask people to examine and change their basic assumptions as part of our educational programs? Should one expect learners to seek this kind of learning experience? Is it justified to pose real-life dilemmas that force examination of one’s life story and lived assumptions? And do adult educators have the expertise to lead participants through the transforming experience? (Ettlign, 2006, p.63)

Similarly, through her practice, hooks (1994b) reminds educators of the responsibility that comes with authority: “commitment to engaged pedagogy carries with it the willingness to be responsible, not to pretend that professors do not have the power to change the direction of our students’ lives” (p.206). The power differentials of a classroom, as well as the knowledge that perspective transformation can be a painful process, not only hold educators accountable for their actions, but above all else also point to the need for a profound ethic of care (Gilligan, 1982).

Transformative Pedagogy as an Act of Love

While most of the literature on transformative learning relates to pedagogical strategies, we should bear in mind Mezirow’s original inspiration from women, including his wife, who, in the act of returning to University, underwent a significant change in

perspective. This change did not occur simply through exposure to one classroom setting alone, but as a cumulative effect of their experiences.

As hooks (1994b) admits, students do not always enjoy her courses: “often they find my courses challenge them in ways that are deeply unsettling. It took time and experience for me to understand that the rewards of engaged pedagogy might not emerge during a course” (p.206). Moreover, it has already been discussed that a wide range of experiences can cause a disorienting dilemma including naturally or externally imposed events, such as art, cross-cultural immersion, death, divorce, work-related promotions or the lack thereof. In this sense, while educators may wish to create the conditions of transformative learning within their classrooms, given that disorienting dilemmas can potentially occur at any time, place, or space, we would be wise to develop skills for supporting transformative growth outside the classroom as well.

Inevitably, individual educators and learners will negotiate boundaries in different ways, and Cranton (2006) gives several examples of these. She adds that “to be authentic and develop authentic relationships, it is important that teachers not contradict their values or their philosophy of teaching in this respect” (p.9). For some this will mean respectful distance, for others this will include holiday dinners. hooks (1994b) has “preferred to schedule lunches with students” (p.204). Here the lines between teacher, friend, counsellor begin to blur and these fuzzy boundaries can at times be uncomfortable for both instructors and students alike.

Educators such as Freire (2003) trust that individuals can overcome such discomfort if the connection is fundamentally based on a deep love of humanity: “dialogue cannot exist ... in the absence of a profound love for the world and for people.

The naming of the world, which is an act of creation and re-creation, is not possible if it is not infused with love” (p.50). In this sense, the act of being a critical educator—an educator who carefully and respectfully supports transformative learning—is in fact an act of love.

Freire is not the only revolutionary educator to speak of love, however. He cites, for example, Che Guevara’s famous quote: “Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous, that the true revolutionary is guided by strong feelings of love. It is impossible to think of an authentic revolutionary without this quality” (cited in Freire, 2003, p.89¹¹). This sentiment was also expressed by Martin Luther King Jr. (1963) in his ‘letter from Birmingham jail’: “The question is not whether we will be extremists, but what kind of extremists we will be. Will we be extremists for hate or for love?” (King Centre, 2004, p.6 [Paragraph 27 of document]). I imagine that these men’s wisdom came, in good part, from listening to their mothers.

hooks (1994a) also states that “it is in choosing love, and beginning with love as the ethical foundation for politics, that we are best positioned to transform society in ways that enhance the collective good” (p.247). She describes how the success of the Civil Rights movement in the United States can be attributed to Martin Luther King, Jr.’s above-mentioned choice to love. “He had the prophetic insight to recognize that a revolution built on any other foundation would fail” (p.244). Through a deep love of humanity, even humanity in its most ugly manifestations, people can overcome the urge to dominate and oppress and choose a different way forward. Perhaps the revolutionary potential of transformative learning is found in the courage to love.

¹¹ A translation of his original speech is available online on multiple websites, for example, cited in references under Guevara (1965). This quote is found in Section 14 on Love and Living Humanity, Paragraph 1.

Summary

As has been described in this Act, the disorienting dilemmas that can spark transformative learning can occur both intentionally in the context of an explicit learning situation (i.e. classroom) and unintentionally in the daily struggles of the human experience. Educators can use the arts or intentional cross-cultural settings to foster perspective transformation, being mindful of the ethics of potentially provoking spiritual growth. The desire to become a critical, transformative educator was linked to a deep love of humanity.

Drawing from the discussion on intersectionality, it is understood that people can at once be oppressors and oppressed, but that the reality of power differentials is exerted through structures and relationships. Through an intersectional approach to transformative learning, it becomes necessary to recognize the reality and implications of complex power dynamics while simultaneously working to foster points of connection. These two concepts suggest that the transformation of oppressive social structures can begin through authentic relationships. With this conceptual foundation solidly in place, it is time to move on to a discussion of Methodology.

Act 5 Methodology

In May 2004, the University of Victoria's Faculty of Education hosted the joint international conference of the 45th Adult Education Research Conference (AERC) and the 23rd national conference of the Canadian Association for the Study of Adult Education (CASAE). The theme of this conference was Adult Education for Democracy, Social Justice and a Culture of Peace and, in addition to the paper presentations, roundtables and symposia, this conference included a substantial art exposition. As part of the research described by Clover (2006b), I was the curator of this socially-oriented art exposition that integrated quilts, mosaics, interactive installations, photography, theatre, and much more.

Nineteen pieces of work that ranged in size from a small book to a clothesline strung across the main conference foyer were included and these pieces represented the efforts of thirteen individuals and five collectives from across Canada and several more from New Zealand. Some of these pieces were part of academic research in Education, others were the result of community groups' work, and still others were the works of so-called individual 'artists' in a more traditional sense of the word. During this conference, however, the lines between these categories were blurred and all were represented, side by side, in the official conference proceedings (Clover with Shinaba & Etmanski, 2004).

The intersecting space between art, research, education, community development and activism is the methodological space I embraced to carry out this research. In fact, it was necessary for me to establish an identity in each of these areas to complete this participatory, action-oriented, arts-based study in the Faculty of Education. Some of these identities were already familiar, others, in particular the one of 'artist,' took a more

concerted effort to learn. In embracing these overlapping identities, I am following in the footsteps of researchers in an ever-emergent methodological field known as arts-based research, a methodology I discuss here. To begin the discussion, I open with an overview of action-oriented and participatory approaches to research. I then look at arts-based research (ABR) in more depth, drawing links to art as method, arts as representation and the multiple forms of validity of such an approach.

*An Orientation toward Action and Participation*¹²

Action-oriented approaches to research draw from a broad spectrum of methodologies and methods and build on traditions from many parts of the world. The epistemological and ontological claims are generally that knowledge is co-created through the research and that the point of research is not merely to understand the world, but to *change* it. Research approaches related to participatory research include, participatory action research (PAR) (Hall, 2001; 2002), community empowerment research (Ristock & Pennell, 1996), community action research (CAR) (Reitsma-Street, 2002; Reitsma-Street & Brown, 2004; Brown & Reitsma-Street, 2003), as well as various other participatory evaluations (Clover & Harris, 2005), budgets and appraisals.

Participatory Research (PR) as conceptualized by early Adult Education practitioners, particularly educators in the geographic South, is an approach to research that developed largely outside of and in opposition to academic institutions. It has a particular history rooted in the work and struggles of marginalized peoples, largely in the Majority World (Brown & Tandon, 1983; Carroll, 2004; Reason & Bradbury, 2001;

¹² I elaborate on this discussion in my forthcoming publication in collaboration with M. Pant in the *Journal of Action Research* (Etmanski & Pant, forthcoming, 2007).

Wallerstein, 1999). PR is both an action-oriented research methodology and movement of international solidarity. The early work of individuals such as Julius Nyerere, Marja-Liisa Swantz, Orlando Fals Borda, Rajesh Tandon, Budd Hall and many others critiqued the ‘monopoly’ universities held on the production and control of knowledge through research (Hall, 2001). They argued that professional social scientists ‘mined’ communities for ideas to advance their own careers or used research to inform decision-makers of policies and development interventions *for*, not *with*, the people they researched (Hall, 2002). Instead, participatory researchers promoted the ability of grassroots people to create their own knowledge and work to solve their own problems through participatory research processes.

Historically, a distinguishing characteristic of this tradition of PR is the specific usage of and weight given to the word *participatory*. The extent to which research is *participatory* is relative to the *control* the beneficiaries of the research have over the whole research process: from problem-definition to data collection, analysis, and dissemination of findings. PR is sometimes conceived as a “natural and common way of working in communities” (Hall, 2001, p.174), and “the term ‘researcher’ can refer to both the community or workplace persons involved as well as those with specialized training” (Brown & Tandon, 1983, p.279). In this tradition, the strategic, political, and educational work of activists in grassroots social movements (e.g., the Women’s, Civil Rights, Aboriginal self-determination, Environmental, and Labour movements, as well as the work of organizations such as Headlines Theatre) can often be framed through the lens of PR.

More recently, the practice has become increasingly known and integrated with other action-oriented, people-centred, community-based, and feminist approaches to research that were emerging at the same time in other parts of the world. The distinct tradition of resistance to the Academy has given way to multi-faceted and critical approaches to participatory, action-oriented research. For example, in line with intersectional analyses, communities are less idealistically perceived as homogenous entities devoid of their own systems of privilege and oppression.

As a result, a more complex understanding of the communities in which participatory approaches to research are practiced has taken shape (Israel et al, 2003, Kothari, 2001, Maguire, 2001, Reitsma-Street & Brown, 2004). While diverse community members may work in solidarity to achieve a specific goal, participatory researchers should seek to understand internal power dynamics to run a lesser risk of solidifying gendered, classed, racialized, and other kinds of hierarchies through the research process (Israel et al, 2003, especially the discussion on “who is the ‘community,’” p.60).

Questions around ownership and control of the research agenda continue to be particularly salient in this approach to research:

Who initiates? Who determines salient questions? Who determines what constitutes findings? Who determines how data will be collected? Who determines in what forms the findings will be made public, if at all? Who determines what representations will be made of participants in the research? (Lincoln & Guba, 2000, p. 175)

In ideal forms of participatory research, the line between researchers and participants is blurred, with participants-as-researchers owning and in control of all parts of the research process. However, for a doctoral project, the answer to most of the above questions is: *the doctoral student researcher*. To resolve this dilemma, Brown & Reitsma-Street (2003) theorize that as a research process evolves, students and practitioners sometimes “name what they do as CAR ... while inside a project” (p.69). Israel et al, 2003 further offer that “participation in all phases of the research does not mean that everyone is involved in the same way in all activities” (p.63). Along these lines, it is interesting to note that in positivist forms of research, control was seen as resting solely in the hands of the researcher. Lack of control over the research was seen to undermine claims of scientific objectivity and validity. Now, relinquishing control can lend validity to a participatory action-oriented study.

While this project set out to incorporate elements of participation and inspire action, in the interest of maintaining the integrity of the practice, I did not explicitly name it ‘participatory’ research. As will be discussed in Act Eight, periods in this research process lent themselves more freely to authentic forms of participation, where I truly did give up some measure of control. However, for the purpose of completing a doctoral degree, I have framed this as *embedded participatory research* within the larger methodological framework of an arts-based study. With this understanding of my orientation toward action and participation in mind, I now begin an overview of arts-based research.

Arts-Based Research

Questions around the intersection of art and research can be found in many disciplines, but a key location where arts-based research (ABR) has gained some legitimacy is in the discipline of Education. As is evident from the 2004 AERC/CASAE conference described above and theorists such as Harris (1999) and Clover & Stalker (2005), Adult Educators have long embraced the arts (particularly popular theatre as will be subsequently described) as a means of investigating the human experience and stimulating learning. Moreover, a special edition of the *Alberta Journal of Educational Research* (2002, e.g. Butterwick; Neilsen; Conrad in references) was dedicated entirely to the theme of 'Exemplars of Arts-Based Research Methodologies' and the 2002 Canadian Association for the Study of Women and Education was dedicated to the theme of 'Embodied Knowing.' Neilsen suggested in 2002 that "it [was] only a matter of time before these discussions moved inside from the margins" (p.206), but in 2007, I am still waiting. Despite the more common work of McLuhan (1964) and Postman & Weingartner's (1969) reiteration of how the 'medium is the message' and Freire's (2003) *exposé* of the 'banking concept of education,' some educators have been less receptive to the arts, as is evidenced by standard curriculum in schools and universities around the world.

Nevertheless, a key proponent of ABR is the former President of the American Education Research Association (AERA), Elliot Eisner (1981; 1997). While Eisner (1997) claims that he has been justifying arts-based research since the 1970s, his Presidential Address at the 1993 AERA conference is noteworthy as "its main theme was about educational research and its conceptual and methodological orientation" (Phillips,

1995, pp.72); in particular, its emerging methodological orientation toward the arts. Other issues raised included “curriculum, ... the modes of presentation of material by researchers in their professional papers and by students in their classroom reports, and about the evaluation of such material” (Phillips, 1995, p.71). While I acknowledge again the fuzzy boundaries between pedagogy, research, and community development, these broad themes of method, representation and validity will be taken up in the remainder of this Act.

Art as Method

Unlike the classic mystery story where the deceased is usually a stranger or an unknown quantity to the detectives, all at this gathering have been close to the modernist ‘body.’ They experienced its previous vigour, sometimes as gatekeeping power limiting experimentation but at other times as a source of creative tension. (Diamond & Mullen, 1999, p.3)

As suggested by Eisner (1997), arts-based researchers have been working to establish credibility in the presence of the ‘modernist body’ for over three decades. Yet, to put this discussion in perspective, I will begin by stating that social scientists have already gained much territory. It now goes without saying that social phenomena *do* exist and we have a number of more or less accepted methods for gathering data about these phenomena: questionnaires, interviews, focus groups, observation, participant-observation, and so on. The reality that interaction with various creative media can also elicit information is taken for granted by some, revolutionary for others, and abhorrent for others still.

In citing Eisner's Presidential Address, although critical, Phillips (1995) reiterates that "the arts open up domains that might well remain transparent to us if we worked only in the 'linear' scientific mode" (p.72) in the same way that other forms of science give us the information necessary, for instance, to fly planes. The point here is not that one is better, only that different kinds of 'science' are complementary as they can reveal different kinds of truths. As stated by Harris (1999), the arts give access to "other ways of knowing" (p.113). To gain a holistic understanding of the world, then, we can start by acknowledging that all forms of knowing have the potential for validity.

Using creative media can bring to the surface pre-conscious or previously unarticulated concerns and desires (Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks & Kasl, 2006). Strange, beautiful, and unexpected outcomes can take shape when people are given permission to be creative; for example, to draw (Huss & Cwikel, 2005), to take or look at photographs (Clover, 2006b; Gabella, 1998; Roy, 2005), to read or write poetry (Furman, 2006), to engage in theatre activities (Boal, 1979; 2002; Butterwick, 2002; 2003; Butterwick & Selman, 2003), or a broad range of other arts-based media (Clover & Stalker, 2005; Diamond & Mullen, 1999). The arts access 'other' (and 'othered') knowledge that cannot be so easily accessed via questions and conversation alone.

Arts-based researchers recognize "in the creative process the integration of intuitive and rational modes of understanding through engaging the whole of the person (emotions and intellect) in the process of understanding" (Simons & McCormack, 2007, p.297). For example, working with Bedouin women, Huss & Cwikel (2005) found that through their creations with pastels and clay, the women were not only able come to better understand and subsequently articulate their own concerns, but working

collectively they were also able to imagine other possible realities. Through the discussion that ensued from their drawings, the women communicated concerns that the researchers believed would otherwise have gone unspoken.

Knowledge that comes through the arts can include empathy and understanding and this has been particularly evident in cross-cultural environments. The same study of Bedouin women spoke of how cross-cultural understanding is fostered when “a specific story or personal detail is expressed rather than when generalized ideologies are expressed” (Huss & Cwikel, 2005, p.10). Although specific, these personal stories can also offer points of connection for others to recognize themselves in these stories and in this way art also becomes “a means of conveying truths about the human condition” (Furman, 2006, p.138). Yet, one should be cautious not to overstate the usefulness of creating empathy.

As Gabella (1998) writes,

A little empathy can be deceptive. If we are to include potent works of art in the history curriculum, we must push students to look beyond their first impressions of human feeling. While the arts may effectively lend insight into human thought, intention, and affect, students must also seek to understand the particular context in which a work of art is produced, lest they (mis)use these representations simply to confirm a stereotypical view of an era. (p.38)

In this sense, practising ‘deep listening’ (Butterwick & Selman, 2003) can help to ensure we fully understand the messages that emerge through the arts.

The possibility that arts can deepen rather than illuminate misunderstandings gives rise to other thorny issues. In 1995, Phillips published an extensive commentary on

(or rebuttal to) Eisner's AERA Presidential Address about the arts in education. He does make some concessions about the usefulness of the arts, for example after seeing a film that set the context for a study, "the numerical results, which [the researcher] also presented, took on a new interest and significance in this richer context" (p.73). However, his main purpose is to make several claims against ABR. While some of these can be brushed aside as emanating from Phillips' positivist research tradition, other claims are worth investigating in more depth.

First, Phillips points out "the potential *abuses* of the use of film and literature—for a skilful ideologue or propagandist can use the power of film and literature to convince an audience of some thesis, without offering sufficient logically relevant evidence; in such cases, the arts are the very *antithesis* of research" (Phillips, 1995, p.78). While I would argue that statistics can be used in the same way, it is for this reason that the arts are not inherently socially progressive. Although they can be such, they can be equally dangerous when used in advertising and other forms of socially regressive propaganda.

A second critique Phillips gives is in reference to Hemingway's *The Old Man and the Sea*. Here he comments parenthetically,

(The description might induce some sympathy for turtles, an appreciation of their nobility, and a wish to help their survival in endangered environments, but these are different and noncontroversial aspects of literature that I suspect few would want to question; although I should note that the scientific article induced precisely the same emotions in me. Literature is neither necessary nor sufficient to raise people's sympathies!) (Phillips, 1995, p. 76)

Richardson (1994) traces such thinking to the seventeenth century, where the world of writing was divided into literary and scientific categories. “Fiction was ‘false’ because it invented reality, unlike science, which was ‘true,’ because it simply ‘reported’ objective reality in a single, unambiguous voice” (Richardson, 1994, p.518). Neilson rejects Phillips’ argument all together by claiming: “Fiction is knowledge. Poetry is knowledge. The arts are ways of knowing” (p. 208). Post-modern theorizing and, in particular, recent discussions around power and the researcher’s hand in representation have called into question the positivist monopoly on truth and I will discuss representation later in this Act and again during the Intermission. For now, staying close to Phillips’ critique, I will raise the question of accessibility here instead.

To me, rather than strengthening his argument—I can grant that sympathy alone is not sufficient—such a comment raises questions about how knowledge is disseminated. While he is not alone in being moved by scientific articles, such articles are rarely read outside of academe, nor can they be read by people without the requisite literacy skills, including literacy in this case, in English.

In addition to accessibility of knowledge, this critique raises questions about accessibility to the means of producing knowledge. For example, because they did not believe they could argue their points using technical reasoning, some artists at the above mentioned AERC/CASAE conference asked observers to ‘read our quilts’ (Clover & Markle, 2003). In this way,

When participants have the opportunity to portray their experience through different art forms, they often reveal insights that they cannot articulate in words. For people or groups who are less articulate, who learn in different ways, or who

have different cultural backgrounds, it can be a most useful means of engaging them ... and offering them a voice. (Simons & McCormack, 2007, p.296)

Therefore, not only are multiple data collection methods necessary, so too are multiple forms of representation.

Art as Representation

Although diagrams, graphs, charts of various kinds, and even some images (cartoons, photographs, drawings) are generally accepted as valid means of representing data within the confines of a text, art alone as a form of scientific representation is still relatively uncommon outside the disciplines of fine arts. This is partly because many people do not have (or do not believe they have) the requisite aesthetic literacy to interpret the validity of the art and partly because the usual (and career-demanding) means of disseminating knowledge are simply not accommodating. In the case of arts-based evaluation for instance, “few evaluation journals offer scope for alternative forms of representation, and sponsors are not always open to receiving creative evaluation reports” (Simons & McCormack, 2007, p.300).

Although the over-emphasis on disseminating knowledge entirely in text format raises concerns for me, the format accepted for non-fiction books and articles is also becoming more flexible, for example, with the publication of the script of my own performance piece ‘Reframing Alice’s Restaurant’ (Etmanski, 2005). Different creative representations also include Cole’s (2006) ‘Coyote and Raven go Canoeing’ written entirely in free verse, as well as the conversational format of articles such as Armstrong & Ng (2005) and Eisner (1997). Eisner (1997) further suggests that increased use of

computer technologies to disseminate research will enable multi-media representations to become more common.

Other arts-based researchers have described how, just as using art as method lends itself to different understandings, representing findings through creative means also has powerful effects. Conrad (2002) claims that until she began using dramatic text to represent her work, “the descriptions [she] wrote initially were long, awkward, not at all to [her] satisfaction. [She] was unable to articulate the significance of the moments in a scholarly, explanatory form of writing” (p.256). As Clover (2006b) further suggests, “for an arts-based researcher, an important part of knowledge dissemination is to showcase the art projects themselves” (p.49). For example, Simons & McCormack (2007) explain how McCormack used a dance performance as his inaugural professorial lecture, and how

The messages from the performance were considered to be so powerful by members of the audience, that further funding was provided by the regional health authority to enable the dance to be performed in a number of other venues with care staff. (p.306)

Similarly, Furman (2006) uses research poems “to communicate the emotional and contextual world of the research respondent ‘effectively and efficiently’ ” (p.137). In this way “the arts provided another form of communication” (Harris, 1999, p.113) and in so doing, provided another means of stimulating learning and creatively disseminating knowledge.

Conferences such as the joint AERC/CASAE gathering described in the introduction to this Act provide other venues for art installations to be positioned as valid representations, in particular for the work of student-researchers. While Elvy (2004)

complimented her photography with an academic presentation, Yalte (2004) and Plett (2004) allowed their installation and quilts to speak for themselves.

As with any representation, art does, of course, pose a few dilemmas. One such dilemma stems from the question of the “interpretation of the meaning of images, both by the creator of the image and the viewer” (Clover, 2006b, p.278). Because research has historically been concerned with conveying *the* truth, art is sometimes perceived as overly subjective. Yet, with the post-modern turn we are coming to understand that we filter the meaning of text through our own experiences in the same way that we filter art, which means this argument can, in some contexts, become circular.

Conrad (2002) argues that using arts-based media (in her case, dramatic text) to represent findings was in itself a form of interpretation, as “analysis is embedded in the process of writing and in the [final] written text” (p.260). Butterwick (2002) further claims that rather than interpretation being ‘the final product’ of research, it “is part of the entire research process from problem formulation to presentation of results” (p.242). In training students as arts-based researchers, Simons & McCormack (2007) encourage reflexivity in their students to address dilemmas due to interpretation. Rather than deny subjectivity, they teach students to “become conscious of [their] values and know where and when [these values] were affecting in ways that deepened [the students’] insight and when they interfered with understanding the main themes” (p.302). Elements of bias cannot be completely removed from even the most clearly written or seemingly objective text as bias even influences preference in topic, method, and career of author and reader alike.

A similar dilemma comes from the possibility that the artist's voice (whichever medium that voice may take) may dominate over that of the participants or that of the essence of the data. This dilemma is resolved, somewhat, in participatory arts endeavours where participants use art to speak for themselves, a subject to which I return in Act Eight and which I demonstrate in Act Nine. However, as Clover (2006b) described, even in participatory photography projects, choices are made around which (often of many) photos will be used in the final representation. While the participants in these projects chose their own photos, one of the artist-educators in her study talked about the "internal power struggle" (p.280) she experienced when choosing photos on the participants' (children's) behalf—a struggle I also experienced, which will be described in the intermission.

In spite of these problematic areas, Eisner (1997) offers five reasons to use creative means of representation. These include, first, that the arts enlarge our understanding. He suggests that the reason to use a specific tool is because it does a better job than others. Despite the potential for stereotyping described above, he suggests that arts are useful in eliciting an empathetic response. Second, he argues, the arts can portray a sense of the particular, and thereby deepen our understanding of the particular, in ways that abstractions cannot. Third, he draws attention to the potential for 'productive ambiguity,' suggesting that "ironically, good research often complicates our lives" (p.8). Fourth, the arts increase the range of questions addressed by researchers. Since we "learn to think within the medium we choose" (p.8), the arts can give rise to questions from novel perspectives. Finally, he suggests that the arts can activate and cultivate multiple

forms of human intelligence. As different researchers inevitably possess different skills, use of the arts can express a broader range of human researcher aptitudes.

I will close this section by illustrating the value of disseminating findings via creative representations with my own experience. Between October 2006 and April 2007, over 150 people witnessed the live performance of UNSETTLED. After the first public performance, five possibilities for subsequent performances were opened and we were able to accept two of these invitations. In addition, I have distributed over thirty copies of the DVD of the November performance. The participants and I were interviewed by local radio and newspapers, as well as several campus publications. I mention these not to boast, but simply to juxtapose this with the reality that only a handful of people will read this dissertation in full and perhaps, if I am lucky, a few others will pick it up to skim. In terms of disseminating and co-creating knowledge in an accessible forum, it is clear to me that a performance is more effective than a dissertation—and that the work required for both, though different in nature, was equal in weight.

In making this claim I recognize that part of academic protocol is the process of allowing claims to pass as true, valid, justified and substantiated. Academic readers/viewers are therefore faced with the dilemma of evaluating what makes a ‘good’ or ‘valid’ arts-based product. From the solicited and unsolicited feedback I have received from friends and strangers, particularly from international students in the audience, I am confident that the performance was a valid representation of reality. Nevertheless, for the purpose of fulfilling my current academic obligations, in the next section I will discuss the forms of validity applicable to arts-based research.

Validity

Many researchers have challenged us to think critically and creatively about validity claims in research. Traditional conceptions of validity tend to centre around accuracy, reliability, generalizability, and adherence to method and rigour, for example prolonged engagement with and persistent observation of research participants. Lincoln & Guba (2000), however, claim that new approaches to research attend to multiple, and at times conflicting, criteria for quality, authenticity, and validity. Some of these new forms of validity include:

Fairness: “balance; that is, all stakeholder views, perspectives, claims, concerns, and voices should be apparent in the text. Omission of stakeholder or participant voices reflects, we believe, a form of bias...this fairness was defined by deliberate attempts to prevent marginalization” (p.180)

Ontological and educative authenticity: “criteria for determining a raised level of awareness, in the first instance, by individual research participants and, in the second, by individuals about those who surround them or with whom they come into contact for some social or organizational purpose” (pp.180)

Catalytic and tactical authenticities: “the ability of a given inquiry to prompt, first, action on the part of research participants, and second, the involvement of the researcher/evaluator in training participants in specific forms of social and political action if participants desire such training” (p.181)

There also exist transgressive forms of validity, which enable social scientists to transgress, reshape, and create new ways of relating to and doing research as well as postmodern forms of validity that create heterogeneity, multiple openings for action, and appeal to other creative and scholastic fancies.

McCormack & Titchen (2006) argue that action research is more than “the application of abstract theory. [It] involves skills, sensitivities and capacities that require a practical wisdom that involves far more than knowing the contents of a theory” (p.240). Similarly, Greenwood & Levin (2000) have stated that validity is “measured by the willingness of local stakeholders to act on the results of the action research, thereby risking their welfare on the ‘validity’ of their ideas and the degree to which the outcomes meet their expectations” (p.96). Reitsma-Street & Brown (2004) further emphasise this value of useful knowledge.

Despite these multiple definitions and criteria, the question of validity remains of central importance to social research. This is particularly true of action-oriented social research projects, where policies, laws, and other actions depend more directly on their outcomes. It is also true of arts-based research “as traditional positivistic concepts such as validity and reliability are not appropriate criteria for expressive arts, researchers using poetry must develop other methods by which their work can be judged” (Furman, 2006, p.138). Simons & McCormack (2007) acknowledge that while “we need to broaden our conception of validity to incorporate understandings gained through artistic expression. ... there is no consensus [so] it is important to continue to work on the creation of new criteria to value arts-based inquiry” (pp.304-305). These comments suggest that discussions around validity are already well underway within the field of ABR.

Validity is closely linked to beliefs about truth and reality (ontology) and the ways in which we come to know truth and reality (epistemology). While the history of academe has taught us that truths about the world are understandable predominantly through rational thought, as is implied in the discussion above, ABR teaches us that the nature of reality is knowable through all the senses, in the body, spirit and, more traditionally, in the mind. As Simons & McCormack (2007) state, “in advocating the use of the creative arts in evaluation, we are not claiming that it should replace other approaches to evaluation. To evaluate comprehensively or holistically may require a range of different approaches” (p.294). This validity claim is particularly poignant in a society and academic system where the arts continue to be marginalized.

Furman (2006) adds to this discussion by suggesting that “the goal of research, in his view, is to seek *a truth*, not *the truth*. That many stories and truths can, and indeed should co-exist, is a key tenet of post-modern thought” (p.136). Conrad (2002) further states that using drama as research “encouraged the expression of multiple truths and the interaction of these truths to make new individual and communal meanings” (p.255). While I subscribe to the belief that multiple perspectives on truth exist, it is also important to ask questions of those perspectives; namely, who benefits from that truth and whose version of the truth is not being heard or systematically marginalized. As Eisner (1997) points out, while ambiguity can be productive in furthering academic conversations, it becomes problematic when “the data mean whatever anyone wants them to mean; or worse, no one knows what they mean” (p.9). In this way, the essence of the intended meaning can at times become lost in some kinds of artistic representations.

Arts-based research is further riddled with questions of aesthetic quality, of which there are competing lines of thinking. In short, one side privileges the process while the other privileges the product. The thought to which a particular researcher subscribes seems to be related to the professional background and training of the researcher in question. This debate is illustrated by the following two quotations:

Elitism is replaced by art as communication, whereby reactions to the art work are more important than the quality of the art in terms of external aesthetic criteria.

Within this paradigm, the criteria of communication and social responsibility predominate over craftsmanship. (Huss & Cwikel, 2005, p.3)

versus

I find ‘artistic action researches’ presented at educational conferences unpalatable because researchers seem to be manipulating artistic symbols, media and techniques, and lack the necessary skills to craft aesthetic-qualitative products.

(Mason, 2005, p.577)

It is relevant to note that Huss is an art therapist and Cwikel runs a Center for Women’s Health Studies and Promotion, while Mason is an art educator with formal training in fine arts—these biases can be seen in their comments. In my own training (with Diamond, 2004) I was taught to make ‘the best art possible’ given whatever constraints with which I was working, while maintaining the perspective that art is a learned skill, one that can only be improved with practice over time—a perspective that bridges both sides of the debate, but is slightly biased in favour of aesthetic rigour. This bias reflects Diamond’s own professional training in mainstream theatre, which I will discuss in the section on ‘Theatre for Living’ in Act Six. This bias is also mildly ironic, given my limited exposure

to and experience with theatre, an irony I reframe simply as one of the constraints with which I worked. Here I echo Clover (2006b) in arguing that for me, being able to claim an identity as an artist was one of the most empowering aspects of this research.

While the debate of aesthetic quality is left unresolved for scholars and practitioners alike, it does open up other questions around validity in ABR:

Questions of generalizability are framed differently in ABR. For example, in-depth involvement and exploration of the particular is, or becomes ultimately, a unified concept, a universal understanding. This in a sense is the argument for case study ... and one answer to those who say that it is not possible to generalize from a single case. (Simons & McCormack, 2007, p.297)

In this way we come back to the issue of interpretation: when readers, audience-members, or other observers see, hear, or feel an aspect of their own reality in the art, they are able to generalize something to a broader context.

The issue of generalizability in ABR is manifested through the relationship between artist and audience. The former is illustrated by Furman (2006), who states:

The degree to which the reader perceives the author as trustworthy is the degree to which he/she may 'trust' the poem. If the reader can find personal meaning for him/herself the poem possesses what may be called participant or reader generalizability. Taken one step further, if the reader can recognize patterns and trends that they believe apply to many people, or to the human condition in general, [in this case] the poem may be said to have some degree of metaphoric generalizability. (p. 140)

Here, generalizability is related to trust placed in the author/artist based on trust in the art (a poem in this case) itself. Trust, empathy, and understanding between researcher, participants, and audience has already been discussed, but I raise it again to demonstrate how relationship is another means of validity. For example, Huss & Cwikel (2005) found that a Bedouin social worker involved in their arts-based study claimed she was more acutely affected than in her previous work with similar Bedouin groups. In this way, ABR's purpose of contributing "to deeper relationships between researcher and research participant" (Huss & Cwikel, 2005, p.10) is reaffirmed.

In reading the pages of this dissertation, I hope it will become clear to the reader that this study attends to multiple forms of validity. While the aesthetic quality of the final production can be debated amongst members of the audience and viewers of the DVD (which is a representation of a representation), as I recount details about the process, attention to fairness, educative, and catalytic authenticities as well as generalizability to audience and relationship between and amongst researcher and participants should become evident.

Summary

This Act has introduced the reader to arts-based research, discussing its history and location in the Academy, as well as some of its strengths and challenges. In particular, I have covered the topics of arts being used as methods of data collection, as means of representation, and criteria for judging the validity of these. In addition to ABR, at the outset I outlined my orientation toward action and participation, suggesting that within the larger structure of an arts-based doctoral study was an *embedded* participatory

theatre project. Having provided the methodological context of this study, I turn now to a more in-depth discussion of the method of popular theatre, particularly 'Theatre for Living,' used in this research.

Act 6 Theatre as Method

Theatre is a long established means of re/representing reality. Through the theatre, actors, directors, spectators, and outside critics –whether professional or amateur– collaborate in an effort to reflect upon, interpret, portray, and potentially change certain aspects of the human condition. In this sense, the theatre, like other art forms, is innately political in its capacity to transform our perceptions of reality, and in the possibility that we will subsequently act upon those newly formed perceptions. Because it has the capacity not only to reproduce our perceptions of reality, but also to transform them, many agents of social change (including educators) have adapted theatre techniques to accomplish their goals (see Boal, 1979; 1998; Butterwick, 2003; Butterwick & Selman, 2003; Conrad, 2002; Prentki & Selman, 2000 as examples). The practice of ‘popular theatre’ has thus emerged in conjunction with the global adult and popular education movement to become a powerful tool of reflection, consciousness-raising, empowerment and, at its best, of mobilizing personal and collective action against oppressive social systems.

In this Act, I introduce theatre as a research method and the creation of a popular theatre performance as a participatory research process. I provide an overview of the practice as it has emerged around the world and then move more specifically to a discussion of forum theatre. I describe key elements of Augusto Boal’s work, which provides a context for David Diamond’s ‘Theatre for Living.’ Finally, I explain several theatre methods and how I used them to introduce participants to dramatic language.

Popular Theatre

Popular theatre is a dynamic and varied art form, with multiple, culturally determined uses and styles. Popular theatre can combine a variety of dramatic techniques with song, dance, body movement, and sculptures; with personal narrative, storytelling, rhythm and percussion; with puppetry, costumery, masks, and other local innovations, all serving to activate the heart and body in order to engage both participants and potential audiences alike (Boal, 1979; 1998; 2002; Plastow & Tsehaye, 1998; Steward, 1970).

The drama itself can be performed either privately or in front of an audience, in theatres, classrooms, or on other makeshift stages: in the streets, the metro, in parks, or under shady trees (Boal 1979; 1998; Byam, 1999; Gallagher, 2001; Steward, 1970). It can provide a space for personal reflection and change (Nelson, 1993), be a means of building solidarity (Butterwick, 2003), be a process of community development (Hinsdale, Lewis & Waller, 1995), or be a venue to propose new legislation (Boal, 1998). In its most common understanding, popular theatre is theatre made *by* the people *for* the people.

Since theatre in its various manifestations exists in most societies around the world, it follows that drawing rigid boundaries around what is, and what is not, popular theatre becomes an endeavour with questionable intentions. Nevertheless, allow me to clarify that popular theatre is not merely a form of passive entertainment that reproduces the status quo; it is explicitly theatre for change. In essence, the term popular theatre implies that the process of making and showing the theatre piece is owned and controlled by a specific community, that the issues and stories grow out of the community involved, and that the community is a vital part of a process of

identifying, examining and taking action on matters which that community believes need to change. (Prentki & Selman, 2000, p.9)

Popular theatre generally has subversive or political intent and can also be used for community development, community organizing, and educational purposes.

Most importantly, I believe that popular theatre is—essentially, or perhaps ideally—a participatory research process (Kidd & Byram, 1979). Through this process community members come together to collect and analyse their own stories, make decisions around how best to represent those stories, and then disseminate them by means of the theatre. As such, communities around the world have been using theatre as a form of participatory research without any sanction from the academy. ‘The people’ or the community members in question can refer to either a geographic community, or one with shared interests, whether it be individuals belonging to the same labour union (Prentki & Selman, 2000), living in the same remote fishing village (Filewod, 1998), or sharing the label of ‘teenaged moms’ (Nelson, 1993).

Theatre of the Oppressed

Theatre calling for audience interaction and intervention in the script developed in many parts of the world, including Canada, simultaneously. Most notably, Theatre for Development (TfD) has gained popularity across the African continent and in India (Bappa & Bello, 1981; Byam, 1999; Khot, 2002; Manyozo, 2002; Mda, 1993). However, because he has written extensively on his own practice of interventionist theatre, Augusto Boal is often said to be the ‘founding father’ of this forum style of theatre. Despite this

gendered misnomer, Boal's work—because it is so far-reaching and influential—is worth exploring in further detail.

Boal works from two basic principles: that professionals should not be the sole owners of theatre and that the verb 'to act' implies both taking action and performing. Following these principles, he maintains that it is possible for anyone to act, in either sense of the word (Boal, 2002). As was one of his key mentors before him, Bertolt Brecht (the German poet, playwright, and theatrical reformer, b.1898 d.1956), Boal is concerned with the divide between so-called passive audience members and active actors. In his attempts to merge the two he has invented the concept of 'spect-actor' whereby spectators become actors in the forum described below. His influential work, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979), is founded on three main techniques: Image Theatre, Invisible Theatre, and Forum Theatre. As it relates to this study, I will describe this final technique here.

Forum Theatre is the theatre most frequently associated with Augusto Boal. In the Forum setting, a play is constructed around pressing issues in the community and the protagonists are always represented as encountering oppressive situations in which they lose. That is, the plot reaches a negative climax and then ends—no resolution is given. The play is performed once in its entirety, and then started afresh for a second time. During the second performance, audience members are invited to yell 'Stop!' at any time and come on stage to replace a character with whose struggle they identify. When they do come on stage, these audience members try to change the outcome of events so that the protagonist, in changing her/his behaviour, can also change the outcome of the oppressive interaction.

The interactions occurring between audience and actors are mediated by a facilitator, or what Boal terms, the ‘Joker’. This Joker explains the protocols of audience engagement and explains, in particular, that the spect-actors should not present magical solutions; the ideas enacted on stage should attempt to truly engage with the real life struggles represented on stage. Boal also cautions the joker to be aware of evangelical interventions in which audience members who have had no experience with the oppression being depicted come on stage and advise protagonists how they should proceed. Instead, the interventions can serve as a dress rehearsal for action in the spect-actors’ own lives, and the Forum, ultimately, a venue to rehearse a revolution.

As his methods developed, Boal and others following his lead realized their limitations, particularly in that they could not be transposed, as they were, outside of the Latin American countries in which he worked. For example, while working in Europe, Boal (2001) discovered forms of oppression he had not previously encountered—“loneliness, isolation, emptiness, lack of communication” (p. 324), for example—which could not be expressed so easily using Forum Theatre.¹³ Through the realization that people had internalized their oppressors, he devised a series of exercises to bring awareness to, and dislodge these ‘Cops in the Head’. In addition, Forum Theatre is limited in terms of individual agency in the face of oppressive structures (laws, policies, ideologies, etc.), not people. In an attempt to influence these structures, Boal (1998) began an experiment in what he termed, Legislative Theatre.

Following his 1986 return to Brazil after fifteen years of exile, Boal was elected as a *vereador* (City Councillor) in Rio de Janeiro. As he is a director by profession, he

¹³ Despite Boal’s suggestion, I believe we powerfully conveyed these forms of oppression in our third scene, ‘Frame.’ Viewers can judge this for themselves in Act Nine.

subsequently began using the theatre to explore popular concerns, and transform the people's desires into law. During his three years in office, Boal managed to pass thirteen laws and then went on to carry out further experiments in Munich and Paris. Boal continues to encourage experimentation with Legislative Theatre around the world. This experiment in using theatre to make law recently spread as far as Vancouver through the work of Headlines Theatre, an innovation that strongly inspired my own work. My forthcoming publication documents Headlines Theatre's attempt to use Legislative Theatre to 'practise democracy' (Etmanski, forthcoming).

*Theatre for Living*¹⁴

Headlines' Theatre is a non-profit theatre company based in Vancouver, British Columbia, Canada. Founded in 1981 by a group of local Vancouver artists, Headlines' main focus at that time was to do 'Agit-Prop' (Agitation Propaganda), or public education theatre on political issues of concern in Vancouver communities. In 1984, when David Diamond became the Artistic Director, Headlines' focus changed from doing theatre *for* communities to doing theatre *with* communities (Headlines Theatre, 2005). Over the years, Diamond developed his own approach to popular theatre, which he calls 'Theatre for Living' (TFL) (Diamond, 2004).

Without question, Diamond has been greatly influenced by his friend and colleague Augusto Boal. Like Boal, Diamond has drawn upon Paulo Freire's approach to education, particularly as outlined in 'Pedagogy of the Oppressed' (2003) and 'Pedagogy of Hope' (1992). However, while Boal's Theatre of the Oppressed is foundational in

¹⁴ Much of this description is included in 'Opportunities and Challenges of Using Popular Theatre to Practice Democracy' (Etmanski, forthcoming, 2007).

TFL, Diamond's model is increasingly moving away from Boal's more binary oppressor/oppressed divide and is seeking to expose the complex relationships in any situation of oppression. This shift began emerging through his work on issues of family violence with the United Native Nations in 1992 (Diamond, 2007). Prior to the making of plays, this community specifically requested that the character of the abuser, or 'oppressor' "be portrayed as a person who needed healing – not a criminal" (Diamond, 2004, p.5). According to Diamond, this demonstrated a difference between "creating a character [whose] actions we do not condone and creating a character who we ridicule" (p.5). In TFL, it is important to portray how so-called oppressors can themselves be oppressed, or at least struggling with their own issues, and perhaps even motivated by complex feelings of caring and love. By portraying how the antagonists are also struggling, Diamond opens space for audience members to also replace the antagonists' characters in ways that were not understood in Boal's earlier model.

In addition to his mainstream theatre training and his decades of work using theatre for community development, Diamond also draws upon his hobby of studying quantum physics. He rejects the Cartesian mind/body dualism, the resulting conceptual divisions between humans and the environment, and the failure of modern science to see the interconnectedness of all aspects of the universe. These beliefs come into play in TFL in his view of communities as living organisms: "just as you are a collection of individual cells that make up your body, a community is a collection of individual people that make up the living organism of the community" (Diamond, 2004, p.8). This is important to Diamond's work in that if communities do not express themselves they get sick, just as individuals get sick if they repress their emotions. Theatre, he believes, is a primal

language that communities have long used as a means of self-expression and as such, learning how to create rather than simply consume theatre (and other art forms) is one way to heal communities and work toward positive social change.

Research Methods

My research design was adapted from a process Diamond (2004) refers to as ‘Power Plays’ (alluding to both the colloquial use of the word power to mean quick but effective, as well as to the exploration of power dynamics that takes place during the course of this workshop). Diamond describes Power Plays as “an intense process of group building, theatrical language learning, issue identification and exploration, play creation, and Forum Theatre performance” (p.7). As he is often invited into communities to conduct Power Plays, I posit that his work is also Participatory Research. How I adapted the Power Play process to collect data is described in Act Seven, while the collective data collection and analysis process that resulted in the final performance is presented in Act Eight. Here I will introduce the reader to how theatre was used as a method.

Boal (2002) and Diamond (2007; 2004) have written guidebooks that outline their theatre methods. These methods focus on activating *all* the senses and, particularly in Diamond’s Power Play model, they move the group from expressing individual to collective experiences, thereby generating a collective consciousness. In general the exercises are designed to build trust amongst the participants and have them develop a level of comfort using their bodies to communicate.

It is important to note that representing these methods in words is, somehow, inadequate; as these activities are meant to activate the senses (in addition to the mind) they are best understood experientially. Many of the activities are done in silence, some with eyes closed and these help develop the underused senses of touch, smell, the subtlety of sound, and the more intuitive sense of presence. These senses are difficult to translate into words. I had flipped through Boal's (2002) guidebook before going to Diamond's training and, while interesting, the descriptions of the activities did not yet carry much meaning. Now, re-reading the descriptions, I *understand* better. This is a real challenge of translating one language to another; the sensory theatrical language into rational text. Nevertheless, so the reader has *some sense* of what the methods entailed, I provide here an overview of the key aspects of theatrical language I used as data collection methods.

Interpretation.

Much of our communication occurs non-verbally. Our facial expressions, body language, outward appearance, and clothing all impact the messages we consciously or unconsciously send to others. As Boal (2002) states, "human beings are capable of 'emitting' many more messages than they are aware of sending. They are also capable of receiving many more messages than they think they receive" (p.39). Others filter our non-verbal and verbal communication through their own life experiences and associate meaning based on their individual and socio-cultural upbringing. One of the first activities I was taught to do when using these theatre methods brings an awareness of these different readings, and the possible dissonance between *intended* meanings and *received* meanings, to the group consciousness.

With the participants standing in a circle, I ask for a volunteer to go into the middle and stand in a frozen position—any position, it does not need to carry meaning. I then ask the others what they see and, inevitably, the group generates multiple and varied responses to the question. Once the group has generated several meanings, the facilitator's response is: "You are all right." In this way, people begin to understand how subjective our interpretation of even the most straightforward of verbal *and* non-verbal forms of communication is. Moreover, as each one of us reads something different, we will each respond differently according to how we receive the message. When the sender's intention matches how the message is received, the message is communicated successfully. If not, there is a breakdown in communication and if clarification is not sought, we risk hurting, being hurt, or inspiring unintended actions with unintended consequences.

Yet, as the translator of Boal's guidebook suggests "the polysemy of images is a vital factor in this work; a group of individuals will perceive a whole range of different, but often intriguingly related, meanings within a single image, often seeing things which the sculptors had no idea were there" (Jackson, 2002, p.xxii). This first activity introduces participants to non-verbal communication and interpretation and also begins the process of intentionally using body language to communicate.

Balancing.

Another activity often used near the beginning of a workshop is called 'balancing' (Diamond, 2004, p.28). In this activity, I asked participants to put their hands on each other's shoulders, lean in and push, *really* push. There are multiple variations, with

participants pushing against different body parts (hand to hand, back to back, etc.). The intention is never to push the other person over, but to find a balance. As Boal (2002) states,

When one person feels that her 'adversary' is weaker and that he is going to lose, she eases off so as not to cross the line, so as not to win. If the other person increases his pushing, the first does the same, so that together both are using all the strength they can muster. (p.60)

Diamond suggests that this game "contains the essence of theatre and also the skill required to accept interventions in [the on-stage] Forum" (p.28). In learning to push back with their bodies, people learn to push back during the intervention. Similarly, struggle between opposing forces is at the heart of (forum) theatre. In addition, this activity is done in silence and is usually the first time that people are asked to touch each other. In this way, it begins to build trust and opens up more channels for non-verbal communication.

Image Theatre.

Image Theatre is a series of games and activities that invite participants to create frozen images with their bodies. Boal (2002) claims that when participants use their bodies instead of their voices to express meaning, the images they create can sometimes be a closer representation of true emotions than can words. In this sense, "the process of 'thinking with our hands' can short-circuit the censorship of the brain" (Jackson, 2002, p.xxiii) and can also be more democratic in that it does not automatically privilege more verbally articulate people.

One method workshop leaders use to invite participants to begin creating images is called, ‘sculpting partners’ (Diamond, 2004, p.25). Working silently in pairs, one person becomes the sculptor and the other becomes clay—not just any clay, but intelligent clay. This means that the person is responsive to the sculptor in that they hold the position and “can fill the shape with thought and emotion that is indicated by the body position in which they are placed” (Diamond, 2004, p.25). The sculptor moves the clay-person both by respectful touch and by demonstration, for example, of facial expressions. Sculptors are encouraged to pay attention to detail, remembering that each limb, each part of the face, carries meaning for the audience.

As the workshop progresses, people position their sculptures in relation to other people’s sculptures, or, in other activities, sculpt scenes with more than one person. Still in other activities, people sculpt themselves into a scene being created by other members of the group. Often participants are asked for words or brief phrases that describe their desires, as characters, in that particular scene. When these images are discussed in the group, the individual images begin to tell collective stories and awareness of similarities in the group consciousness develops.

What’s inside this for you?

Practitioners of experiential learning techniques are often specifically trained in how to debrief exercises with participants. In various courses on facilitation, I have learned to do this in different ways. The most simple is to organize the discussion according to the questions: ‘What?’ ‘So what?’ ‘Now what?’ Other facilitators use the cycle of: experience – analyze – generalize – apply. In other words, the facilitator moves

the group from discussing what actually happened in the activity, to what it means in the context of their lives or the topic being discussed, and to how this knowledge can inspire action. Experiential learning is closely linked to praxis and the spiral design discussed in Acts Three and Four. In many ways, it also reflects the purpose of action-oriented participatory research: what have we learned from our collective experience? How can we now take action?

As theatre methods are experiential learning exercises, I was also trained in how to debrief, unpack, and lead discussion around the meaning each activity contained for the participants. Following Diamond, after each activity I asked the question: *what's inside this for you?* It is important to explain that this question has two meanings:

First, it appeals to the *what*: What actually happened in the activity? What did people do? How did it make people feel, both their physical sensations and emotions? Did they get hot? Did they get cold? Did it remind them of any incidents or stories? Did they experience any judgements of themselves or of others?

Second, it appeals to the *so what*: Can people generalize anything about their response to the activity to the issue being investigated, in this case, to their experiences as international students at UVic? With the question, *what's inside this for you*, I encouraged participants to think on personal, symbolic, and structural levels, about their own experiences and the common themes that were emerging in the group.

Take a moment to think about this question, *what's inside this for you?* The legacy of Cartesian dualism, the division between mind and body, is ever-present. This means that the idea of linking physical sensation and emotion to rational thought is sometimes met with suspicion. Yet, the idea of a unified body is foundational to this

work. Boal starts from the principle of ‘two unities.’ The first unity is between the physical and psychic apparatuses: “that the human being is a unity, an indivisible whole. ... all ideas, all mental images, all emotions reveal themselves physically” (Boal, 2002, p.49). The second unity relates to the five senses: “none exists separately, they too are all linked. Bodily activities are activities of the whole body. We breathe with our whole body” (p.49).

Furthermore, for the purpose of creating theatre, he argues, “the important thing about an emotion is what it signifies. We cannot talk about emotion without reason or, conversely, about reason without emotion: the former is chaos, the latter pure abstraction” (p.37). In this way, the question, *what’s inside this for you?*, helps participants to draw connections between their physical sensations and emotions and the more rational thoughts or generalized analyses these can inspire. Everything becomes symbolic: the experience, the emotion and the thought. As people become more aware of their physical sensations and emotions, they can begin to learn from them, not simply experience them at a conscious or unconscious level or react to them without reflection. This kind of knowledge is sometimes called ‘embodied knowledge’ (Johnson, 1989). As described in Act Five, this is how these methods, like other arts-based methods, can serve to draw out pre-conscious thoughts—thoughts that were inside the body, but not yet fully developed or articulated in the mind.

Circles.

Diamond encourages practitioners to begin and end each workshop with a circle. The opening circle serves to introduce people to each other (if they are meeting for the

first time) and also to get a sense of people's state of mind/being when they walk in the room. A more significant period of time (an hour or more, depending on the number of people) is allotted to the closing circle. Diamond's emphasis of the use of circles comes from his work with many different First Nations communities and he ensures that no dialogue occurs during this time; individuals speak one at a time while others listen in respectful silence. During this research I did not place the same level of emphasis on the healing and sacred dimensions of a circle as Diamond does. However, now that I better understand the power of the circle, in the future I would revisit this decision. Overall, I used the opening and closing circles as a means of ensuring everyone had an opportunity to "honestly express what she [sic] feels at the end of the session [in hopes that] no one leaves with anything that has been opened up and not resolved" (Diamond, 2004, p.13). While I ensured that each person had an opportunity to speak, I also allowed some dialogue to take place.

Summary

This Act has introduced the reader to the use of popular theatre as a method. I began with an overview of popular theatre and then narrowed in on Boal's 'Theatre of the Oppressed' and Diamond's 'Theatre for Living.' I then went into some depth about key aspects of the theatrical language, including interpretation, balancing, and image theatre. I also described the question I use to elicit information after each method: *what's inside this for you?* Finally, I included a description of how I used the opening and closing circles as a data collection method as well.

With a more abstract understanding of arts-based methodology and theatre as a method, I now show how aspects of this methodology apply directly to this research. The following Act gives an overview of the data collection process.

Act 7 Data Collection Process

Data collection entails applying methodological theories in the real world, with real world constraints and surprises. It is essentially the act of putting the research plan to the test. While researchers do have a certain amount of power and need to be aware of how that power is exercised, they cannot control other human beings' actions, inactions, decisions, and whims. This is a beautiful part of research as it can lead to discoveries about trends in individual and group behaviour, just as much as it can lead to discoveries related to the research focus. It can also lead to frustration or unanticipated work when events do not unfold according to plan.

Early in this research a friend reminded me to *trust the process*. These were simple words that, while I also apply them to my life in general, were particularly poignant in this context as my friend had experience with the theatre methods that I would soon be putting to the test. I had enough confidence with interviews and focus groups, but did not have much experience with theatre methods, so I occasionally wrestled with the beast of self-doubt. In addition, while I had experience facilitating group workshops, I did not have experience building a group with the result of a theatre performance in mind. My friend's words reminded me that I was engaging in a process that was beyond any skill or lack thereof I was bringing. The methods had been tested and proven effective by others before me, including her. Her words helped to carry me through the parts of the research that did not go according to plan and to maintain humility even when all was running smoothly—there is vulnerability in even the most well-thought-out plan.

In this Act I document key aspects of the data collection process. I begin with a short summary of the research process. To synthesize information I include a number of tables and figures, which represent the timeline, the research participants, and the workshops. I then discuss how data collected from the methods introduced in Act Six were used and analyzed differently during the first four workshops than they were during the weekend play-building workshop.

Summary of Research Process

Reinhartz (1992) speaks of the “long time period needed to complete an in-depth study” (p.204) and how this is particularly true in studies that use multiple methods. While ‘long’ is a relative term, it seems fitting here as the in-depth data collection occurred over a period of six months (June 7, 2006 to November 23, 2006), the after effects lasted another five months (until April 18, 2006), and my preparations as a researcher began with a pilot study conducted in March 2004.¹⁵ Table 7.1 below summarizes a timeline of the key events in this research.

Table 7.1 Timeline of Key Events

Date	Event
March 2004	First contact with Headlines Theatre during a pilot study of their mainstage production “Practicing Democracy.” This study was conducted under the ethical review of a Studies in Policy and Practice course (SPP 517). (Etmanski, forthcoming, 2007)
August 2005	Theatre for Living training, Level One (6 days, 8 hours/day)

¹⁵ See my chapter, *Opportunities and challenges of using legislative theatre to ‘practise democracy’* (Etmanski, Forthcoming 2007) for the results of this pilot work.

August 2005 to June 2006	Coordinated 'Make Poverty History' campaign, UVic Social Justice Film Series, Victoria Days of Peace, and Deconstructing Empire Graduate Student Symposium, through which I developed extensive relationships across UVic and in the Greater Victoria community. These relationships helped build support for the research and ultimately filled seats at the final UVic performance.
January 2006	Presentations to various UVic offices about this research.
January 15, 2006	Pilot workshop with one participant where I practiced, for the first time, using these activities outside of the training context. (This work was done with the ethical approval of a research seminar course, under the supervision of Dr. Reitsma-Street.)
February 3, 2006	Ethical approval granted to begin the study.
March 16, 2006	First recruitment effort via e-mail (Graduate Student Society Listserv, requests to Graduate Secretaries in all departments across campus, word of mouth to international student friends) and campus posters. This effort solicited one response.
April 12, 2006	Interview with only respondent from first recruitment effort.
May 2006	Awarded one year of SSHRC funding to complete this research and informed that the summer course I had planned to teach had been canceled, both of which enabled me to focus more intently on this research.
May 18, 2006	Second recruitment effort via same e-mail channels as above. This time I changed my strategy. Instead of asking for general interest, I set a specific date for the workshop, offered a free lunch at the Graduate Student restaurant, did not ask participants to commit to full play-building process, and included feedback from a number of international student colleagues and friends on the recruitment blurb. This effort solicited a response from 15 students, 13 of whom participated in the first workshop.
June 7, 2006	First summer workshop (details of workshops to follow)
June 28, 2006	Theatre workshop presentation at Vancouver's World Social Forum. I used this opportunity to practice the theatre activities used in the first summer workshop.
July 10, 2006	Second summer workshop

July 18, 2006	Third summer workshop
July 24, 2006	Fourth summer workshop
August 5, 2006	Third recruitment effort. As will be discussed in Act Twelve, the four summer workshops did not generate sufficient momentum to go to performance. Based on the different levels of participation during the summer workshops, I decided that six participants was the minimum number needed to build plays. Through responses from this third effort, I ultimately found six participants and was able to move forward with the weekend play-building workshop.
August 10-15	Theatre for Living training, Level Two (6 days, 8 hours/day)
August 25-27	Original weekend workshop scheduled. Cancelled due to insufficient response and scheduling conflicts with interested students.
September 8-10	Weekend play-building workshop with six participants
September 26	Rehearsal
October 20	Group meeting over dinner (at a restaurant), to maintain group cohesiveness in long break between Rehearsal and Performance and to make minor adjustments to the plays.
November 8	UVic Performance
November 23	Celebratory Dinner (at a restaurant)
January 26, 2007	Performance for a group of University and College Administrators
April 13	Performance for a group of Human Rights and Equity Educators
April 18	Final performance at UVic scheduled and ultimately cancelled, discussed further in Act Twelve. The Human Rights and Equity Office, the Office of International Affairs, International and Exchange Student Services, and the Faculty of Graduate Studies had publicly endorsed and agreed to sponsor this performance.
April 18	Group meeting over lunch in UVic Cafeteria
April 24	Final potluck organized by participants

Participant Engagement

Participants' engagement ranged from a two-hour interview minimum (Gerri) to participation in the final project, plus three of the four group workshops, for a total maximum of over thirty-six hours (Susan). Each participant engaged in one or more of the following activities: 1) a one to two hour semi-structured screening interview (over coffee or lunch); 2) a three-hour individual workshop (pilot workshop), 3) a two to three-hour group workshop, or 4) the final play-building process, which was approximately a thirty-hour commitment between September 8 and November 23, 2006.

This final play-building process included five key events: 1) a weekend workshop (approximately 18.5 hrs over a Friday evening, Saturday and Sunday); 2) a three-hour rehearsal (one hour of warm up activities, one hour of interactive rehearsal with audience members, followed by an hour-long conversation with audience members afterwards); 3) a two-hour dinner meeting to bridge the long gap between rehearsal and final performance; 4) a two-hour final performance (with an hour of warm-up activities in advance); 5) a two-hour celebratory dinner. In addition to these more official aspects of the project, participants gave unmeasured time in terms of e-mail and telephone correspondence with me and each other as well as individual time spent thinking about and preparing for the project.

As mentioned in Act Five, we were invited to perform again in several venues following the UVic performance. When conveying these invitations to the actor-participants, I ensured they knew this was beyond the scope of my research, and that I did not expect their further participation. They said yes to some of these performances and no to others and as a group we were able to accommodate two requests and were paid an

honorarium for one. In addition, we received radio and newspaper coverage before the UVic performance.

My contact with the participants during this research is summarized in Table 7.2 below and the departments are represented in Figure 7.1. Where appropriate, I have also indicated prior or other contact with participants. As the intention from the beginning was to create a public performance, anonymity was never guaranteed. I have nevertheless decided to use pseudonyms to add one layer of ambiguity, especially for the participants who did not become actors in the final performance. With a few exceptions where students chose their own pseudonyms, these are intentionally anglicized to further protect identity. Geographic regions are indicated to show the range of country-of-origin diversity amongst participants, while at the same time blurring the identities of students from under-represented countries.

While I did not pay participants for their participation, as mentioned, each workshop included much food. Participants at the first summer workshop also partook in a group meal from the Graduate Student restaurant and actors in the final performance partook in two restaurant meals: one in between the rehearsal and final performance and one as part of the celebratory dinner, to which family members were invited as well. A small gift was also provided to each of the actors.

In addition to these token material offerings, I made several offers of reciprocity as a fellow graduate student. Offers that were taken up include providing feedback on papers, writing letters of reference, assisting in resume-crafting, participating in one participant's study, invitations to social events, including Christmas dinner, and child-minding, as well as sharing contacts, grant proposals, articles, job, and publication

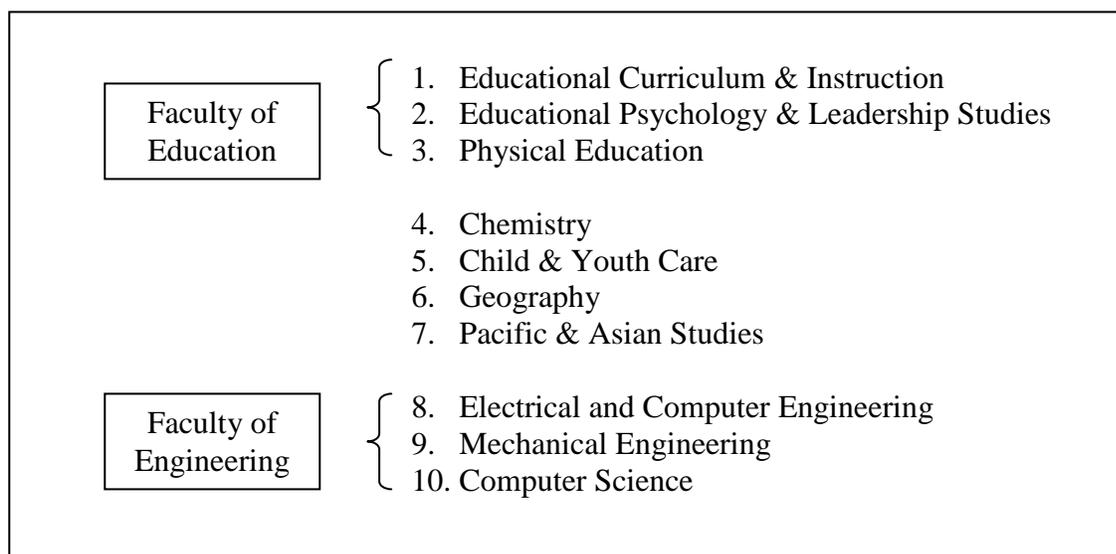
opportunities. Following the final performance, I advocated successfully for Lawrence's poem, *Frame*, to be published in the "Unacknowledged Source" (graduate student magazine) and the Office of VP Research newsletter, "Multiplicity." Maria-Luisa's research was featured in the "Unacknowledged Source" due, in part, to my efforts as well. These small acts of reciprocity were the least I could do for participants who generously gave so much of their time.

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Table 7.2 Contact with Participants Throughout Research

	Initial interview	Summer Workshop Participation (3 hrs each)	Weekend Workshop & Performance (30 hrs total)
Africa			
1. Harold		2 workshops	
2. Rebecca		1	
*Asia			
3. Marcia	(no, but previous contact on campus)	2	
4. Jessica	(previous contact)	3	
5. Jacqueline	(previous contact)	2	
6. Sylvia		4	
7. Daniel	Yes	2	
8. Trevor		1	(attended rehearsal)
9. Brent		1	
10. Lars		1	
11. Johan		1	
12. Susan	Yes	3	Yes
13. Lawrence			Yes
14. Coco	Yes		Yes
15. Zhou He	Yes		Yes
Australia/Oceania:			
16. Alicia	Yes	1	
Europe:			
17. Zoe	Yes	3	
Middle East:			
18. Bella	(pilot workshop)		(attended final performance)
19. Gerri	Yes		
20. Kevin	Yes	1	
North America:			
21. Phyllis with baby Margaret	Yes (via telephone)		Yes
South America:			
22. Leanna	(previous contact)	2	
23. Brandon	(previous contact)	2	
24. Maria-Luisa			Yes
* Regions of Asia represented by participants included: China (Mainland), Hong Kong, India, Japan, Singapore, and Taiwan			

Figure 7.1 Departments Represented by Participants



In addition to the student participants, all audience members signed a consent form before entering the performance hall. Audience members included nine participants at the September 26, 2006 rehearsal and exactly one hundred participants at the November 8, 2006 final performance. Demographic information about audience members was not collected, but from the sign-in sheets and informal polling during the performance I know that a diverse range of people was present, including: UVic faculty, staff, students (including international and domestic students), teaching assistants, other instructors, and alumni, as well as community members from anti-racist organizations, home-stay networks, public schools, and other theatre practitioners.

Workshops

The workshops included a variety of methods learned during the ‘Theatre for Living’ training. As described in Act Six, each workshop opened with a quick check-in circle with each participant and closed with a circle. Following my facilitation of each

method I asked the question: *what's inside this for you?* The summer workshops were run on a drop-in basis, which meant that different people were present at each workshop. Upon realization that a drop-in model would not lead us to a public performance, I recruited a new group of people who were willing to commit to the full play-building process. A summary of workshop details is included in Figure 4 below. For readers who are more interested in the specific methods, I have included the page number on which a description can be found in Diamond's (2004) guidebook to Theatre for Living. Similar methods can be found in Boal's (2002) handbook as well.

Table 7.3 Summary of Pilot Workshop¹⁶

Date (2006)	Participants	Regions Represented	Methods
Jan 15	1 woman	Middle East	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Point and Turn (p.35) - Hypnosis (p.23) - Lead the Blind (p.27) - Blind Cars (p.29) - Sculpting Partners (pp.25-26)

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¹⁶ Note that the student later signed consent to use data from the pilot workshop in this final study. Since most of these methods required two people, I gave the instructions and then we did the activity together.

Table 7.4 Summary of Summer Workshops

Date (2006)	Participants	Regions Represented	Methods
June 7	6 women 7 men	Asia Africa Europe Latin America Middle East	- Balancing (pp.27-29) - Complete the Image (pp.19-20) - Internal Monologue (p. 20) with “I want” (p.21) - Hypnosis (p.23) - Sculpting Partners (pp.25-26) - Secret Thought (p.65)
July 10	7 women 4 men (3 new Participants who were not at the first workshop)	Asia Latin America Middle East Oceania/Australia	- Fear/Protector (p.22) - Blind Busses (p.29) - Song of the Mermaid (p.57) - Groups of 4 (pp. 43-44) - Wide Shot (p.65) - Stand with a Character (p.65) - Stepping into the Future (p.64)
July 18	4 women	Asia	- Glass Bottle (p.37) - Focus group discussion
July 24	6 women (1 new)	Asia Africa Europe Latin America	- Knots (p.34) - Rainbow of Desire (pp.47-52)

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Table 7.5 Summary of Weekend Play-Building Workshop

Date (2006)	Participants	Regions Represented	Methods
Sept 8	5 women 1 man 1 female infant	Asia Latin America Canada	- Complete the Image (pp.19-20) - Balancing (pp.27-29) - Hypnosis (p.23) - Glass Bottle (p.37)
Sept 9	(same)	(same)	- Point and Turn (p.35) - Energy Clap (p.21) - Blind Sculpture (p.31) - Electric Current (p.32) - Fill the Empty Space (p.22) - Sculpting Partners (pp.25-26) - Before doing Song of the Mermaid (p.56) - Magnetic Image (pp.44-45) - Initial Play Building (pp.65-66 under 'Rehearsal Techniques)
Sept 10	(same)	(same)	- Character and Play Development (pp.65-66 under 'Rehearsal Techniques) - Catch Me (p.39) - Clap Exchange (pp.26-27)

Application of Methods

I used the theatre methods differently during the summer workshops than during the weekend play-building workshops, which resulted in the different forms of analysis that will be described in Acts Eight and Ten. In the weekend workshop we were building plays using a collective process, which meant that the participants and I took in and analyzed both the images and verbal responses, without any use of paper. We generated themes (as will be described in Act Eight); however, we were not required to use written notes (with the exception of themes written on a blackboard) or transcripts to produce the final plays. In this way, for the purpose of producing the final performance, we relied

predominantly on the theatrical language: the sensory data we had embodied (sight, smell, sound, touch) as well as the emotions, images, and stories these methods elicited.

As will be discussed further in Act Ten, when I went back and reviewed the video footage of the summer workshops, I was required to make some decisions. I realized quickly that only a small part of the sensory data can be captured on film: sight and sound. As the purpose of the theatrical language (images, senses, stories, emotions) was to build plays, which we had already done, I decided that the best data that could be used for the purpose of producing a text-based document were the verbal responses to the question, *what's inside this for you?* I also used the group discussions at the end of the workshops and closing circles. Therefore, for the purpose of writing a dissertation, I applied the theatre methods and analyzed the data differently than for the play-building process. For the summer workshops, as opposed to the weekend workshop then, “the purpose [was] not to create art, but rather to use an artistic or expressive medium, theatre, to investigate problems” (Butterwick, 2002, p.245). In this way, just as interviews are used to elicit verbal responses that can later be transformed into text-based transcripts, I used the verbal responses elicited from theatre methods as data and transformed them into text.

Summary

This Act has given the reader an overview of what the data collection process entailed from the timeline, to the participants and their engagement, to the workshops themselves. I also differentiated between how the methods were applied for different purposes: for the purpose of creating plays (one form of representation of the data) all

sensory data was used, and for the purpose of writing a dissertation (another form of representation) predominantly verbal data was used. With an understanding of the data collection process, I will guide you through the data itself—but first, it is time for an intermission.

Intermission

If you have been reading non-stop until this point, I encourage you to take a break. Get up, walk around the room, stretch your legs, pour yourself a glass of water—whatever it is you need to do. We are switching gears now, moving from the conceptual, theoretical, methodological, procedural context of the study, to the depths of the study itself. Take your break now and, when you return, I have an announcement.

Announcement on Representation

As described in Act Five, there are two interwoven processes in the design of this research. The over-arching process was my doctoral study, the purpose of which was to facilitate my own learning, enable me to gain a new professional credential, and so on. While part of my motivation for learning and seeking credentials is to better contribute to global social change, I recognized that this part of the process was a more individual pursuit. However, embedded within this individual pursuit was a collective process, the purpose of which was to create a theatre performance that inspired dialogue, thought, and action around the struggles faced by graduate students, particularly international graduate students. This collective process was equally, if not *more* important than my individual pursuit and must take its rightful place as an Act in this dissertation—this academic performance. Moreover, as Huss & Cwikel (2005) suggest, the “image should speak for itself, reducing the possibility of the [artist] being spoken over” (p.4). This, of course, posed two key logistical problems.

The first is that, unlike other art forms such as painting, drawing, sculpture, quilting, photography, etc., the method I chose is ephemeral. As Boal (2002) describes,

theatre is organized around human actions bound in time and space, whereas music is organized around “sound and silence, in time [and painting is] form and colour, in space” (p.293). While some art forms may lend themselves more readily to inclusion in dissertations, our November 8th popular theatre performance, fortunately or unfortunately, does not fit within the margins of 8.5” by 11” white paper. There is, however, a feasible solution. In the same way that non-arts-based researchers represent their findings using graphs, charts, tables, etc., or as other arts-based researchers may include poems or photos of the artwork that were the results of their studies, our final UVic performance was captured on video. Thus, a representation of the results of our collective work is included in video form as Act Nine.

The second logistical problem is that to my knowledge, the academy does not (yet) bestow doctoral degrees upon groups (evidence of the values of individualism and competition, I believe). This means that due to the structure in which I was working, at the end of the collective process I was jolted back into the individual pursuit of the larger study. Yet, because the individual and collective processes were so thoroughly interwoven, I was challenged again with the task of representation. Although it was *my* research project and I officially held power as *the* researcher, I was conducting research within my own community of fellow graduate students. Because I value relationship and reciprocity, throughout the process I truly became a participant in my own study, a co-investigator, a co-learner, and a friend.

While I had previously experienced these fluid boundaries as a facilitator, I was not expecting to experience this level of relationship as a researcher. Our thoroughly interwoven experiences led to more dilemmas in representation, similar to stories shared

by many feminist, interpretive and post-modern researchers before me (e.g. Katz, 1996; Lincoln & Guba, 2000; Mason, 1996; Moss, 2002; Wolf, 1996). I was also aware of the politics of people representing themselves (e.g. hooks, 1989; Tuhiwai Smith, 1999). Specifically, I understood that no matter the nature of the relationships that developed through this research, they were still steeped in relations of power. According to Wolf (1996):

Power is discernible in three interrelated dimensions: (1) power differences stemming from different positionalities of the researcher and the researched (race, class, nationality, life chances, urban-rural backgrounds); (2) power exerted during the research process, such as defining the research relationship, unequal exchange, and exploitation; and (3) power exerted during the postfieldwork period—writing and representing. (p.2)

While this dilemma did not leave me entirely during the ‘postfieldwork period’, I found some resolution by drawing symbolism from my role as the facilitator—the *joker*, if you will—during the final performance.

My role in this capacity entailed setting the stage and then stepping out of the way while the actors spoke. I then stepped back in, provoked interaction and stepped back out. After audience members and participants had investigated each idea, I stepped back in, elicited analysis, invited more interaction and then again stepped out. This continual stepping in and out became symbolic to me of ‘speaking with’ (Ristock & Pennell, 1996) the participants. It was never my desire to ‘speak for’ any one person, and at times I handled this more gracefully than others.

Although I understood at the outset that through this research I would somehow be responsible for representing a group of people to which I did not belong, I began understanding the dilemma of representation experientially when it came time to speak on CBC radio about this research before the performance. These words from Coco helped me through:

I understand you don't want to speak for international students because you aren't. However, I think you can do it and I am rather happy that you will do it for us (me). I hope I am not burdening you with too much trouble to deal with. As I mentioned before, international students very often find it hard to be expressive in another language, and also hesitate to address problems. I believe that because you have listened to their inner voice by interviewing them, having workshops with them, and creating plays with them, no one else but you can interpret better their message to the target community. More importantly, I trust you!

[November 7, 2006]

Coco, along with Zhou He and Lawrence, decided to accompany me to the studio. Zhou He came on air and the other two cheered us on from the weather station behind the glass. We celebrated our achievement together after the interview. I realized then that I had been mistaken: In this research I was representing a group of people to which I did, somehow, belong. Moreover, thinking of myself as separate was part of the problem.

During the performance later that evening, none of actors seemed to be finding it hard to be expressive in another language or to address problems. It became even clearer that it was not 'no one else but me' who could speak, but that we could all do it together. Yet, in inviting people to speak for themselves on stage, I was always standing right

beside them, in solidarity, as were the other members of the group—and they were all standing beside me. We drew strength from each other and I believe we were able to accomplish much more than had I stood on stage alone to lecture on *my* findings. There is a place for this latter kind of learning and teaching, but it was not the purpose of this experiment. The danger and the gift of learning that there are other ways of being a researcher and doing research is that it was difficult to go back to an earlier paradigm; I did not want to return to the individual pursuit.

Nevertheless, I concede that in systematically analyzing the data, I did gain different theoretical insights and I present these in Acts Eleven and Twelve. The voice I use to represent these lessons continues to be one of ‘speaking with,’ which means stepping in and out while participants speak for themselves and setting the stage where necessary by providing additional context for their comments. It also means using my own voice as an equal, albeit privileged, participant in this research.

Denzin’s (1994) post-modern sensibilities encourage “writers to put themselves into their texts, to engage writing as a creative act of discovery and inquiry” (p.504). Because I became a participant in my own study, I do recount some events in my own voice, from my perspective as outlined by practices of autoethnography (Ellis & Bochner, 2000) and autobiography (Moss, 2001). As will be further described in Act Ten, to reach this point I have used reflexivity, attempting to understand when my biases and values provided “insight and when they interfered with understanding the main themes” (Simons & McCormack, 2007, p.302). This entailed writing and re-writing until I was satisfied it would be evident to the reader which was my voice (“I”), which were the voices of the participants (“they”) and where they began to merge together (“we”).

The two kinds of representation are, of course, intricately linked. To understand the potential for transformative learning and the implications of intersectionality of which *I* will speak, one must first understand the struggles performed by *all* the graduate student-actors. In other words, to understand the results of my study as an individual researcher, one also needs to understand the collective results presented by the group.

However, arriving at the two representations (Act Nine, the performance and Acts Eleven and Twelve where I share my theoretical insights) entailed two separate processes: one collective process of analysis and one individual. To give the reader a sense of what these analytic processes entailed, by way of introduction, I provide a separate overview of each in Acts Eight and Ten. I begin, in the next Act, with an overview of the collective analysis process.

As we will be starting shortly, please take your seats.

Act 8 Collective Process of Analysis

Although this project was action-oriented and involved intensive participation from the six student-actors over a sustained period, and various levels of participation from other students and audience members, as outlined in Act Five, I do not consider the research project as a whole to have been *participatory*. As already described, according to the tradition of participatory research from which I drew, the extent to which a project is participatory is relative to the amount of control the key beneficiaries (i.e., participants as researchers) have over the project. In this case, although the research topic emerged in the context of my conversations with immigrant and international students, *I* defined the problem and research question, *I* chose the methodology, and *I* designed the research process, and *I* wrote up the results. Ultimately, *I* am the one who will receive Academic Citizenship—indicated to others by the letters p, h, and d.

Nevertheless, the point at which I gave up some if not much control and the point at which this project started becoming more ‘participatory’ was during the process of analysis that resulted in the creation of the poem and three plays. In Act Seven I gave an overview of the whole research process. Here I describe in more detail the part of the weekend workshop where we transitioned from theatre activities to the creation of plays. This process entailed a collective analysis of the themes we had encountered up until that point of the workshop, and some collective decisions about which stories we would like to put on stage. This part of the process, I argue, was the most ‘participatory’ in that participants had much control over which stories, themes, and messages they wanted to portray. We began making decisions collectively—negotiating, arguing, relenting and celebrating—and I was included in this collective.

I begin this Act with a discussion of the concept of accumulation, which was introduced to me during the two Theatre for Living training sessions I attended in preparation for this research (as outlined by the timeline in Figure 7.1). I then describe how the group came up with the themes that had emerged throughout the weekend workshop and how these were transformed into the final plays. I highlight some of the transitioning challenges we all faced as I took on more of a director's role, and end by giving the reader a sense of the work it took to move from the initial scenes to the final plays.

Accumulation

A key element of the play-building workshop is a concept Diamond (2004) refers to as 'accumulation', which means intentionally "allowing one day's work to affect the choices [the group makes] when focusing on a moment the next day. In this way, the consciousness of the group, the larger living organism of the community, moves in an organic way towards the issues that they all share" (p.14). Diamond symbolically described accumulation as gradually releasing balloons up to the ceiling over the course of the workshop and letting them hang there, *accumulating*, until the time came to create plays. Throughout the weekend workshop, all the stories, ideas, and emotions that were generated through the theatre games hung there in the room with us. When it came time to create the plays, it was the participants, not I, who decided which combination of balloons to pull down. This cluster of balloons provided the framework through which the final performance emerged. Then, working collectively, we developed the characters and added as much depth as was possible, given the constraint of time.

In essence, Diamond's concept of accumulation refers to a collective process of analysis. The workshop moved group members from generating data by enacting their individual experiences (using theatre methods) to creating short collective plays based on identified stories and common themes. The act of moving from the individual to the collective is amplified once again when the workshop participants perform their plays for a larger community audience. Audience members are asked to figure out which—of all the stories, ideas, and emotions presented in the performance—cluster of balloons to bring back into their own lives. As described in Act Five, this is how arts-based representation becomes interpretive; it is up to individual audience members to make their own generalizations.

Generating Themes

Before the plays can be created, the group needs time to accumulate stories and build trust. By the second day of the play-building workshop, many individual experiences had already been shared—verbally and through images—and we had begun identifying with each other's images and words, finding points of connection, and relating to each other's lives. On the afternoon of the second day, I asked the participants to bring these themes into the group consciousness by naming them. To this end, I asked them to brainstorm all the themes that had emerged so far in the workshop. Below is the list they generated.

Figure 8.1 List of Themes Identified by Weekend Workshop Participants

Isolation	Multiculturalism	Recreational opportunities
Language	“None of my business”	Segregation
Boredom	Authority	Deadlines/time constraints
Cultural difference	<i>Whose</i> authority?	Multiple interpretations
Discrimination	Knowledge	Misunderstandings
Food	<i>Whose</i> knowledge is valid?	Unwillingness to change
Finding Voice	Money	Personal space
Being Silenced	Tuition	Stereotyping

For the participants and for me, each of these phrases was associated with stories and images that had come up in our work and group discussions over the course of the weekend. With the possible exceptions of food, money, tuition, and recreational opportunities, I challenge the reader to see how these original themes (and more) were creatively represented in the final performance.

The Initial Plays

With our embodied knowledge and this list of themes surrounding us on the blackboards in the room, our task was then to create scenes that would address as many of these themes as possible. Immediately following this theme-generating activity, I divided the participants into two working groups using a technique called ‘Magnetic Image’. For this activity, I asked everyone to think of a real moment from their lives when they were struggling with one of the listed themes. I then asked for two volunteers to make “a shape, using [their] own [bodies] that [conveyed] the strongest emotion that [they] felt inside this moment of struggle. All [they had] to work with [was their own bodies], in a frozen shape” (Diamond, 2004, p.45). With these two people in position, I

asked the other four members of the group to go stand beside the person whose shape represented some kind of meaning for them. One image attracted three others, to make one group of four. The one remaining person felt he could not relate to either image. As the play-building process requires people to work together, the solution I suggested—that worked for the participants—was that the group of four stay together and the other two work as a pair.

The purpose of Magnetic Image is not only to divide people into groups, but to do so in a purposeful way. I instructed the group of four to find the common themes that had drawn them together around that image and to create two short scenes about those themes. The person who had originally made the image had no responsibility for leading the group—the image simply served as a ‘magnet’ for bringing people together in an organic way. As Diamond explains, “as you talk, you are going to find that a sense of something that you share starts to appear in the middle of the circle. Seek it out, this struggle that you share. Name it. It is the core struggle of your image or play” (2004, p.46). Their task was to create fictional scenes that represented the truth of the group, not to perform one person’s story.

As the other two participants were together more by default than by attraction, we soon discovered that their commonality was that they each had a clear idea of a story they wanted to tell. As “a workshop is a series of judgment calls” (Diamond, 2004, p.9), I asked that they come up with one scene each and use the other person as a character in this scene. Later we would have all six actors to work with, but for the time being, their task was to come up with two two-person scenes.

I gave both groups approximately one hour to produce two very short, very rough scenes that we would be able to work with the next day. The two stipulations were that the scenes had to take place within a graduate student setting and they had to build to a conflict, but not be resolved. At this point, it was *entirely* up to the participants which cluster of balloons they chose to pull down. I essentially took an hour break: after fielding some initial questions, I left the room and left them to their own devices. As Diamond explains, it is up to the groups to “figure out how to work together and how to use a theatrical language. Most important, they ‘own’ the play because they have made it. They are the experts on their issues” (2004, p.65). To create plays that truly emerged from participants’ experiences, it was necessary that I hand over some measure of control to the group—not all the control as will be demonstrated in the examples below, but enough for this to truly become a collective, if not participatory, process.¹⁷

This part of the process was completely experimental on my part. I had experienced it twice in the training workshops, but had never facilitated it and genuinely did not know what would happen next. I did, however, know I was not giving them much time and as a result I was challenging *all of us* to trust the process. I was both surprised and thankful when, by the end of the hour, we had four very rough scenes with which to work. These initial scenes are outlined in the figures below.

Before you read these rough scenes, I will note that at the end of that long Saturday working together, baby Margaret was no longer in the mood to participate. She needed her mother’s attention and this was one of the few times that Phyllis was not present when the whole group was working together. She had participated in developing

¹⁷ Because this method requires that the initial scenes be developed by the participants without the facilitator’s influence, the three final scenes *did not* reflect the three settings I had originally stipulated in my research question.

the scenes with her small groups, but pressed for time, we collectively decided to run the initial scenes without Phyllis so we could all go home on time. To bring her up to speed as quickly as possible, after the opening circle, I asked participants to replay the scenes first thing Sunday morning. As she was not present for the two scenes performed first on Saturday evening, the outlines below are an amalgamation of those original scenes and the ones performed again the next morning with her present.

[intentionally blank]

Figure 8.2 First Initial Scene Presented by the Group of Two

Maria-Luisa (as the instructor): Good morning class. Today I would like to talk about the article I gave to you last class. That was the article on the experiences of homeless children in Africa.

Lawrence stands up (as a student in the class)

Maria-Luisa: Yes?

Lawrence: I'm sorry, my English is not so good. Umm. Well this article is about poverty in Africa. The author concludes that it's the same around the world, but it's a little different in our country.

Maria-Luisa: So you're saying it's different in your country. Well did you do research in your country?

Lawrence: No, I just confirmed the experience from my country.

Maria-Luisa: Are you a doctor? Do you have a PhD?

Lawrence: No.

Maria-Luisa: Well we've solved that. Your opinion doesn't count, does it? Anyone else have something to say?

END

[During the first run of the scene, it was only Lawrence and Maria-Luisa, but on Sunday morning, Maria-Luisa invited some of the other participants to be other students in the 'classroom'. I discuss the implications of this in the section on transition.]

Figure 8.3 Second Initial Scene Presented by the Group of Two

Lawrence sits in a chair and reads the initial concept for the poem he presents in the final performance (see Appendix A). He has Maria-Luisa walking around him, miming the activities of which he speaks, e.g. talking on the phone, drinking coffee, dancing in a bar, reading a book, etc.

Figure 8.4: First Initial Scene Presented by the Group of Four

Susan (as the instructor): Hi everybody. First please tell me your name and when did you come to Canada. How long you have been studying English and what do you think about Canada?

Zhou He (stands up and very hesitantly says): Ooooooh, nice to, uhh meeeeet you. Uhhh. (Starts speaking Mandarin, introducing herself, then) Sorry, sorry, sorry, sorry and sits down.

Coco: (Introduces herself entirely in Japanese: I'm from Japan and I've been here for three years, etc.)

Phyllis: (Introduces herself in French) Bonjour, je m'appelle Phyllis. Je suis une Canadienne.

Susan: What's happening here?

Phyllis (turns to the others and in French, asks what did she say?): Qu'es-qu'elle a dit?

END

Figure 8.5 Second Initial Scene Presented by the Group of Four

Coco (as the instructor): Okay class we'll have the discussion today. So Zhou He, can I ask you to get the ball rolling please?

Zhou He: Uhh, pardon? Sorry? Get the ball?

Coco: As you know, we're going to have a discussion, so I would like you to start.

Zhou He: Uhh, destart? Get ball rolling means start?

Coco: Umm. Okay, you don't know. Okay, that's *okay*.

Susan (starts a random topic of discussion, on Saturday it was about a building on campus and on Sunday it was about a perceived difference between Canada and the United States): The Clearihue building was created in 1963 and at that time UVic was known as an institute.... // Well there are differences between Canada and America. People think of America as a melting-pot and Canada as a mosaic...

Coco (turns to Phyllis): What do you think?

Phyllis: What do I think about what? What are we talking about? We're getting the ball rolling all right...

Coco: What do you think, Zhou He?

Zhou He: Good.

Coco: Good... OK, umm, Zhou He, I have a bone to pick with you after class, is that okay?

Phyllis: *Well give her a chance!*

Coco: I think she has to work on her English.

Zhou He: A bone?

Coco: No, I meant, I need to talk with you after class.

END

These scenes were not meant to be polished. They were the first *analytic frameworks* and were admittedly—by all accounts—a little surreal. We applauded each

others' efforts, but did not comment at all after the first run on Saturday evening—or even when we ran them again first thing on Sunday morning. I had learned during my training to ask participants to present the rough cut at the end of the day so that we all, but especially so that I, could go home to think about what to do with these initial scenes. Our task on the last day of the workshop was to refine the plays, figuring out what was at the core of each one, adding complexity to each character and each story. As described in Act Six, in developing the scenes our job was not to present resolutions, but to keep in mind potential openings where the audience might intervene.

My task, as the facilitator, was to *somehow* make this happen. Again, I had been through this process experientially, but had never tried to facilitate it myself. All I knew was that we had to make the 'best art possible' in spite of our constraints and to remind the participants, in my own words, that “you have a chance here to tell the truth... If you try your best and tell the truth, people here will know that and they will listen to what you have to say” (Diamond, 2004, p.79). After a few warm up exercises, we took a leap of faith and simply began.

Transition to Character Development

This work essentially consisted of probing the characters one by one to learn more about who they were, what their motivations were, what their relationships were to other characters, to the settings, etc. We spent the whole day doing this work. To paint a picture of the conversations and negotiations that resulted in the final scenes, I will describe some general characteristics of how the work proceeded and then expose the process further by sharing an excerpt of the transcript.

This part of the workshop was hard work. Until this point, the activities were fun, novel, and equally engaging for everyone at all times. Giving each play some depth required focused attention on one person at a time and the use of more verbal (i.e. English) language. This was a transition that was difficult for both the participants and for me. Anticipating there would be difficult moments, at the outset of this workshop I had introduced some theory about stages of group development, suggesting there would be a time when the group may start to ‘storm,’ but that this was natural and we would come through in the end (e.g., Kaner’s 2001 dynamics of group decision-making; Tuckman & Jensen’s 1977 cycle of forming, norming, storming, performing, adjourning). When that transition period came, we managed to make our way through with relative grace, but not without some conflict. I outline some of this conflict here, as overcoming it was key not only to the development of the plays, but also to the development of the group and to a more participatory process.

We decided to work on the scene that involved Maria-Luisa (as the instructor) discussing the article with Lawrence first. We established that this conflict came out of Maria-Luisa’s true experience and related, in particular, to the theme identified by the group as “whose knowledge is valid?” I began by probing Maria-Luisa, in character, asking her what kind of a class this was (Social Work), how much teaching experience she had (this was her third time teaching—she was a sessional instructor who had just finished her PhD), whether she perceived herself to be an activist (yes, a ‘white’ middle class feminist, who did not have much exposure to anti-racist theory), and whether she had travelled (backpacked through Europe after high school). Maria-Luisa needed to

know who she was in this scene, and in order to build a collective understanding about what was taking place, the rest of the participants needed to know this as well.

However, as I was probing her, Zhou He asked Coco a question I could not hear. When I stopped to inquire about what was happening, it turned out that Zhou He did not know what ‘sessional’ instructor meant, but that Coco had clarified it for her. I carried on with Maria-Luisa. After a short time, people became restless and I stopped again. This time when I asked, it turned out they were starting to develop their own characters in conversation with each other. I began by saying, “we’ll get to his character, don’t worry...” but I suddenly realized that because I did not know exactly where I was going, neither did the participants. In retrospect it seems obvious that not explaining this process could be problematic, but in the moment I was just trying to figure out a way forward. So without much warning, I had changed the format of the workshop and switched into a different role: I was paying close attention to one person and essentially ignoring the others.

In the training workshop, Diamond is very clear that *there is only one director*, and this director is him. Students are paying to take the course and learn from him, so this directive role is somehow justified. During this part of the workshop when he is working with each actor to develop the character, all eyes are on him and this is the point where his years of experience in the theatre are truly revealed: his expertise in this area demands respect. Having undergone this twice in two separate workshops, I knew that while this work was essential to building theatre from the bottom-up, it was also tiresome. We were switching gears, and while I had tried to explain, I had not sufficiently prepared the participants for what to expect—mostly because I myself did not know what to expect.

The following is a transcript of some of the dialogue that took place after I realized the group might be starting to ‘storm.’

Figure 8.6: Transcript of Group Transition to Character Development

Me: *Oh, okay.* I should say this to all of you: this is very boring work for the people who are watching and it requires a lot of patience. I’m sorry, that’s just how it is. [I laugh; the others don’t], but we need to spend a little bit of time with each of the characters and you might find that you feel tired today.

Coco: But all the information is necessary for us to know, right?

Me: Yes.

Phyllis: And almost so that our characters can interact more. If we’re looking for complexity, that’s going to add another layer.

Me: That’s right.

Lawrence: So our talk right now is focused on improving the play?

Me: Right now we’re improving the play, yes. That’s what we’re doing for the next hour or so. I’m going to go to each character and ask for a little bit more depth, we’re going to develop each character. I’ve started with Maria-Luisa’s character because I think that sets the tone of the classroom. We need to figure out which class we’re in first, okay?

[Silence in the room, which I read as: no, it was not okay.]

Me: I’m sorry. It’s going to be a little bit boring while you’re watching this, but we’ll come to your character [Lawrence] and we’ll come to your character [Zhou He].

Lawrence: But these two are not even players here. [Pointing to the two participants Maria-Luisa had invited into the scene.] They are just for our eyes. When it comes time to ask the opinion of another student, you [Maria-Luisa] just need to pause and look around and the audience will know they are there. If they [the other two people Maria-Luisa had invited into the scene] have no information, if they are not here, the audience can concentrate on you and me.

Coco: We can try both.

(Continued on the next page)

(Figure 8.6 Continued)

Me: *Well...* we need to make these plays as realistic as possible. I mean, we have limited resources, we only have six people, but in a class normally there's more than one student. So in order to make it more realistic, I think it's okay. The plays are going to change from these initial plays that we started.

Maria-Luisa: There's also the aspect that I talked about this morning, I didn't want to portray the instructor this way, because it's unfair, because that's not really what happened. When we developed that play together I needed to adapt it because there was only the two of us, but what really happened was the student said, 'well that's not what happened in my country. I researched this in my country.' And then people in the back of the class started to say, 'who the hell does she think she is?'

Me: And we might not follow exactly what happened in real life because this needs to become what happens in this classroom, right now. So we're changing the scene.

Maria-Luisa: So that's why I had asked other people to step in because I was thinking about what really happened was that the teacher was caught in between, in an uncomfortable situation, and then put it back out to the rest of the classroom.

Susan: It will bring complexity if you kind of stay with the real situation. If the teacher is in that contradiction where she wants to reply, but she doesn't know how to reply and she doesn't want to arouse conflict with the students. So those students can be the real students saying things like, you don't have a doctorate...

[Long silence in the room, then eventually...]

Me: I want to stop this discussion. It's really important you understand that I'm going to be a little bit bossy now [people laugh this time] and it's not because I want to be mean. We're changing what we're doing now. This part of the workshop is different. I'm turning into more of a director.

I went on to clarify that because this was my first time facilitating this kind of a process, I did not anticipate that this would be such a difficult transition for the group. I apologized for not explaining this part of the workshop more thoroughly and for not facilitating a smoother transition. I wanted to carry on, but I could still sense the discomfort in the room, discomfort that I believed was due to a number of reasons. The obvious reasons were my messy facilitation of the transition, the natural progression of

group development, and tension that can occur during any group decision-making processes.

There were, however, at least two other contributing factors and these related to two of the themes we had outlined together: language and ‘*whose knowledge is valid.*’ This part of the workshop was based more on verbal communication and it was becoming increasingly clear that not only had some of my explanations of this particular kind of theatre been misunderstood, the pace at which we had begun the character development work was also too quick. In addition, both Lawrence and Zhou He were artists in their own right—and they each seemed to have their own vision of how we should proceed. Lawrence is a documentary film-maker and Zhou He is a literature major who had previously written her own short plays. I publicly acknowledged that the issue we were portraying in the scene was also at work *right there* in the room.

Even with this acknowledgement, we still needed to find a forward. By this time in the workshop, we had gone through a number of ‘trust-building’ exercises together. As I was trained to do, I always demonstrated the activities before asking the participants to go ahead. In this way, I hoped to demonstrate that I trusted them as much as I expected them to trust me. I was relieved when, as we were navigating our way through this tension, Phyllis made the symbolic connection between our work and these exercises. She said, “Catherine has been through this process before—we have to trust her.” I exhaled. Yes, I thought, you do need to trust me.

In one sense, I understood this was a vote of confidence, but simultaneously it was a reminder that this workshop was ultimately about my PhD. I may have only been one step ahead of them, but I was one step ahead with an experiential understanding of

how this particular method works—and with my research at stake. I also knew they were giving way and that *I too* needed to trust them. Not only were they bringing experiential knowledge about their student experiences, they were bringing professional and discipline-based knowledge as well—*whose* knowledge counts? This comment about trust cleared the air: everyone accepted ‘my way’ as the way forward and I, in turn, resolved to ‘direct’ in a more participatory manner than I had been trained to do.

Although I was still leading the workshop, we ensured that everyone’s ideas were heard in the process. In this sense, the participants conceded a little, but so did I and the result was, as Zhou He commented at the end of the workshop, that we genuinely felt we had created the plays together.

Developing the Scenes

This process of developing the three scenes took the entire day. Because we were getting used to this way of working, this first scene about the article took us right up to the lunch break. After lunch we began discussing the two scenes with the four participants (Figures 8.4 and 8.5 above). We uncovered that these two scenes were both about language: one was about using English idioms and expressions that were unfamiliar to second language learners and the second acknowledged the different languages that were present amongst the participants. After some discussion, we decided to amalgamate the two scenes, and the result became the first scene of the performance.

The scene that involved Lawrence reading a poem with Maria-Luisa gesturing around him (Figure 8.3) presented a challenge for us that turned into a wonderful opportunity. Although the poem was rough, the message it contained was so powerful

that it triggered a visceral response—I had goose bumps each time Lawrence read it. I was not alone in this experience: when she heard it for the first time on Sunday morning, Phyllis also exclaimed, “Wow, it almost brings tears to my eyes.” After some discussion, we could all relate to the sense of isolation and cultural ‘frames’ at the heart of this poem. At the same time, a poem did not lend itself to interventions from the audience.

Thankfully, Lawrence had either misunderstood my explanation about how the interactive performances would work, or else he had ignored my directions completely—an assertion of creative agency also discussed by Huss & Cwikel (2005). In either case, we knew we needed to keep the poem and I asked Lawrence if he would simply read it out before we began our performance. Maria-Luisa was relieved as she felt silly miming the actions as he spoke. Finally, I suggested we could conclude with a play that represented one of the scenes in the poem to bookend the performance.

Drawing from an idea that had occurred to me the previous evening when I had been thinking about the rough scenes, I suggested the participants choose one of the scenes from the poem to enact. They agreed and, to get us rolling, I suggested Lawrence walk past a group of people and then put up a frame in front of his face. The group went along with this idea and, with only an hour left in the workshop, I thought it would be easy to come up with a short scene. I was wrong. By the time we were finished, the clock on the video read 50:54. The scene was less than 30 seconds long and it took nearly one hour of group negotiation to create. This work paid off in the end, however. The last time we ran the scene there was a long silence in the room. I looked around at the others and finally Coco exclaimed, “That was really good!” We all burst into applause and there was

a tangible sense of accomplishment in the room. *Yes!* Not only had we done what we had set out to do, we had truly done it together.

The result of our collective efforts was the performance, UNSETTLED. As described in the intermission, the performance will speak for itself. However, for the reader/viewer's convenience I have included a printed copy of the poem as Appendix A and Director's Notes, which include outlines of each scene, as Appendix B. After watching the performance, the reader may wish to bookmark these appendices for later reference, especially while reading Acts Eleven and Twelve.

Summary

In this Act I have given you a sense of the process of collective analysis, from the concept of accumulation, to the process of generating themes, to the initial scenes. I then gave you a glimpse into the shadows of our group development *and* scene development process and how the initial struggle led to a more participatory process of scene development. Finally, I have given one example of the time it took to create such a short scene and the sense of accomplishment that ensued when we knew we had found the 'truth' of what we were trying to portray. As a reader you are now in a privileged position to understand what comes next in a way that others in the audience did not. With the context of our process of collective analysis in mind, I now give you the collective representation of our results.

Introducing... UNSETTLED.

Act 9 UNSETTLED

Please contact the author for a copy of the DVD.

Programme

Opening Act Reading of the poem, 'Frame'

Scene I Group Work

Scene II Human Rights

Scene III Frame

Cast

Zhou He Student in scenes I & II

Susan Student in scenes I, II & III

Lawrence Student in scenes II & III

Coco Student in scenes I & II

Maria-Luisa Instructor in scenes I & II; student in scene III

Phyllis Student in scenes I (as Francine) & II (as Jane)

Act 10 Individual Analysis

As I mentioned during the intermission, there are two interwoven processes at work in this dissertation: the collective process, the final result of which you just saw, and the larger context of my doctoral study. As described, following the collective process, I was propelled back into the individual pursuit of knowledge and I needed a place to begin. I decided to write about the process first, some excerpts of which you read in Act Eight. As I was writing I began to understand Miles & Huberman's (1994) caution that "as much as you may want to, you cannot study everyone everywhere doing everything" (p.27). While heeding their advice was a challenge indeed, I, like all researchers, was required to make decisions about which data was most useful for responding to my research question and which could be put aside to achieve the task at hand, namely completing a dissertation.

This Act renders transparent the steps of my individual process of analysis. I begin by describing the sources of data and how I organized and transformed them into working format. I then describe the process of analysis I used by providing some examples of the questions I asked of my data, the themes I generated, the effect of reflexivity and writing, the process of expanding dichotomies, and the final step of letting go of the story *I* wanted to tell to let other stories take the lead.

Sources of Data

This research entailed multiple methods and as such, I began with multiple sources of data. In Act Seven I described how, for the purpose of individual data collection, I applied the methods differently and for the purpose of individual analysis, I

cut out the sensory data to allow the performance to speak for itself. There still remained theatre activities (after which participants verbally shared their reactions), opening and closing circles (which systematically gave each individual an opportunity to speak and reflect on the workshop), semi-structured interviews (to screen participants in advance while at the same time explaining the research and eliciting initial discussion), two in-depth group discussions on specific topics (which were different from circles and discussions following theatre activities, though they did occur during the workshops), an anonymous feedback form submitted electronically by the actors, and countless e-mail conversations. Character development, rehearsal, and interventions into the forum theatre also served as yet another potential source of data, but as mentioned, I discarded these (as being more methodological in nature) and allowed them to stand alone as part of the collective research process.

From the above methods, I collected approximately 53 hours of data, including:

- Pilot workshop: 3 hours (journal notes)
- Semi-structured screening interviews: 10 hours (journal notes and one two-hour interview audio recorded)
- Summer workshops: 12 hours (video recorded and three closing circles audio recorded)
- Play-building workshop: 18.5 hours (video recorded)
- Rehearsal: 3 hours (video recorded)
- Dinner meeting: 2 hours (journal notes)
- Final performance: 3 hours (video recorded)
- Celebratory dinner: 2 hours (journal notes)

This data was organized and transformed into working format as follows:

I reviewed the video footage as I transferred the tapes onto my home computer. All verbalized video data from the four summer workshops was transcribed in full and the remaining footage from the weekend workshop was purposely sampled for occasions where participants offered new or contradictory insights. I also transcribed the scene development for the scene, Frame, as an in-depth example. While transcribing the video footage, I included notes on gestures, facial expressions, and movement in the room, as well as the participants' words.

In addition to the video recordings, closing circles in summer workshops 2, 3, and 4 were audio-recorded, as was the interview that resulted from the first recruitment effort. All audio data was transcribed (approximately 5 hours) and cross-referenced with transcripts from the video for accuracy. While transcribing all audio and video data, I included my thoughts, observations, reactions, and preliminary analyses.

Immediately following each workshop I systematically typed notes and these electronic notes became part of the data. In addition, throughout the whole process I kept detailed hand-written fieldnotes, which filled three research journals (approximately 600 pages). I did not transcribe these notes, but skimmed through them, highlighted passages, and sometimes wrote additional notes in the margins as I was reading.

Following the final celebratory dinner, I asked the actors to collectively submit an anonymous feedback form to me by e-mail and this was also included as data.

As with any research project, many hours were spent organizing, coordinating, following up, and building relationships and these, of course, were not calculated. E-mail

communication comprised a significant component of this work and there were 450 messages in my research folder until the time of the celebratory dinner and 212 messages from the celebratory dinner to the final potluck, which marked the official end of this project. I did not re-read all of these e-mails as most of them were related to confirming schedules, dates, and times. A few, however, were more substantive and provided additional insight. I selected and printed 13 e-mail messages to also use as data.

In summary, the data I selected to print and systematically analyze were the video transcripts from the four summer workshops, the audio transcripts, the purposefully sampled transcripts from the play-building workshop, the typed notes following each workshop, the anonymous feedback, and the thirteen e-mails. As I became a participant in my own study, I also made use of my own narratives of the research process. The process of analysis is described below.

Analysis of Data

Although this research was not explicitly Grounded Theory as described by Glaser & Strauss (1967) or Strauss & Corbin (1994, 1997), I drew on interpretive processes of analysis to arrive at the final lessons and theoretical contributions around transformative learning and intersectionality.¹⁸ As Charmaz (2006) points out, interpretive theories “allow for indeterminacy rather than seek causality and give priority to showing patterns and connections rather than to linear reasoning” (p.126). In this sense, while my study was theoretically driven by the context laid out in Act Two, the key concepts that emerged were grounded in the process of analysis.

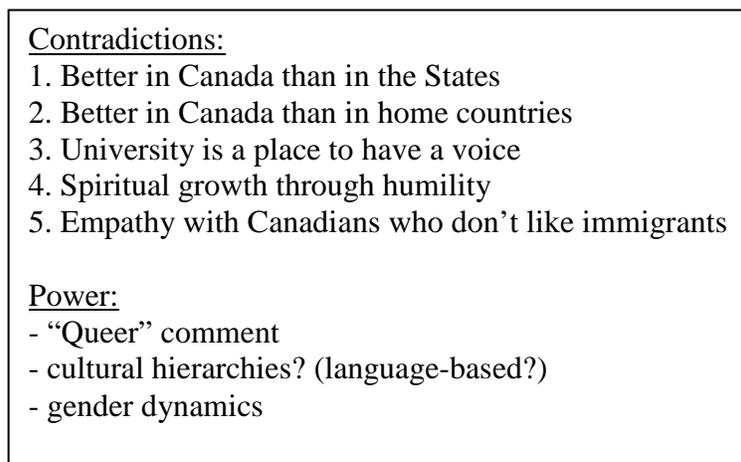
¹⁸ Note that I did not use visual or other arts-based forms of analysis for this individual process of analysis (e.g. Harper, 2000) as I converted the selected data into text format.

I am not suggesting, however, that as a researcher I went into this study as “a *tabula rasa*, who [absorbed and understood] the meanings of the subjects of the research unfettered by any of [my] previous understandings” (Ezzy, 2002, p.10). In fact, returning to my original research proposal I noticed the words ‘intersectionality,’ ‘transform,’ ‘transformative,’ and ‘personal transformation’ occurring several times, and I described my methodological approach as ‘anti-oppressive feminist’. The point is that, while I was predominantly guided by anti-racist theory going in, the process of data analysis required me to look more closely at other theories on the way out. In this way, the stories I originally wanted to tell gave way to the more nuanced stories waiting to be told.

Seeking Contradictions.

From the first workshop I began asking questions of my data. As my research question asked, “What are the contradictions...” I immediately began looking for comments that hinted at ‘contradictions’ between welcoming discourses and student experiences. With an anti-oppressive approach in mind, I also reflected on dimensions of power *between* the participants. Initial contradictions and dimensions of power are evident in Figure 10.1, which are notes from my research journal from June 8, 2006, the day after the first summer workshop.

Figure 10.1 Excerpt of Early Notes from Research Journal



As Butterwick (2002) and Conrad (2002) have suggested, analysis and interpretation are iterative processes that occur throughout the research—they are not merely the final results. In this light, it is interesting for me to note that with all my meanderings through various theories and concepts throughout the process, some of these early seeds of inspiration about spiritual growth and intersecting dimensions of power developed to fruition, as will become evident in Acts Eleven and Twelve.

A False Start.

Several months after the UVic performance and into the analysis, I was writing several letters of reference for Canadian interns who had worked abroad, and who, like many of the international students in my study, were figuring out ways to transform less than ideal situations into opportunities for personal growth, learning, and action. While I was writing about these interns as agents of social change, I seriously began wondering why I was so intently focused on the struggles of international students, struggles that narrowly positioned them as passive victims of racism and oppression. The design of

forum theatre required me to put unresolved struggles on stage, which we had done, but it was not the nuanced story I had heard throughout the research process.

I specifically recalled one participant's early comment about 'spiritual growth through humility' (as noted in my research journal in Figure 10.1). At that point, I began writing about 'transcendence' and looking for other examples. This, however, ultimately did not prove useful as only one participant actually spoke of spiritual growth. I recognized this as somewhat of a 'false start' (Ristock & Pennell, 1996, p.85) and decided to look more closely at the data to generate other themes.

As Ezzy (2002) states: "I experimented with a variety of conceptual labels, or categories or codes (all of these words mean the same sort of thing), until I found codes that seemed to fit the data" (p.89). Through discussions with my research advisor and friends, and through systematic inspection of the data, I arrived at the latter categorization of transformative learning, which encompassed a greater range of student experiences, including the one on spiritual growth. It took some time to arrive there, however, and for the purpose of transparency, I recount that process here.

'Sitting With' the Data.

Over the New Year between 2006 and 2007 I attended a ten-day silent meditation retreat. Having attended such a retreat once before, I was curious about what insights I might gain by 'sitting with' the data, in silence, for this length of time. I had intentionally watched most of the video footage prior to this retreat, so that the images would be fresh in my mind. Although the purpose of this particular meditation technique is to *not think*, I knew from previous experience that my mind would inevitably wander. My attempts to

not think about the data proved useful, as two different kinds of insights emerged from this process. First, it highlighted several key events and after emerging from the retreat (when I again had access to pen and paper) I began categorizing these as ‘critical incidents/negative stories.’

Second, from Krieger (1985), I knew that understanding myself was part of the process of sociological discovery and that being open to a new conception of self would allow for a new conception of the research participants. A sense of personal resolution that occurred during this meditation offered one such insight. After the November performance, an audience member (who was known, but not well-known to me) had offered to give me some unsolicited feedback. As this occurred in the moments *immediately* following the performance, I was completely caught off-guard and, while I often solicit feedback for other work, this particular offer was so offensive to me that I was still mulling it over two months later.

At one point during the meditation I realized that because this was my first attempt to produce theatre, I felt more vulnerable than usual—I was in unfamiliar territory and *way* out of my comfort zone. In the moments immediately following the performance what I wanted was reassurance, not an indication that I had done something wrong. I do not like to admit vulnerability, but this new conception of self gave me additional insight into many of the participants’ comments about feeling insecure when they first arrive in Canada. They too were, quite literally, in unfamiliar territory. This insight generated another category of ‘insecurity/vulnerability.’

Generating Themes.

With these insights, I went back to the data and looked for further examples of critical incidents and expressions of vulnerability. I realized that watching the video alone was not an efficient or effective way to systematically sort through the data, so I decided to transcribe the video footage. The process of transcription generated more themes and once the data was selected and transformed into typed format, I attended to my propensity toward kinaesthetic learning. I printed three sets of data and, with scissors in hand, systematically sorted through the data set. I literally cut the printed transcripts into pieces and placed these pieces in file folders spread around my living room. Where a piece of data fit into two or more themes, I cut the same piece from the additional printed copies. Where the themes overlapped, I made further notes to myself about which theme “goes with” which. Where a one or two word description did not suffice to capture the similarities between pieces of data, I used several descriptive phrases. This was a generative process; while I had listed 20 potential themes at the beginning, I added 10 more ‘file folders’ as I systematically went through the data. These themes included:

Figure 10.2 Initial Themes

1. Age (goes with culture)
2. Canada as good
3. Classroom (goes with culture)
4. Connection/Isolation (away from social network)
5. Continuum of citizenship
6. Cross-cultural research (goes with language and classroom)
7. Culture
8. Difference (goes with isolation, culture)
9. Empathy
10. Expectations of Canada (reasons for leaving home/impressions)
11. Helping/reciprocity
12. Immigrant versus international student
13. Insecurity/vulnerability/lack of confidence/out of comfort zone/need for reassurance
14. Intention and how action is received (complexity of oppression)
15. Knowledge that struggle is part of the experience
16. Language (goes with culture)
17. Leaving something behind
18. Misc
19. Negative “stories”
20. Old guard (perception that activism contaminates education, art, research)
21. Policy (not a change of policy, change of heart)
22. Privilege
23. Process
24. Request for services (goes with policy)
25. Risk-taking (trust, learning strength)
26. Same thing at home (self-reflection about home country)
27. Standing up to power/reaching a point of saying no/strength/self-confidence
28. Stereotypes/media
29. Threat
30. Time /practice versus newly arrived (goes with standing up to power)

The reader will note that number twenty-three on the above list is called process. This included all my instructions on the method, not the participants’ words. I made another decision to exclude this data from the analysis; while the process was interesting (to me), these were my words and so they were not helpful in responding to the research question that focused on international student experiences. Furthermore, as my research question was not methodological in nature, one of my first decisions was to (temporarily)

put aside the data related to the methodology and listen more closely to the voices of participants.

While this sorting process was useful for differentiating the process from the participants, it was not sufficient for generating new theoretical insights. Instead it created a ‘multiplicity of perspectives’ (Strauss & Corbin, 1994) which did not yet lead to a coherent story. Kirby & McKenna (1989) state that “in essence, analysis consists of moving data from category to category (constant comparative), looking for what is common (properties) and what is uncommon (satellites)” (p.146). With this in mind, I used the constant comparison method (as described by Kirby & McKenna, 1989; Ristock & Pennell, 1996) and developed another analytic framework.

As suggested by one of my committee members, I began systematically asking ‘what are the struggles’ faced by international students in the three original settings from my research question: the application process, classroom, and student-supervisor relationship. I then broke the data down further by investigating these struggles according to how race intersected with seven other dimensions of power: gender, class, age, sexual orientation, ability, language, culture. At the same time, I still had the insight on transcendence at the back of my mind and systematically questioned the data for examples of how students were transforming those very same struggles.

Analysis Through Reflexivity and Writing.

With data fitting into these two parallel frameworks (struggles and transformations), I was challenged by Richardson’s (1994) questions and subsequent suggestion:

How do we create texts that are vital? That are attended to? That make a difference? One way to create those texts is to turn our attention to writing as a method of inquiry. I write because I want to find something out. I write in order to learn something that I didn't know before I wrote it. (p.347)

In other words, I began using 'writing as a method of inquiry' and systematically wrote about each of the quotes containing examples of the participants' struggles in the three settings and according to the eight dimensions of power. Through the writing process, I expanded the categories of language and culture to include: spoken English, accent, non-verbal communication, and silence, as well as cultural disorientation, cultural isolation, cultural hegemony, always the 'outsider,' and Western academic culture. This produced four chapters about students' struggles that fit in the following framework:

Table 10.1 Initial Analytic Framework of Student Struggles

Ch. A Settings	Admissions process	Classroom	Student- Supervisor relationship	Other? (e.g. research lab)	(non- academic settings)
Ch. B Intersecting dimensions of struggle	Race	Race + Gender	Race + Class	Race + Sexual orientation	Race +Ability
Ch. C Language	Spoken English	Accent	Non-verbal communication	Silence	--
Ch. D Culture	Cultural disorientation	Cultural isolation	Cultural hegemony	Always the 'Outsider'	Western Academic culture
Ch. E	Transformation?				

As I was writing, I continued to follow Richardson (1994) in endeavouring to 'nurture my own voice' to release "the censorious hold of 'science writing' on our

consciousness, as well as the arrogance it fosters in our psyche. Writing is validated as a method of knowing” (p.518). In this way, I produced a thoroughly reflective reading of my data:

A reflexive reading will locate you as part of the data you have generated, and will seek to explore your role in the process of generation and interpretation of data. You will probably see yourself as inevitably and inextricably implicated in the data generation and interpretation processes, and you will therefore seek a reading of data which captures or expresses those relationships. (Mason, 1996, p.109)

A similar sentiment is expressed differently by Ristock & Pennell (1996) who claim that “an assertion that the theory is confirmed becomes problematic when it is recognized that the researcher does not merely discover it from the data but also shapes this ‘discovery’ ” (p.87). They go on to suggest that developing creative analyses and attending to competing discourses in the data assists the researcher in avoiding the dogmatism that often accompanies theoretical assertions, which can sometimes serve to further alienate and or reproduce violent structures already at play in participants’ lives.

Expanding Dichotomies.

Following our last performance in Vancouver, I truly had a sense of the limitations of my research question. As I continued writing, I began to gain a greater awareness of how the data revealed the contradictory ways in which the research question was problematic. For example, when categorizing student experience according to the above-mentioned dimensions of power, I realized their experiences did not fit neatly into

these boxes as they each held unique positions within these overlapping areas of identity. As such, I began keeping track of data that simply ‘did not fit’ into the somewhat binary classification of struggle or transformation.

I was already familiar with an analytic tool used for expanding dichotomies, the ‘semiotic square’ (Ristock & Pennell, 1996). Essentially, this entails following a four-step process of generating a key starting position, seeking its contrary, then seeking its contradiction (possibilities that encompass both the key position and its contrary), and finally looking for its implication (neither the starting position, nor its contrary).

The analysis produced the following square:

Figure 10.3 Semiotic Square Used for Expanding Dichotomies

1. International Students experience multiple struggles	2. International Students do not experience struggles (any more than other graduate students or other members of UVic)
<p>4. (Neither/ Nor; implication)</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> - the research question is flawed - the category ‘international student’ is not sufficient for understanding the problem - international students are a diverse, heterogeneous, non-unified community with internal dimensions of power so each struggle is unique - other students have equally important struggles (e.g. child care) - staff, faculty and administrators also struggle with increased internationalization <p>→ INTERSECTIONAL ANALYSIS NEEDED</p>	<p>3. (Both/ And; contradiction)</p> <p>International and other students do struggle, but some figure out how to use these struggles as a means of learning, spiritual and personal growth, and inspiring action.</p> <p>→ TRANSFORMATIVE LEARNING</p>

This analytic tool gave me permission to value the neither/nor position and compile my own narrative along with all the pieces that ‘didn’t fit’ into one more chapter on intersectionality, which you will read in Act Twelve.

Further Reflexivity and Finally Letting Go.

With some prompting, I came to the decision that, while *I wanted* to document all the different kinds of struggles faced by international students in various settings, the four chapters that recounted these struggles did not answer my research question—the question that was guiding me to seek out the contradictions. As described in Act Two, going into the study, I already knew some of the struggles students faced and this was what propelled me to conduct research on this subject.

Sinding & Aronson (2003) recount how their own choice of words during the interview process served to support potentially harmful discourses that were affecting their participants. In their case, their choice of words around what a ‘good death’ or ‘active ageing’ might entail seemed to affirm the research participants’ perceived sense of failure around family members’ death and ageing processes. This understanding was specifically achieved through reflexively engaging with their transcripts. As I reflexively engaged with my own data, it started to become clear to me that my own desire to have international students’ struggles publicly articulated and acknowledged coupled with the methodology of forum theatre that requires the presentation of unresolved challenges, had been a significant driving force in this research.

At the outset, however, I was encouraged to go on a quest for something I did not already know. Early in the process, the research question developed from ‘what are the

struggles...?’ to ‘what are the contradictions...?’ I also realized that since we had performed UNSETTLED in four different venues (including the rehearsal), in one sense, my original desire to have students’ struggles publicly articulated and acknowledged had already been accomplished through the collaborative theatre performance. The art and the actors *had* spoken for themselves and this representation had already impacted the minds and possibly the hearts of people who had been there to witness. After much resistance and reflection, I was finally able to let go of approximately 150 pages of writing about struggle in order to focus on the genuinely new insights around transformative learning and intersectionality.

Summary

This Act has given readers a sense of what my individual process of analysis entailed, from the initial selection of data to the final two key lessons. Although this was not a Grounded Theory study, I explained how the various iterations of analytic frameworks and themes were generated from the data and, therefore, the theoretical insights were grounded in the data. I used extensive reflexivity (Mason, 1996; Ristock & Pennell, 1996; Sinding & Aronson, 2003) and was creative in my approach to analysis, choosing to intentionally ‘sit with’ the data during a ten-day meditation and attend to my propensity toward kinaesthetic learning with scissors in hand.

I also drew largely from Ristock & Pennell (1996), from my ‘false start,’ to a process of ‘constant comparison,’ to a means of ‘expanding dichotomies.’ I used Richardson’s (1994) recommendation of using ‘writing as a method of inquiry’ as well. In the end, I realized I needed to ‘let go’ of my desire to tell a certain kind of story, in

order for the new, surprising insights to fully emerge. This process led me to the lessons on transformative learning and intersectionality, as will be described in the next two Acts

Act 11 The Potential for Transformative Learning

After watching the performance of UNSETTLED, some of the challenges, struggles, and forms of discrimination encountered by international students should now be apparent. While it could be argued that the existence of these represents an inherent contradiction to the welcoming multicultural discourses of Canada, as I have suggested, these alone were not the surprising elements of this study. Here I will discuss the first of two sets of lessons I learned through this research. This first set returns us to the discussion of transformative learning from Act Four by providing examples of how such learning might take shape in the lives of graduate students in general and international students in particular. The discussion here is related to Mezirow's (1991) idea of 'perspective transformation,' particularly in the context of cross-cultural immersion (Centre for Intercultural Learning, 2006; Chamberlin-Quinlisk, 2005). The irony, of course, is that we seldom acknowledge the extent of struggle involved in transformative learning. Could you imagine the fallout if the extent of struggle was clearly advertised on UVic's or the Canadian Embassy's website?

To describe various elements of students' experiences that they have learned to frame in a new perspective—and which I have labelled as transformative learning—this Act is divided into six sections, according to the different ways students transformed negative experiences into opportunities for transformative learning and personal growth. I begin with an acknowledgement of the nature of the journey, that is, the necessity of learning the lesson in the struggle. I then go on to talk about laughter, empathy, pushing back, raising one's voice, and the effect of community.

Learning the Lesson in the Struggle

A participant named Johan only came out to the first workshop. He actively participated in all the activities, but did not say much at all. During the closing circle, Trevor first wanted to ask whether other students felt they had gained more than they had given up in their home countries. Johan's response was the following:

There's a book called, *The Alchemist*, by Paulo Coelho. It's very interesting to read it from the perspective of being an international student.

Although it was a short, simple comment, it stayed with me for a long time. I love that little book, *The Alchemist* (Coelho, 1993), in spite of its sweeping generalizations and romantic perspective. To me it represents that same sense of faith in the process as described in Act Seven, but also faith in the journey and in life. Yes, we do encounter challenges, yes we struggle, and yes it *really does hurt* while we are inside these struggles. Ultimately, though, if we can find it in ourselves to make our way through these challenges, as Mezirow and others described in Act Four suggested, we can take them as opportunities for learning and personal growth. Ultimately, whatever lessons we can extract can also help us at a later point in the journey. Johan's reference to this book symbolized, for me, an acknowledgement that struggling is part of the transformative journey—part of the 'disorienting dilemma' being an international student entails.

Johan was not alone in demonstrating this kind of perspective. Chelsea, too, demonstrated an understanding that struggling is part of the journey:

The first thing that came to my mind as we were doing these activities is the negative things: all the struggling, all the times I've felt powerless. 'I'm not stupid, I just don't know how to communicate!' All these feelings and all the

differences are somehow easier to remember. But now I was just thinking that I should let you know that it's not all bad. I really like it here and I don't want to go back. I see the differences: there are things I miss and that I will always miss and that's just life. But I have been welcomed here and I have found people who have helped me so much. I had the opportunity to go back home and feel strange at home too and compare the two worlds and decide that this is where I want to stay. This is probably the most incredible thing that Canada, UVic, and everyone allows us to do. We can choose where we want to be. Just because you were born somewhere doesn't mean you have to just be there and that's it. Thanks to open immigration processes—they are complicated, but the thought behind it is that you can choose to live someplace else and to be part of a different culture and to choose things that you believe are good and that's where you want to be. We have this possibility and I'm very grateful for that because I chose to be here, I like what I see here, what I have here and this is my option. So there are some difficulties that come with that, obviously, but I think that most of us recognize that we have to go through some struggles to get there. It takes a little bit of effort, but it's worth it.

I do recognize that not everyone has access to the same opportunity and 'choice' as Chelsea. In earlier conversations, she indicated that she understood that the opportunity to study or immigrate to Canada is a privileged one, inaccessible to the Majority of the world's population and undesirable to others. However, the point here is that she acknowledges that struggling is part of the experience. Somehow, as she says, the hard work makes the experience more valuable—'it's worth it.'

Daniel experienced a similar kind of lesson. He told me a lengthy story about a committee member that began this way:

Daniel: I had a committee member who was *really* overpowering and dominating. The problem about that was that he was known, or he rather established himself as “the” person on [my home country].

Me: Was he from [your country]?

Daniel: No, no.

Me: Oh! (laughing knowingly) An ‘expert’ on [your country].

Daniel went on to talk about how he felt this person perceived him as a threat, how he tried to “put me down” and dominate committee meetings. He told me that while in some ways “he was a very strong and very nice man and I wanted him on my committee,” this member was so assertive that the student’s supervisor would “become very quiet” in his presence. When it came time for Daniel to defend his research proposal, this ‘expert’ asked him to revise the proposal five times and finally asked him to write up a separate paper to “prove to me that you are capable” of doing the proposed research.

After writing that paper, he went to his supervisor and finally said “this is not acceptable anymore. I couldn’t tolerate it.” Around the same time, this ‘expert’ retired from a leadership position in the department and this created the opportunity for Daniel’s supervisor to ask this person to step down. At subsequent committee meetings “everyone told me that it was not acceptable the way he was doing it,” but “nobody would say that” because he held a position of power. These are the final lines of our conversation on the subject:

Me: I'm sorry you had to go through that! Oh my goodness.

Daniel: But that's all part of the learning process, right?

Yes, it is part of the learning process and it turned out that this was one of several experiences that Daniel used as an opportunity to learn how to 'push back' as I will discuss below. Perhaps it was not the most pleasant part of his process, but it was an essential part nonetheless.

I include these three students' comments as a segue into this discussion because their message was integral to many of the stories that were shared throughout the research process. I nevertheless recognize that there is an inherent danger in suggesting that people learn from struggle, or implying that everything always works out in the end. With wars, famine, poverty, and various kinds of misery surrounding us, it is easy to see that often it does not. All of the challenges students expressed in UNSETTLED are just as much part of the story as is the perspective and strength gained by surviving them. This perspective, however, is what was surprising to me.

Before we move on to other examples, I am mindful of hooks' (1989) warning about the ethical implications of representation: "when we write about the experiences of a group to which we do not belong, we should think about the ethics of our action, considering whether or not our work will be used to reinforce and perpetuate domination" (p.43). With these words in mind, **let me be very clear that I am not advocating intentionally causing others harm in the name of promoting transformative learning.** The kind of perspective transformation participants described was not the result of intentional pedagogical strategy in a formal learning setting. These are examples, rather, of students' own capacity for resilience and transformation.

In guiding you through this discussion, my intention is not to romanticize the students' struggles, nor am I expecting other students to simply get it together and get over any challenge that comes their way; this is key. As Mezirow (1991) stated, "these challenges are painful; they often call into question deeply held personal values and threaten our very sense of self" (p.168). To embrace the concept of transformative learning, particularly in a higher education setting, we must acknowledge people's emotional work in terms of both the mental effort and the time it takes to learn from the overt and covert racism, insults and other forms of struggle. Moreover, acknowledging a journey of transformational learning does not call for pity—it means *valuing* this emotional work as legitimate learning that takes place within the walls of academe. It also means creating supportive communities and figuring out ways to better support students in times of struggle so they can acknowledge the potential for transformative learning.

Learning to Laugh

The longer participants had been in Canada, the more they explained what they had learned about the culture. With time, they were able to look back and recognize the cultural mishaps they had not understood in the moment. Time gives perspective and, although they did not forget the pain or humiliation of the experience, several participants commented that they are now confident enough to look back and laugh. The following three stories were shared in that spirit:

Zoe: You know what I found the first time when I came in Canada? I didn't have dental benefits or anything and I had this pain. So I'm walking into the first dentist which I am seeing and wanted him to do something for me. So he was nice

and polite and whatever and when the bill came, it was something that I couldn't pay. So he decided to put it into payments so that I could afford it. I was so thankful because I was so much in pain—the next time I went there I invited him for lunch! (She laughs) Because that's typical for my culture. (She laughs again) Can you imagine how that person reacted? But you know, it took me ten years to understand that! (Laughter in the room) That's typical for us—we invite people for lunch, you know, you're thankful to them. The only thing that you want is to cook for them a nice dinner—that's all. Nothing else, but people here think different.

Me: He probably thought you were asking him out on a date. (More laughter in the room)

As she was telling the story, she burst into laughter several times, as did the whole group. But this was not a mean-spirited laughter—we were not laughing *at* her, we were laughing *with* her. As there were only women present at this workshop, I believe we all understood just how embarrassing this scenario would have been: it is always uncomfortable for me when people mistake kindness for a different kind of interest. In this sense, my laughter was one of empathy and I sensed that the other women could also relate. Sometimes the humiliation of experiences such as these stays with us for many years—ten years in Zoe's case. It seems that laughter and having the opportunity to share such stories (in this case, in a women-only setting) are healthy coping mechanisms for the stress of adapting to a cross-cultural environment.

Daniel, too, wanted to share some humour with the group during a separate workshop:

With that I should stop and share some humour, a cultural experience. ... The second day in Canada was the worst! In my country we drive on the left side, but here we drive on the right side. I knew that, but with the jet-lag you tend to forget. So I stood on the wrong side of the road to get to UVic. Instead of coming to UVic I went away from UVic. *That was really funny.* Anyways, I got on the bus and there were three or four people. In my country the busses are always full and even if there's only a few people, we all sit together to chat about politics and there's always so many things that are happening. We don't sit so far. But in this bus, when I got in there were only 3 or 4 people. So I looked around and everyone was sitting so far and wide. So I sat down next to one person and he got really uncomfortable. I thought, is there something wrong? I said hello and he just grunted 'humph!' (He laughs) *That was really difficult.* ... So anyway, I gathered my courage and asked him how far is it to UVic? He must have really thought something was wrong because I was going in the opposite direction. He said, go and talk to the driver. So I went to talk to the driver and he pointed me in the other direction. So that was my first experience. (my emphasis)

Although he frames this as sharing some humour from his own cross-cultural experience, he laughs right before expressing just how difficult it actually was when the person on the bus would not talk to him. This person did not do anything wrong, per se, but then again, neither did Daniel—a cross-cultural misunderstanding, as he suggests. Yet being in unfamiliar territory—his second day in the country—created a heightened sense of

vulnerability: it was “the worst!” Now that he understands the (bus) culture in Canada, he can see the humour of his behaviour, but at the time he needed the strength to persevere.

Jason expressed a similar level of emotional vulnerability, about which he can now laugh:

For me, today, this is a bit funny. I’m a very emotional person and I laugh very easily and I cry very easily. I was never a rich guy, but my life in my home country was totally different. For example, I had a nice car and I used it to go partying every weekend. I used to work and I had lots of friends and we would get drunk and I didn’t have to worry about paying my bills. [I never thought], oh my god, I have to pay rent—no! I had to sell my car to get some money to come here and of course my parents helped me. And it’s this thing that happened. It didn’t last any more than 10 seconds, but it’s a scene I’m never going to forget. I don’t know why, but once when it was winter and it was raining a lot, I was coming home from school. I had my backpack on and it was raining and I was totally wet. I was about to cross the street and when I was waiting for my turn to cross, this really, *really* nice car—I was totally wet—and this really nice car stopped at the light. There was this guy about my age who was wearing really nice clothes. I thought he was warm in his car and I was outside. I looked inside the car and I can remember exactly. I didn’t see his face, but I can remember *exactly* his clothes and the action. He reached for the stereo, a CD came out, and he changed the CD. He just changed the CD! And when I saw that I started crying! [There were noises in the room, gasps and soft laughter] And I couldn’t stop crying: ‘oh my god—

that was my life!’ And I walked back home crying all night long. I’ll never forget that.

It did seem a bit funny that simply watching someone change the CD in his car stereo could evoke such a powerful emotional response. Nevertheless, from the group’s gentle laughter, I suspected that some of them could relate. For me, this story demonstrated that it is symbolic moments like these, moments where we recognize ourselves in others when we fully grasp the consequences of our decisions: what we have left behind and what we have lost. It is also moments like these that can propel us toward a kind of growth we might not have been seeking, a kind of lesson we might not have been expecting to learn.

Learning Empathy

Jason’s story, which had been offered as part of the closing circle during the first workshop, elicited the following comments from Zoe:

I think what Canada gave me the most and even the University of Victoria was to see it from both sides of the coin. So I’m thinking now, what did I do to my students? At the same time, I want some of my professors to be in my shoes for a little while—for a day—so I think then they would change their perspective. That could change everything, right? I want them to speak two or three languages and to try to think academically in two or three languages and after that to try to put these thoughts in English. That’s so difficult! But I think when Jason goes back home and gets a beautiful car with a CD player you’re going to notice the person on the sidewalk just crying. So that is what Canada changed in me. So I could

notice everybody who needs help. So I just grew spiritually here by seeing the other side of the coin.

Zoe calls this a lesson in spiritual growth. At the heart of her story, I believe, is a growing sense of empathy. She began to question how, when she worked in her country of origin, she too had been implicated in the same kinds of hurtful scenarios she was now experiencing: “What did I do to my students?” She specifically spoke of a change in perspective and wishes her professors could go through a similar transformation. This desire has implications for professional development, not only amongst students, but amongst all members of the university community. As she suggests, “that could change everything, right?” This comment is linked to the discussion in Act Two about Weber’s instrumental rationality, internalized oppression and the cycle of violence perpetuated by the normative fallacy: just because we have experienced pain from an individual or an organization does not mean we ought to do the same to others. As Zoe suggests, we can learn empathy instead.

In some cases, students spoke about how finding empathy can be a real challenge. Rebecca told a story about feeling that she had somehow stepped on her professor’s toes, but did not understand what she had done wrong. When she later tried to make amends with this person, she was met with hostility: “I didn’t know that I could be told just like that, ‘don’t come here!’ It hurts! Coming from somebody you really respect, somebody you like.” She and others in the conversation were trying to figure out how to grow from experiences such as these by learning how *not* to treat others:

Rebecca: How do we learn? Grow? I want to learn from my professors, but I don't want to learn that! (She puts her hand in the air, palm forward, in a stop signal) That's not healthy.

Zoe: I think we're all going to be better people if we take the time to get to know each other.

Jessica: We certainly learn more [about] how to teach.

Violence becomes institutionalized when we normalize bad behaviour, when we accept that 'the way things are' is 'the way they must or ought to be' instead of being the result of a series of human choices. If educators—especially those of us concerned with social justice—learn how to overcome painful experiences, perhaps we will be less apt to reproduce the very hierarchies we wish to dismantle. We can start with the understanding that “the world is not OK” (Hall, 2001, p.177) and as a result, how people are treated in the world is ‘not OK.’ Rebecca, Zoe, and Jessica were trying to learn more “healthy” ways of being in the world, by taking “the time to get to know each other” and learning how *not* to teach. These suggestions point to a need to open up better pathways of communication within university settings.

Empathy can also take the shape of insight into one's own culture. Daniel was the first person who agreed to meet me for an interview. During our conversation he told a story about a fellow student who cited a study about people in Daniel's home country who feed their children to wolves and how, in this way, science can serve to perpetuate stereotypes. Here are the rest of his thoughts on that experience:

At the same time, it will be the same when a Canadian student goes to [my country] and sits in a classroom. Probably the [local] student would say that

Canada is full of Eskimos. I know it's politically incorrect terminology, but even now in school curriculum you'll find Eskimos introduced there. So there's more to it. It's not that I'm glorifying [my home country]—it's everywhere. Ignorance is everywhere.

Chelsea spoke to the same kind of reflexive, empathetic learning from yet another angle. Although she had previously talked about several challenges she had encountered, she could understand that she was not the only one struggling with cross-cultural interactions:

I just want to say that we always feel like we are wrong. So it is as much true for us when we're coming to Canada and we don't know a lot of things as it is for Canadians who are living with people they don't know and they don't understand. We're all human beings and we all fear the unknown. So this is happening to us, but we are not them so we have to get a way to negotiate. Bring a little bit of our culture so they can understand us, but at the same time we have to learn about their culture so we can understand them.

“Negotiating” in a cross-cultural context, as Chelsea suggests, entails active, democratic listening (Garrison, 1995) and attempts to understand the other person's perspective. As Daniel suggests, it entails reflecting on our own culture as well.

As explained in Act Two, entering into this research I believed that because I had been an international student myself, I could see and relate to students' struggles in a way that perhaps others on campus could not. Yet, as explained in Act Five, “a little empathy can be deceptive” (Gabella, 1998, p.38). In addition to the possibility of perpetuating stereotypes, as Gabella suggested, we should also be aware of the implications of empathizing with people who might be abusing power. The complexity of any person or

situation is lost when we assume we understand another person based solely on our own experiences.

Marcia: I think I do not have a lot of the common problems that a lot of international students face, like the language difficulties. I must say that so far my experience in Canada has been very positive and I think that Canadians are really very friendly. I went through U.S. immigration and then I went through Canadian immigration and I thought, 'Ohhh, Canadians are really very kind and friendly compared to those in the U.S.' I think I can empathize with how Canadians feel about immigrants and international students because [my home country] has a very open immigration policy. We are very internationalized and I think I show the same kind of prejudices against those immigrants. Like the jobs should go to [the locals] instead of to immigrants. So I can actually understand how Canadians feel about international students.

I had a hard time accepting this comment without judgment. In a sense it was a 'disconfirming case' (Miles & Huberman, 1994) not only because she was breaking the stereotype I had created through my own sense of empathy, but also because she seemed to be empathizing with people to whom I could not relate. As a fluent speaker of English and as a woman whose skin colour, religion, and other personal characteristics did not generally trigger a reaction of fear and suspicion, she was in a different position to make this statement than some of the others in the room. In fact, in response to this comment, one man told a story about being racially profiled every time he goes through the Victoria, BC airport.

As I was sitting with these comments, I realized that I have never been truly impoverished, nor have I ever been worried about finding work. My own relative privilege, family socialization, life opportunities, education, and abilities have always given me enough resources and a sufficient sense of security that I have felt able to take risks and pursue goals I did not know how I would finance at the outset. If I did not feel this sense of security, perhaps I too would see others as a threat and want jobs and other opportunities to go to me, or people like me first: horizontal hostility, as McDonald & Coleman (1999) and Lee & Lutz (2005) explain.

While the threat itself may be real or imagined or the struggle may be a relatively privileged one, if we do not acknowledge that prejudice may be a cover for unexamined fear, concern, or anger, the solutions we present likely will not be sustainable as they will not be endorsed by people who hold such beliefs. It is important to somehow address concerns such as these, whether we perceive them to be legitimate or not, as ignoring them will not build support for whichever action it is we wish to take. I am not suggesting that my interpretation was the rationale behind Marcia's comments, only that it helped *me* to empathize with the position from which she, like many mainstream Canadians with whom I have discussed my research, might be coming.

During the third workshop, Marcia went on to explain, "even if a professor shows racial discrimination, I learn something from it. I know how it feels and I don't do it to another race." As it turned out, she not only empathized with the Canadians who resented immigrants' presence, she also expressed a similar, though perhaps not quite as nuanced, kind of resistance to the cycle of violence that others had described.

Learning to Push Back

Chelsea's comments about finding a way to negotiate with members of the dominant culture were closely linked to many of the responses an activity called 'balancing' elicited. This activity was described in Act Six, but I will remind you that I asked participants to put their hands on each other's shoulders, lean in and push, *really* push. The intention was not to push the other person over, but to find a balance. I have now conducted this activity several times and as it is usually one of the first activities we do, it often elicits comments related to trust. In a few instances, however, the comments were more closely linked to the process of negotiating power in the context of unequal relationships:

Zhou He: When I was thinking about this activity I thought of the relationship between people. At first I thought we should behave gently and we found a balance. But then I thought if you're too gentle, you're too weak.

Susan: I have several points. One is a Chinese saying: if the horse is too kind, it will be ridden. If the person is too kind, he's going to be controlled and used and tamed or something. So as she said, sometimes we need to be stronger.

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Daniel: To me it represented domination and being dominated. We're always subservient to the dominant culture, but over time that changes. We have to decide if we want to be dominated all the time. I was also trying to push the limit to see how far he would go.

All three of these comments hint at reaching a turning point, maybe even a breaking point, where enough is enough: “if you’re too gentle, you’re too weak,” “sometimes we need to be stronger,” and finally, “we have to decide if we want to be dominated all the time.” While these comments were symbolic readings that did not refer to specific incidents, they foreshadowed a parallel turning point that was more explicit in other participants’ stories.

The first story comes from a student¹⁹ whose supervisor dropped them* claiming their English proficiency was too low:

Participant 1: And then after a week of crying I decided I wouldn’t go back to [my country]—that I came here to do my degree and I wouldn’t go back home without the thing I came here to do. Then he made me talk to him so I went to his office and he asked me what I would do. I told him that when you have faith and when you believe in yourself, you don’t really have patience [for people who put you down] ... And I refuse to go back to my country without my degree. Then he laughed sarcastically and said, well you know you’re not going to do your Master’s with me. And I said, I know and I’m not even going to ask you to supervise me. I came here to do my Master’s and I’m going to do my Master’s no matter what. So I had to find another supervisor.

Participant 2: Did you find another supervisor?

Participant 1: I did.

This kind of resolve was reflected in different ways from several students. Take Jessica’s story, for example:

¹⁹ This was a sensitive story, so I took my cue from the participant. I am intentionally using the grammatically incorrect, but gender neutral plural pronoun to ensure this student’s identity is protected.

At the beginning I was playing their game, their way of doing things, in admissions, in everything—knowing I held the cards they wanted. Then when I started showing cards they *didn't* want, they started going, 'oh...well....' I found that I just had to politely, and stubbornly, and *politely*, and quietly just *insist* on my way, and then look for the people who reflected that way. ... I finally went to the top and said: 'It's no longer worth it.' At this point the system crossed the line: I'm not staying unless you convince me there's a reason to stay. I'm not asking for special favours, I'm asking for you to say, do you think it's possible for this institution to do this? Here's what I want to do. Here's how I want to accomplish it. Do you have the people for this? If not, there's lots of other places to go. And they were wonderfully accommodating when I got to that point. But it was traumatic getting to it. It's hugely traumatic. It goes against our natural instincts to say, 'you're wrong!'

These stories add depth to the previous symbolic comments about being so gentle that they are perceived as weak, being too kind so that they are controlled, and finding a balance between being dominated and being dominant. Yet, as Jessica explains, reaching a breaking point can be traumatic and counter-instinctive. These comments are reminiscent of Freire (2003): this kind of liberation is “a childbirth, and a painful one” (p.49). Yet, when the breaking point did not come soon enough, other students spoke not only about emotional pain, but physical pain as well.

Daniel: When the stress level was too much here, a year into it my back went out and I couldn't take this anymore. I really was in terrible pain ... So finally I said, I'm not going to get stressed out. I'm taking it very slow and it's okay if I don't

finish it—it's fine, but I will try, I'll give it a try. So far I've finished two chapters and the third chapter is almost done.

The stress he was experiencing pushed him toward a different kind of resolve. The resolve we all need to keep ourselves healthy.

How do we know when another person is close to that breaking point or when we are pushing too hard? If we expect people to tell us, we are not acknowledging that discomfort can be silencing, as the reality of power differentials can be as well. Take the following interchange, for example:

Jessica: I think if you firmly just say, here's what I'm doing.

Zoe: No, not in my case. It wasn't possible.

Jessica: In some cases that's true.

In this situation Jessica, who had already told her story of reaching a turning point, was encouraging Zoe to confront the professor with whom she was experiencing conflict. Zoe's resolution was different, however, and, as I explain in the next section, it required figuring out a different way to raise her voice.

Learning to Raise Your Voice

During the first workshop, I conducted an activity called 'sculpting partners' (described in the section on Image Theatre in Act Six). Here, participants pretended to be a sculptor and 'sculpted' a partner into a specific image that represented one of their experiences as international students. I then asked each group of sculptors to position all the human sculptures in a space in the room we called the 'gallery.' Together, these sculptures told a new story, a collective story and each person interpreted that story

differently. One interpretation was particularly useful in connecting the students who developed the resolve needed to confront, to those who chose a different way to raise their voices.

Daniel: Marcia has identified that there is a flaw in the system. Lars is saying ‘I’m with you, here’s my muscle power.’ They’ve all seen that Marcia has reached a hopeless situation. Brent is so desperate. Jacqueline has been pushed around and she cannot take it anymore—it’s so painful. Chelsea is praying that something should happen.

Me: So these people are about to take action?

Daniel: Yes.

While this again describes a fictional situation, his interpretation represented, to me, the different stages of the journey at which people found themselves when they entered my research project and several possible courses of action as well. Throughout the data there were *many* examples of participants who had identified *at least* one flaw in the system. Many people offered a hand in solidarity to others who reached a hopeless situation. Many described feeling desperation. Many had been hurt because they had been pushed around. I wondered, too, whether those who had not learned to raise their voices felt that prayer was their only option. More relevant here, though, I found that many of the participants were taking *some kind* of action.

As I played with this interpretation and sorted through my data I found that there were many examples of action, large and small. For some it meant a direct confrontation or a resolve to stay healthy, as I have already described. For others it meant looking for spaces to raise their voices in opposition. For her part, although she could not confront as

Jessica was prompting her to do, Zoe seemed to have resolved to ensure that other people at UVic understand the challenges endured by international and immigrant students. One of her strategies was to encourage others to tell their stories and in this sense she was saying, 'I'm with you, here's my muscle power.' After the student above told a very emotional story about a confrontation with their* former supervisor, this was part of Zoe's response:

Zoe: Oh god, you have to write your story! ... A lot of people are not aware, they're *not aware* what's happening with some of the international students because they're just taking it. They're not writing it. If they write, they could change the system. One writing, second writing, third writing, fourth writing, five writing—if we keep it for us, the system is not going to change. There are things in the system that could change if we are assertive. Whatever it is. Every little thing. It's not for us to put it inside. No way.

Jessica: You're right. Document it. Pursue it.

Zoe: Just the facts from your point of view. Nobody can tell you if you're right or you're wrong. From your point of view, as a human being you have the right to say your story. If you don't say your story, people are going to think that there is only one story.

These final comments also reveal the benefit of standpoint research. Dominant perspectives suggest that *they chose to come here; it is their responsibility to learn English and assimilate; if they don't like it here, they can go home*. Yet as Zoe says, unless people who see a different perspective gain access to the production of knowledge

or otherwise find ways to raise their voices, there will continue to only be one side of the story.

Others in the group expressed the shared responsibility for making change. Take Sylvia's comments, for example:

What I always think is I have lots of complaints and lots of struggles and lots of negative things to say about the system here in Canada and also the system here at UVic. But I think this institution—the University of Victoria—this is the place and this is the site where I can raise my voice. Because I cannot say what I'm thinking in the middle of downtown, shouting at other people! But here I can do that in a classroom or in this workshop. So I think I should appreciate that I have a chance to study here, although I have complaints or negative things. And one more thing: I have an assumption that international students have difficulties and we as international students have disadvantages in terms of language competency. And, how do you say, it is always up to us to reach or to achieve the norm, but they don't come down—and they hold the power. So they always use the power or exercise power on us. So that's a lot of pressure and stress on us. So I think we need to negotiate, but to negotiate I think we have to raise our voice more and they as Faculty members or administrators, they should have an attitude to hear our voice more.

As Sylvia suggests, change cannot come from the bottom alone. During the course of this study, I encountered some resistance and I learned that in my position as a student I could only take this research so far. Nonetheless, I also encountered *many* people who were very willing to listen and some who pro-actively were trying to make UVic a little more

welcoming for international students. The human beings inside the bureaucracy have some agency, albeit structurally constrained agency, and as students we did as well.

For the people who witnessed the progression of this research, it was no secret that I hoped this research would, in some small way, create a different kind of opportunity for students, myself included, to raise our voices. My position as a 'white' woman was not unproblematic and I was wary of Ellworth's (1992) warning to critical pedagogues who try to create space for people to raise their voices, when in fact learners often speak out against those in authority (including these same critical pedagogues). Nevertheless, my hope matched Zoe's and Sylvia's desires. As Zoe went on to say,

In the end what matters? Our degrees? No. Only one thing matters: our insights as human beings, right? So we have to make the world a little bit better. Even though it doesn't change for you, it has to change for the people after us.

Perhaps through the ripple effects of UNSETTLED, UVic will be a *little bit better* for the people who come after us. As rephrased by Becker (1970), "the question is not whether we should take sides, since we inevitably will, but rather whose side we are on" (p.204).

Several participants told me the reason why they gave me their time and their stories was because they shared my hope that this research would make some small difference. This project, however, was not the only space people found to raise their voices and work toward institutional change. I ran into Johan at a feedback session hosted by Graduate Studies. I learned that Susan and Trevor worked for the new student orientation, with a desire to help new international students in particular. Bella created a solidarity group for people from her home country and Maria-Luisa created a writing support group for fellow graduate students. Coco previously sat on the Graduate

Student's council and, like other people who are fluent in more than one culture, I noticed that in her everyday life she played an unofficial role of "interpreter, translator, and ambassador between groups" (Mahtani, 2005, p.88). Several audience members commented on the power of Lawrence's poem, *Frame*, and its publication across campus extended the impact of his words further. The Master's research of Susan and Sylvia relate to the experiences of international students, and Phyllis' work relates to global citizenship. Zhou He became active in various environmental organizations.

Over the year I conducted this research, I began noticing and hearing people beyond the scope of this research raising their voices as well. I noticed that several more international students became involved in the Graduate Students' Council, as representatives and in paid positions as Executive members. The fall 2006 edition of the Graduate Student magazine the *Unacknowledged Source* featured the writing and work of many international students from across campus, in particular from the Faculty of Education. Time will tell whether these small but significant individual efforts will reach the critical mass needed to cause the system itself to change. In the meantime, take note: international students are taking action—they are learning to push back and to raise their voices.

Learning in Community

The ability to laugh, the ability to confront, and the ability to raise their voices only became possible for these students as time progressed. Time was not the only factor, though. Of equal importance were the relationships built during this time. Students spoke to me at length about isolation, loneliness, and the desire to belong—wanting to reach

out, but not knowing how. For many students, however, the intensity of this stage eventually passed:

Sylvia: Yeah, I miss my parents, but I think now I'm able to enjoy life. It's because I think I can find a place where I should be or where I do feel comfortable. That's the impact of my friends here in Victoria. The more I have a connection with my friends here, the more I feel comfortable.

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Daniel: I'll just say that this is the fifth year I'm here in Canada. The first two years I felt terribly lonely. Terribly lonely. I was waiting to go back. Just drop everything and go back. But in the third year when I went back home, I felt lonely there. One of the reasons is I find the culture at home is everyone is similar. I don't get to mingle with other cultures. Here I have the opportunity: Brazil, China, pick any country, it's here. So I'm personally interacting with each one, but there's a sense of belonging in a cultural kind of way. So I would suggest to you that I love it here.

Many educators understand the importance of creating an intentional or safe learning environment, conducive to fostering critical consciousness. However, the learning environment for students in this study reached beyond the classroom walls. When students feel lonely, "terribly lonely," how can this not affect their ability to learn? Conversely, as Sylvia suggests, relationships with friends make all the difference. Both of these comments speak to the power of learning in community.

In a small way, this research generated a similar sense of belonging. The last time the theatre troupe got together as a group, we met in the campus cafeteria where

Lawrence normally eats. On our way back from the Vancouver performance, Lawrence had invited those of us in the car to join him for dinner. He explained that he had too many points left on his cafeteria meal card and did not want these to go to waste; he was returning to China the following week and the card would expire while he was away. We were too tired at that point to take him up on his offer, but I promised I would join him for a meal before he left town. When it turned out that we had to cancel the April performance on campus, I asked Lawrence whether he would like to invite everyone to the cafeteria instead. Generously, he extended the invitation.

As we made our way to the front of the cafeteria line-up to pay for our meals, Lawrence explained to the cashier that he was covering all six of us with his meal card. “Wow,” the cashier exclaimed, “you’ve got lots of friends!” I smiled. A few moments later when we were sitting together eating our meals, I elbowed Lawrence and jokingly observed, “Hey, you know what this window kind of looks like? It looks to me like a frame”—in reference, of course, to the verse in his poem we had heard him read so many times before:

I am in the cafeteria

The sunbeam is shining on the tree

The window is a frame

“Yeah, yeah, that’s it!” he replied, to which Maria-Luisa added, “but this time you’re on the inside.” Indeed, we all were. Through the relationships built over the course of this research, some of the frames had begun to disappear from all of our lives.

The University of Victoria is already aware of the need for international students to connect to the community. As stated in Act Two, there is a ‘Buddy System’ that

connects new students with old and I imagine there are times when these ‘buddies’ turn into genuine friends. International students are not alone in this desire to connect. Two of the so-called ‘Canadian’ actors, Maria-Luisa and Phyllis, also have a plan in the works for connecting international and immigrant students with Canadians who have travelled abroad. Both of these are important efforts because they speak to a more universal need for community.

Yet, in the context of academe, there seems to be a more fundamental reason why this sense of isolation is particularly acute. The competitive nature of academe reflects the competitive nature of this society where we are conditioned to work independently and rewarded for being individuals. This anonymous comment from one of the participants, which was given to me as feedback on the research process, spoke about a different way of learning that led to the feeling that we were all on the inside: “people having a common goal are easy to understand and become friends.”

Of course there is something intangible about friendship, about relationships, something in the chemistry between people that works, or does not. In this final discussion on community, I am not suggesting that we all need to be *friends*, but I believe that we do need to find more reasons to work with others so that we can *learn how* to work well with others, to share common goals. I fear that cooperation is a skill that is being systematically socialized out of us in academe as it is in the larger society. If we recognize this we can make choices about whether to see the world as a competition over *allegedly* scarce resources (McDonald & Coleman, 1999), or as a collective effort to achieve a socially just and ecologically sustainable planet. This is work that can begin in the context of our classrooms, our research, and our everyday relationships. Such

relationships can support international students—and us all—in lifelong journeys of transformative learning.

Summary

In this Act I have reviewed several of the ways in which students transformed less than ideal circumstances into opportunities for personal growth and action, experiences that are congruent with the theory of transformative learning as described in Act Four. Students understood that struggling was part of the experience and managed to find lessons in these struggles. They learned how to laugh at themselves, even when the laughter originally came in the form of tears. They found empathy for others they had hurt, or for the ways in which they thought mainstream Canadians might be struggling with how to interact with them. They found the strength needed to confront, to persevere, and to keep themselves healthy. They found their voices and encouraged others to raise their voices as well. And finally, they were able to learn these lessons when they found a place to belong.

As the stories told by students in UNSETTLED indicate, these transformative lessons do not come easy. People arrive at a university seeking wisdom, but are perhaps unprepared for the nature of the wisdom they will gain. By better acknowledging and validating the kinds of struggles I have described here and creating more authentic everyday relationships, the university community can support students in realizing the potential for transformative learning. Yet it is not students alone who can realize this potential. In the next Act, I describe the limitations of a research question that focused so

narrowly on international students and discuss the increased potential for change that stems from an intersectional analysis.

Act 12 An Intersectional Analysis of a Globalized University

After the fourth and final summer workshop, I had collected sufficient data to write a dissertation. Four theatre workshops with eighteen participants, plus one pilot workshop and five semi-structured screening interviews had given me sufficient stories to write something potentially meaningful about the experiences of international students and about using theatre as a method of inquiry. I was determined to go to performance, though, and these four workshops had not built enough momentum to make this happen. I was still learning.

There was a specific moment during that final summer workshop when I knew the search was not over yet. In that moment, as will be discussed, it became clear that the search I was on was more complex than the parameters dictated by my research question. To learn the lessons this research could reveal, I knew I needed to be more flexible—no matter how loud the academic ‘cops in my head’ (Boal, 2001) were blowing their whistles.

The second set of lessons from this research emerged from *acknowledging* contradictions embedded in the research question itself. Many of these lessons were contained in the symbolism of that one moment in the final summer workshop. Over the course of the research I discovered that this activity held multiple symbolic layers and these revealed themselves as time went on. These lessons, which I *acknowledge* in the three sections following the description of the knots activity, pertained to the diversity of experiences captured in this project. I acknowledge the diversity of racialized students, the diversity of *all* graduate students and the reality of antagonists’ struggles in

increasingly globalized university contexts. Finally, I acknowledge that these are all interconnected.

Knots

The activity that symbolically represented the lessons I will present here was called ‘knots.’ For this activity, we stood shoulder to shoulder in a circle and reached across to hold on to different people’s hands. The purpose of the activity was to undo the knot we had created with our hands while working together in silence.

There were two aspects of this activity that generated embodied moments of learning for me. The first was that while I had been facilitating all the activities from the outside until then, I facilitated this activity from the *inside*. In earlier workshops, I had been prepared to participate if the occasion arose, for example if someone needed a partner, but until that point I had not. When I began explaining this activity I was musing aloud about whether or not to join in and it was the participants who encouraged me to join. I am not entirely certain why I did. Perhaps it was because of the invitation, perhaps it was because by then I felt very comfortable with the methods and the people, perhaps it was because only women were present, or perhaps it was because this activity is meant to be done as one large group. Most likely it was a combination of all of the above. In any case, there I was and because I was there I not only witnessed, but also *experienced* the lessons that emerged from this activity. This was the point where I truly became a participant in my own study.

It was not only that I facilitated this activity from the inside that was influential; it was what happened while we were working together as well. As we began the act of

untying the knot by twisting and turning our bodies and hands, *suddenly* the group broke into two smaller groups. Susan, Jessica, Rebecca and I were on one side and Chelsea, Sylvia and Zoe were on the other. I recall feeling ‘shocked’ and reviewing the video, at this point in the activity I literally gasped out loud. I stopped for a moment, looked over at the other group and then realized I still had my own group ‘knot’ to work out so we went back to work. I am still not sure how this break happened and it does not really matter that it did, what matters is what I learned.

Acknowledging the Diversity of Racialized Students

When the circles broke apart, I really grasped the implications of something I had previously known in my mind, but had not fully understood in my body until that moment. After the other students finished speaking about what this symbolized from their perspective, I offered my own learning to the group:

I think there’s an assumption embedded in my research that all international and immigrant students are one community, but that’s not true. I mean, there are so many different communities, but there’s this catch category of ‘international student’ that UVic uses, that everyone uses, but there’s such diversity in that. So that to me was symbolic.

Somehow, I did know this already. It made perfect sense to my *mind*: I had read much theory on diversity, hybridity and so on, and had heard people speak about the heterogeneity of international students before, but I did not understand what this reality actually meant for my research.

When I tell people about my research, there is usually an assumption, or stereotype or prototype of international students as Asian, mostly Chinese, students. In my Faculty, the Faculty of Education, this prototype is mostly women, whereas in male-dominated departments I suspect the prototype is mostly men. Indeed, several Asian men from the Faculty of Engineering participated in the first summer workshop. There is an obvious reason for this prototype: most international students come from Asian countries, just as most of the students in this research were originally from Asian countries as well. Yet, within the assumed community of international students there is, as my comments from the hands activity suggest, such diversity. Students who come here from a culture that is not highly represented amongst international students will experience different kinds of cultural adaptation that may be accompanied by feelings of cultural inferiority, which was described by two participants in particular.

Students' experiences were also qualitatively different according to gender, age, class, sexual orientation, ability, language, and so on. Moreover, students did not necessarily understand each others' cultures; in fact, some had more difficulty with other cultures than with mainstream Canadians. Take the following two examples, for example.

Chelsea: My conflict was with another student. Actually, what happened was with my research group. We have two people from this particular country and I believe it's totally cultural, but they're very direct when they talk. For us it seems like they're rude because if they see something in your work instead of criticizing in a way that (pause) I don't know, *that we do*, they just say *this is wrong! I don't agree with that!* So the first time [this happened] we didn't talk much with this person. He was sort of isolated for that reason. We thought he was bossy. Then it

happened again with this other person from the same place. And this time I realized, yeah, he doesn't mean that. It's just the way they talk. They're so direct and we're not used to it, right? But we got into some trouble with the research group because the other people who didn't meet the first one thought that this person was being rude again because of the way he talked to us and was being bossy and everything. So we had to talk to our supervisor. My supervisor is sort of the same way, so he said [to the student] I know that we in this part of the world, we talk in this way, but you have to remember that here it's different. So you might want to try to rephrase the way you talk. I almost felt like I was betraying him [the student] a little bit, but he changed a little bit. He's trying. I think it's basically a cultural difference. It wasn't a big deal, but in the same way I now recognize that it's his cultural way of doing things. That's why they were talking to us like that.

The second was from Sylvia. There was a long pause before she started this remark, then hesitantly:

I think there is some, how do you say, racial complexity. I think here in Victoria, how do you say, the number of 'white' people is large, right? I don't know. Hummm. ... When I first came here, my impression of Canada was good, but as I, how do you say, as I continued to live here I don't know why but I began to have hostile feelings against 'white' people. For example when I went shopping, the person at the cashier, her attitude was so terrible. I thought, what did I do? Did I do wrong? I don't think so. So my impression of, not Canada maybe, but Victoria was getting worse. And then as I continued to live here in Victoria, I noticed that

all 'white' people are more kind than Asian people. I think that Asian people, especially immigrants, have some kind of pride that they had gone through difficult times and then they have now established their culture here. So I think I'm just a student who is visiting and studying here for a short time, maybe compared with them. So I think their attitude toward Asian students is not so nice. Do you know what I mean?

Taken together, these comments are indicative of both inter-cultural misunderstandings and the "horizontal racisms across and between differently racialized ethnic groups" (Lee & Lutz, 2005, p.15) as described in the literature of intersectionality in Act Three. Moreover, as Chamberlin-Quinlisk's (2005) study suggested, it is not only 'white' students who can have their assumptions brought to the surface through intercultural communication; we all can.

The methods used in these workshops served a purpose of building relationships over time. This was more difficult in the three-hour drop-in summer workshops, but with the extensive contact between the six actors in the final performance, we learned to be more comfortable with the kinds of cross- and inter-cultural discomfort suggested above, until that discomfort started to fade away.

Another insight on the diversity amongst students and the lived reality of multiculturalism came when I first met Maria-Luisa during the weekend play-building workshop. Maria-Luisa self-identifies as bicultural:

See I'm Canadian because I was born here, but when I came [back] to Canada when I was 17 I didn't know what Canada was, I left here when I was a baby.

She has lived in two countries for long enough to be culturally and linguistically literate in both. (She was happy that I could not properly pronounce her last name when I introduced her at the final performance. She *wanted* people to know that her reality is somehow different from her outside appearance.)

Jessica's comments elaborate the idea that other people's identities embrace this duality, this tension:

It's interesting because I grew up in Asia so much of who I am is Asian, but I never look like that. And then my passport is from the United States so there's always an interesting reaction when you pull out *that* passport. I'm always put in that position of being white and being female. ... So there's always this duality in my life. I came to the U.S. when I was 18 so I have immigrant status with the right passport. So there's always this assumption that I would know things that are 'white' or 'Western' or 'North American.' And I don't know them.

Both of these students reflected a transnational identity that was simultaneously insider and outsider. Their identities challenged "inadequate and inaccurate binary divisions" (Grewal & Caplan, 1994) of both theory and citizenship. Mahtani (2005) speaks of the potential for such individuals to agentively become "spies, tricksters, ambassadors, and interpreters in order to consider other models to describe the multifaceted experience of 'mixed race' identity" (p.77). However, in this particular context these two students were speaking about unique challenges that arose from their hybrid identities, where external appearance did not match the lived experience and as a result the expectations placed upon them were disorienting or incongruent with their knowledge and experiences. Similar mixed identities emerged through language.

From the beginning I was curious about the specific challenges encountered by speakers of English as a second language. While the struggles associated with language and accent were poignant, and these made it into the final performance, amongst the participants there was, in fact, much diversity around language competency. Take the following interchange, for example:

Me: Okay, and in terms of learning to speak English, I know that's a main reason for coming to a Canadian or American or Australian or UK English-speaking university. What are the reasons for speaking English? I can guess some of them, but I'm curious what *your* reasons for learning English are.

Marcia (the first to speak, but somewhat hesitantly): It's my first language.

Me: It's the first language in [your country]? Okay, that shows my ignorance. I didn't know that. Humm, (I add, jokingly): 'Your English is so good!' Do people say that to you?

Marcia: That's right.

Me: Does it drive you crazy?

Marcia: No, no. The first paper I submitted to the instructor, he said 'oh you write very well.' I told myself, I know that I write well, then I thought maybe he didn't know that I learned English when I was young. I sort of like it. You know the expectations of people and you fall just slightly above their expectations and then you do well!

Although there are local dialects, all the education and business in her home country—as in the home countries of several post-colonial participants—is conducted in English. In

this way, she, like several other so-called international students, has essentially been speaking English all her life.

Her final comment about knowing people's expectations and exceeding them was interesting for me to learn. It demonstrated two aspects of the complexity of language. First, it gave some insight into the expectations this professor (and possibly others) had of international students: low. Second, it demonstrated that speaking English from a very young age placed her at an advantage over other international students, which she clearly acknowledged at an earlier workshop.

Because Marcia's external appearance did not match the expectations of her ability, she was rewarded whereas students such as Jessica and Maria-Luisa found themselves at a disadvantage from similarly mis-matched expectations. This was also a very different scenario than experienced by students like Sylvia who gave multiple examples of "people measuring my intellectual ability by my communicative competence."

These kinds of nuanced experiences speak to the limitations of conducting research or creating support systems, policies, and practices based on the category 'international students.' While this category is perhaps a useful heuristic device or a strategic way to work in solidarity to overcome shared challenges or toward shared goals, the category has many limitations. It is an externally imposed category that delineates the boundaries of a hypothetical community.

In fact, the category itself can lead to a further sense of isolation when there is a refusal to acknowledge the ways in which international and domestic students' experiences overlap. For example, Phyllis, a 'white' born-in-Canada Canadian spoke on

several occasions about how her experience at UVic did not meet her expectations of graduate school based on what she had been told about her programme—a sentiment expressed by *many* international students in the study.

It is important to understand shared struggles around racism, language and culture that may unite international students and also the dimensions of power and privilege that place English speakers and those familiar with Canadian culture(s) at an advantage. However, as demonstrated by the complexity of the above students' identities, people's experiences are not so easily categorized. As described in Act Three, even official citizenship is fluid: several students were either in the process of immigrating to Canada or considering doing so over the course of this research. Ultimately, the term 'international student' is simply an administrative category that reinforces a nation-state based definition of citizenship, one that is bound in time (Lee & Lutz, 2005), but that has materia implications for determining how much a student pays in tuition.

Acknowledging and Engaging Diversity

Although all of the above insights around diversity were embedded in that one moment during the hands activity when the two groups broke apart, the implications of such diversity amongst students were not the only lessons I learned from that activity. As the research progressed, I became increasingly conscious of the fact that because my research related to international students, this came to be seen by others as my primary, if not only concern related to social, economic, and ecological justice. I later realized that this too was symbolic of the two circles breaking apart. As I mentioned above, I looked over, gasped, and then realized I needed to get back to work with the people who were in

my circle. Practically and symbolically, I did get back to work, but the work became more and more uncomfortable because as it did not fully represent the range of my values. For example, for a study that implicitly and explicitly dealt with racism, I was not deliberately trying to connect the potential experiences of Aboriginal students or racialized, ‘born-in-Canada’ Canadians to the experiences of international students. For the purpose of conducting research, I had broken off a small piece of racism and Aboriginal students were somehow in another circle with which I was not connected—a contemporary dilemma which Armstrong & Ng (2005) address.

As mentioned in Act Ten, in early analyses I attempted to demonstrate how individual struggles with racism were unique according to specific elements of identity: gender, class, sexual orientation, ability, language, culture, etc. Attempting to categorize experiences in this way was unproductive, however, as people’s experiences overlapped, diverged and then reconnected in other categories. In addition, despite my efforts to allow this research to be informed by an anti-oppressive approach that uses an interconnected analysis of dimensions of power and privilege, the nature of my question, as well as the anti-racist theory I read going in, encouraged me to spotlight one dimension of oppression, racism, over all others. Early in the workshop, one participant made a “queer” comment and in the moment I decided to let it slide, but it haunted me nonetheless.

In particular, when Phyllis and baby Margaret joined the project the microcosm of my research, like the university community it represents, became more complex. As a person who has so far chosen not to have children, I *know* that I am ignorant about what being a parent, being a mother, entails. Through this research, I came to understand a little about what it is that I do not know.

Phyllis and I spoke on the phone shortly before the weekend play-building workshop. She told me she had just given birth to baby Margaret two weeks prior and that she was still interested in participating. Even with this conversation, I was still surprised when she brought Margaret and her partner Nelson to the workshop. In retrospect it makes perfect sense that she would not have been able to leave a two-week-old nursing infant at home, but after our initial conversation, the thought that a baby would be present at the workshop honestly never crossed my mind. (As I said, I am truly ignorant in this regard.)

I did not know how to facilitate the theatre activities to accommodate a baby, but in the back of my mind I knew anything was possible—for example, Diamond had told us he conducted workshops with people who use wheelchairs. Phyllis and I agreed that I would explain the activities as usual and she could figure out a way to adapt them if she needed to be holding Margaret in her baby sling, or sit one out if she could not adapt.

As I do not normally spend time with children, I welcomed Margaret and was curious about what new doors her presence might open for the research. On our first day together, Coco immediately commented that although international students encounter challenges, seeing Phyllis with Margaret made her think about some of the different kinds of challenges other students were also facing. Other participants reflected this sentiment as time went on. Although she is not an international student, Phyllis' (and Margaret's) participation in this research encouraged all of us to learn more about balancing parenthood with studies and in this way I am certain that the whole research group learned and benefited from baby Margaret's presence. Not only did she become an integral part of the group, she also became an integral part of the research process.

Too young to sign the consent form, Margaret participated by her mother's will. Margaret, however, was not a passive participant in this research. She was very much present and in some ways had more choice over the terms of her participation than others. While the rest of us pushed through a certain level of discomfort for the sake of getting through the work, Margaret always made her needs known: when she was tired, hungry or otherwise upset she told us, and more often than not her father Nelson (who was there in the background throughout the workshop) came to take her away while the rest of us carried on. I suspect that despite my attempts to be aware and respectful of people's needs, there were times the other participants wished a larger being would whisk them away for a moment of respite—but if this was indeed true they, unlike Margaret, did not tell me.

Because she was only two weeks old during the weekend workshop, when Margaret did not want to participate it often meant that Phyllis needed to take a break to feed her or otherwise attend to her needs. Not surprisingly, the rest of us never complained about having to break—we too needed food, rest, and a change of diaper, so to speak. We rested when she needed to rest, we ate when she needed to eat and in general this created a more natural flow to the workshop than I ever could have designed with a pre-set agenda. We did not consider these breaks 'lost time' as we used them to care for ourselves and also to get to know each other better through less formal conversations. In general, Margaret reminded us to be more gentle with each other and in this way I felt she made a significant contribution to our overall enjoyment of the process. As a person who tends to push through physical or emotional discomfort either to achieve the task at hand or for the sake of being polite, I learned much from Margaret.

In the time leading up to the first public performance at UVic, Phyllis and I began discussing whether Margaret would continue to be part of the performance. As she had been there throughout the development of the plays, she was, in actuality, a member of the cast. During the rehearsal we learned that Margaret's presence also added a wonderful dimension to the forum. As Phyllis was playing the antagonist in two of the scenes, Margaret made her character more real: less of a one-dimensional villain and more of a human being—a mother. As it turned out, the best time for the public performance at UVic was during the evening and since it was past Margaret's bed time, she could not perform at that time. To symbolize that she still was a mother and maintain some of the complexity we had built into the plays, Phyllis brought Margaret's baby sling and rocked it throughout her performance. Inside was one of Margaret's stuffed animals, but this was not the same as being on stage in the presence of a live human being, a real infant.

As mentioned, we were invited to perform again and Phyllis decided that Margaret should act in the next two performances. However, by the last performance it became clear to all of us—to Phyllis and me in particular—just how integral a role Phyllis' partner had been playing in the whole production. I had been acknowledging this reality in small ways, but the real implications hit all of us when he was out of town during our last performance in Vancouver.

While Phyllis had a full public life, which included her graduate studies, this project, and other projects as well, she, like other parents—mothers in particular—simultaneously had significant domestic responsibilities. The delicate balance that enabled her to do all this work was offset when she temporarily became the *only* care-

giver. Despite the fact that Phyllis had brought along a friend²⁰ to help with Margaret in Vancouver, without the support of a full-time dad, we *all* learned that it was simply too much for Phyllis to continue to do all the emotional, performance, *and* care-giving work this project entailed, while attending to her own graduate studies and other projects as well. Intimately witnessing her juggling act while we were in Vancouver led me to ask Phyllis whether she truly wanted to go ahead with the final performance we had scheduled at UVic, especially as her partner would still be out of town. “Should we do this?” I asked, and after a day of careful consideration, Phyllis decided that she could not give the final performance. As it was not possible to find a suitable replacement²¹ for Phyllis’ characters in time, and as no other date worked for everyone before two participants were leaving town for the summer, we needed to cancel the show.

Through my relationship with Phyllis and Margaret, I gained a better understanding of a different kind of student struggle than the one I had originally set out to investigate. This new understanding crystallized the essence of intersectionality for me: when working collectively for social justice, it simply does not work to privilege one form of oppression over others. As I have already described in Acts Three and Eleven, all should be acknowledged and addressed.

The diversity of graduate student struggles has implications in terms of the allocation of resources at UVic—for example, do we fund anti-racism initiatives or child-care? This question could be generalized to a national level as well. There are gendered implications, of course, and women are still fighting for universal child care—a fight I

²⁰ This friend was paid an honorarium for child care. As was the case with all the actors, her transportation, food, and accommodation were also covered. Actors received an honorarium for this performance as well.

²¹ Maria-Luisa was out of town during the performance for university and college administrators, but we found a temporary replacement for her characters.

fully support. However, an intersectional analysis suggests that this is a limited conceptualization of choice and that there are other ways to take action.

This research presented an alternative that indicates there is a greater need for cooperation as claimed earlier by Wilkinson (2003). On several occasions, Phyllis talked about how it warmed her heart to watch all the participants interacting with baby Margaret and, as described above, she served as a point of connection between people with perceived differences. This connection implies that the central question should not be whether to fund one service over another—both are equally essential for graduate students, for human beings, to achieve their full potential. Instead, how can we work to bring more people together to minimize isolation and maximize benefits for all?

While it is useful to understand how racism, sexism, ageism, classism, heterosexism, ableism, and so on manifest in society and in people's daily experiences, the challenge presented by intersectionality is to understand how these overlap and intersect in unique ways and also how people might make unexpected, but productive alliances across their struggles. In a sense, the original category of 'international students' also became symbolic to me: this research came to represent a way of figuring out how to make UVic a more respectful learning environment for *everyone*. This, however, entailed another challenge: acknowledging the antagonist's struggle.

Acknowledging the Antagonist's Struggle

As described in Act Six, integral to Diamond's 'Theatre for Living' work is the idea that the antagonist be represented as a complex human being, not a one-dimensional

villain. “We might look at his²² actions and disagree, but he must believe his actions are correct [in the context of the scene]” (Diamond, 2004, p.71). This is a point of discrepancy between Diamond and Boal. In more traditional models of ‘Theatre of the Oppressed,’ the antagonist should not be replaced for fear of presenting a magic solution and if participants perceive the antagonist as a monster, that is how the antagonist can be played. Diamond demands that antagonists be played more realistically so that in understanding their motivations, we can attempt to alter the conditions that *create* oppression, not simply ridicule or seek to incarcerate the individual oppressors themselves. This perspective runs parallel to the discussion on internalized oppression presented in Act Three (e.g. Fanon, 1967; Freire, 2003; Mann & Huffman, 2005).

Placing myself *inside* the ‘knots’ activity had one further consequence. As an insider, I also became more directly implicated: not only implicated in finding the solutions to challenges this research aims to address, but also implicated in creating those very challenges in the first place. “I” became symbolic of other ‘white’ Canadian students who are not only responsible for creating and seeking solutions, but who are also facing unique struggles them/ourselves. While it is not appropriate to reduce the analysis by simply claiming that ‘we are all oppressed’ (Ellsworth, 1992), through this theatre work I learned that solutions, like many efforts at change, only work if all the struggles in the scene are acknowledged and somehow honoured. I learned this experientially through my relationship with Phyllis and baby Margaret as I have already described. I also learned this by paying closer attention to different kinds of antagonists.

²² Gender pronouns alternate between masculine and feminine throughout Diamond’s (2004) text. Whether the use of a masculine pronoun is intentional or incidental in this instance is unknown.

Part of the facilitator's responsibility during the forum is to figure out a way to invite audience members on stage. To do this, I asked people to keep two questions in mind as they were watching the first run of the scenes: what are the struggles each character is facing and how can we create respect inside the scenes? During the four performances, I believe we genuinely did find a number of ways to create respect for the international students in the three scenes. We found a few ways to create respect for the instructor-characters too, and in the final performance in Vancouver we even found a few ways to create respect for the character of Francine who, in the first scene, was trying to juggle her children's schedules with her participation in a group project. What we were never able to find, however, was a way to respect Jane.

Playing the Antagonist.

Phyllis' character Jane was the most evil antagonist we included in this production, the one who, in the second scene where all the actors were on stage, blatantly accused Lawrence's character of not knowing anything about human rights and indirectly accused him of perpetuating such abuses himself. The driving force behind the character Jane's anger, which was only understood through audience interventions, was a magazine article she had read about a female child being left to die in the gutter somewhere in China.²³ This was an important point of connection for the character that Phyllis had researched and developed on her own, which enabled her to more realistically portray the humanity and struggle of angry, if not ignorant Jane. She was, after all, the mother of a baby girl and her character was incensed at the idea of such evil being done to another mother's daughter. She felt solidarity with the mothers of the world and, in this scene,

²³ This article is available online at: <http://www.taliacarner.com/deadnewborningutter.html>

Lawrence—like other participants who had been victim to negative stereotypes—inappropriately became the target of her anger.

China is symbolically one of Canada's favourite villains: not only is its economy getting stronger and therefore somehow perceived as threatening, but we hear frequent media reports about its environmental *as well as* its human rights abuses. Even politically left-leaning documentaries such as 'Manufactured Landscapes' (Baichwal, 2006) focus the attention on China, with minimal discussion of how we in Canada are guilty of and implicated in the same charges. Taking the risk of including a line about 'human rights' in our performance led to several conversations about the complexity of these issues in the group work creating that scene and also in the forum. Problems related to accepting media reports uncritically and Canada's history of human rights abuses were also revealed through several interventions during different performances.

Unfortunately, what was never overtly brought to the audience's attention was the reality that Lawrence, too, was the adoring father of a daughter *and* there were two Chinese daughters (female students) also in the scene. Beneath the surface of this scene, just as in life, there was complexity that was never revealed and points of connection that were never acted upon. The attacks on Jane did not work; this reality could only be uncovered if Jane could somehow enter into a respectful dialogue with the other students in the microcosm of a classroom we had created on stage.

The only intervention that came close to creating this kind of respectful environment occurred during the rehearsal. In this intervention, an audience member replaced the instructor in this scene and asked the students to work in small groups instead of having a discussion that involved the whole class. In a small group setting,

Lawrence's close proximity to Phyllis (as Jane) diffused some of her anger and she was simply not able to speak to him in the same tone of voice. Although this did not acknowledge Phyllis' struggle, the different classroom dynamics did create a possibility for the two students to have a more respectful conversation. At the end of this intervention, Phyllis (as Jane) apologized for her comments and, in turn, Lawrence forgave her.

Phyllis and I had several conversations about her performances as the antagonists. Shortly after the rehearsal she told me that the performance had left her feeling rather *unsettled* and the title of our performance was the result of her choice of words. Aside from the one intervention described above, most of the interventions in the first two scenes directed anger or ridicule toward her. In four performances, not one person intervened who genuinely understood or acknowledged the struggle of the character Jane. After the third performance for the University and college administrators, Phyllis shared the following thoughts with me:

I'm left feeling a bit empty about the end result. What exactly was learned?

Were we able to move beyond binary thinking? No, because we have yet to have someone replace me, the antagonist. As hard as it is, I am almost certain that each and every one of us can, in fact, find parts of ourselves in [the antagonists].

I am certain we can too and given that we were invited to perform again and again, I suspect at least a few people did. As Phyllis suggested, recognizing ourselves in the antagonists can reveal unconscious assumptions or overtly held beliefs and this kind of critical self-reflection can be *unsettling*. Yet, as described in Act Five, when art is the medium, it is up to the audience members to make those generalizations for themselves.

As explained in Act Six, understanding the antagonist's struggle does not mean we agree with it or condone the behaviour it generates, but we recognize that the antagonist is a person in need of healing—and I would add education—not ridicule. While it is true that no one came on stage to replace Jane, in line with Phyllis' concerns, my hope is that those who dared to recognize themselves in the antagonists silently learned what *not* to do from their relatively safe positions in the audience, just as other participants learned this from their professors, as described in the previous Act.

Boal (2002) states that “actors discover things when they take the risk of experiencing emotions” (p.36). Along these lines, Phyllis told me that after our last performance in Vancouver she was able to find some resolution for a wrong she felt she had committed long ago. By her explanation it seemed that this self-forgiveness came through her recognition that in that moment of her action, she too had been struggling. Although it did not justify the action she had taken at that time, in her case, *playing* the antagonist, that is, actively engaging with the antagonist's struggle, helped her to heal from one of her own struggles in the real world.

Replacing the Antagonist.

Maria-Luisa described that she too experienced a similar kind of healing through this research process. Sent to me in her own words and in reference to the intervention described above in the rehearsal where Jane apologized to Lawrence:

Being an ‘actor’ in the play and a part of the creative team that put together the scenes provided me with insights in ways that I did not expect. Seeing others take the parts of the characters I was portraying and play out different actions than my

character helped me heal from traumatic events that occurred too often in classrooms during my BA.

In a particularly powerful instance during our rehearsal, an audience member came up and took the role of the character I was portraying. This character was based on a professor that had hurt me with her actions in one class I took. When I saw him take the tense situation we were portraying and completely change the dynamics and results of it by doing things that were constructive and that opened up venues for communication between the other characters I felt a wave of healing come over me.

It was quite a physical experience, perhaps even spiritual as I think that healing is accomplished on bodily as well as emotional planes. If I had only read or talked about some of the reasons why this professor may have treated me the way she did I doubt I would have experienced the same kind of learning-healing experience. I am still surprised that I feel a whole other level of appreciation for the difficulties she may have been experiencing and forgiveness for her actions and/or inactions as a result of participating in this theatre project. Because I physically placed myself (my body along with all of its sensations) in the character I experienced the learning-healing with my whole being; mind, body and spirit.

As she explains so well, the kind of learning-healing that can occur through this work is surprising and can accompany the acknowledgment of the antagonist's struggle.

I did not set out to create a 'learning-healing' environment for the participants or for myself. I knew that several of Diamond's productions fostered this kind of learning-

healing; however, going into this work I believed it was patronizing to somehow expect participants to heal. Following Ellsworth (1992), neither did I romantically expect it to be an empowering experience. While I understood that healing and empowerment may be incidental outcomes, my focus was on what change we could inspire at an institutional level to better support international students. In addition, while I believed that reflexivity is essential, as described in Act Three, I also believed the purpose of critical self-reflection was to work toward better informed social change. Coming out the other side, I have a greater appreciation for how intricately the two are linked. As Freire (2003) suggests, institutional change cannot occur unless those with the power to abuse power liberate themselves of their internalized oppressors.

Understanding the Antagonist.

For my part, I too encountered an antagonist during an intervention in our fourth performance. This was the only audience member who had intervened in the first scene to replace Phyllis' character, Francine, who on this day brought her child to class. Phyllis decided to hand over Margaret to the audience member to emphasize the poignancy of this character's struggle as a mother, with a child, in a classroom, attempting to complete a group assignment.²⁴ As the intervention progressed and Margaret began to fuss, the audience member in turn handed her over to Maria-Luisa, who was playing the instructor and sitting off to the side marking a big stack of papers. In a completely improvised response, Maria-Luisa held baby Margaret at arms' length, stared at her for a moment

²⁴ When Phyllis decided to bring Margaret to perform, I asked what she would do if someone replaced her character. She told me she would decide in the moment. In this particular moment, she felt comfortable handing her daughter over to this particular person.

with a perplexed look on her face, then promptly handed her back to the audience member who had taken on the role of her mother.

When we debriefed this intervention, the audience member said that she handed over Margaret to the instructor because she felt the person with the most power in the room needed to take some responsibility for the classroom situation she had created. In turn, Maria-Luisa came up with a complete and strangely familiar story about how the director of her programme was breathing down her neck because she had already submitted her marks late once before, so it was really important to get her marking done. In addition, she added that Francine had just called five minutes before class saying she had an emergency and asking whether she could bring her daughter. In character, Maria-Luisa told the audience that she personally does not really like children and had decided not to have them, but she accommodated Francine's request nonetheless. In this sense, she felt she was being a progressive instructor and *already* thought she was being accommodating. Caring for the student's baby in addition to trying to get her own work done was simply too much.

Given my own life choices and work load, this was an exposing mirror indeed—for better or for worse, I could completely understand the motivations of the instructor, whom that audience member had perceived as some kind of antagonist. As Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks & Kasl (2006) explained, the arts can bring to the surface pre-conscious or previously unarticulated concerns. Until that point, I had not fully understood the extent to which I too had been struggling with figuring out the best way to accommodate a small child in this research process.

This dissertation marks the final stages of my degree and I am already beginning to transition out of my student identity. As I write these words I wonder how much longer I will be able to relate to the student perspective described throughout most of these pages. I know that I will continue to be an educator, whether in the academy or elsewhere, and that I too will be perceived through the same eyes, ears, and experiences through which the participants of this study have filtered their instructors. I will of course endeavour to apply the lessons of this research, but inevitably I know I will continue making human mistakes as I continue learning along the way. I also know that at that point, as was the case with Maria-Luisa's improvised response as the instructor, most of my own struggles will be invisible, inaudible, and imperceptible to those around me. I will simply become the antagonist.

Acknowledging that We are all Connected

The final implication of the two circles breaking apart reveals the limitations of standpoint research. This study set out to tell a story of internationalization from students' perspective, but in the final analysis it has been clearly revealed that this alone is not enough for creating sustainable change. Instructors, as well as other staff, administrators, and faculty, also need support in increasingly globalized—and hopefully increasingly child-friendly—university and social contexts. A final reading of the 'knots' activity was articulated by the participants and helps to tie this discussion together:

Sylvia: I think in a sense we are connected with each other. And sometimes we turn around or jump or twist, but in the end we are still connected. Although we had two circles.

Me: So you were still connected to the others, or just the small group?

Sylvia: Mmm-humm. Smaller or bigger. Often times I feel so isolated as a graduate student. But—(pause) Yeah.

Zoe: I'm a UVic student. You're isolated personally, but actually, you're a grad student so you say, 'I'm a student, I belong to this.' It's kind of, I want to know more, but I don't know how, right?

Sylvia: But at least I had two people who could support me.

In this research, as in life, I got turned around a few times. I also needed to take a few jumps or twisted to make something work. On many occasions I felt as though I did not belong and did not quite know how to reach out. There were times when it seemed I only had two people supporting me. Yet, at the end of this process, I *know* that in a real sense *we are* connected to each other. Stresses on one affect the whole and none of us has made it on our own. I see the final challenge of intersectional analyses as beginning to acknowledge on a more conscious level that we are connected to each other, just as we are connected to the Earth.

The social conflict theory that drives many actions related social justice is useful because it teaches us to ask who benefits and how? Once we find these answers, then what? And what happens when it is we who benefit? How do we begin to radically change the structures that give rise to such great inequities? This theatre method does not advocate turning a blind eye to the actions of violent perpetrators, nor does it suggest that people can come up with magic solutions incongruent with the constraints of their particular organizations: families, communities, universities, and other hierarchical structures. It does, however, suggest a different paradigm from which to begin any social

analysis aimed at creating progressive social change, a paradigm that also acknowledges that we are connected to each other—even to the antagonists.

To radically alter the structures in which we live and work, we might begin by better understanding them. Acknowledging the limitations of this research design has given three ways to break open binaries and understand complexity. Namely, acknowledging the unique identities of people whom we believe belong to specific categories, international students for example. Also, acknowledging the diversity of struggles in any context and, no matter how much we may despise them, the reality of the antagonists' struggles. Finally, we *must* begin to understand the extent to which we are all connected, at a global level, so that our actions can benefit the whole.

Summary

In this Act I have filtered the limitations of my research question through the symbolism of an activity called 'knots.' Placing myself inside this activity, and subsequently experiencing the circle break into two, symbolically represented four aspects of intersectionality as it relates to the experiences of international graduate students. First, it exposed that the category 'international student' is insufficient for describing the diversity of experiences amongst students who fall into this category. The second symbolic reading reinforced the importance of acknowledging the range of struggles, including the range of racisms, experienced by graduate students. In particular, Phyllis and Margaret's participation in this project revealed the dangers of focusing too narrowly on one aspect of struggle, but simultaneously brought new points of joy and connection.

The third symbolic reading rendered visible several antagonists' struggles and demonstrated how acknowledging these can serve as a learning-healing experience. The implication of this is that supporting people at all levels of a hierarchy to heal from internalized oppression is an essential element of structural change. The final reading ties this discussion together, suggesting that to move forward we must actively acknowledge the extent to which we are interconnected, not only in our shared humanity and shared dependence on the Earth, but in our shared experiences as well. Recognizing the antagonist's struggle reiterates the point that pressures on one reverberate throughout the whole. The 'Theatre for Living' method offers one possibility for working toward an intersectional analysis of social change.

Act 13 Embodying Transformative Learning and Intersectionality in Higher Education

This research is theoretically grounded in the concepts of intersectionality and transformative learning. In the last two Acts, I have shown the implications these theories have for international students' lives and for addressing the challenges that emerge from increasingly globalized university contexts. The arts-based, action-oriented, participatory methodology employed is not insignificant to the lessons that emerged. Taken together, what possibilities might these theories and methodologies offer to both the university and the larger society in which this study was undertaken? How do these themes come together as we are nearing the final act?

In Act Three, I suggested that there are multiple ways forward, but that one place to begin is through dialogue where the purpose is not consensus, but understanding across difference. The theory of *Enowkin* gave some direction, but what more has been learned along the way? By way of conclusion, in this Act I will weave together some of the threads that have been left hanging throughout the pages of this dissertation. I offer these not as dogmatic findings, but as reflections on a long process of discovery. These include reflections on what it means to position international students as transformative learners. I suggest people in institutions of higher education need to work harder to build community and relationships on campus, engage in active listening and active inclusion, and participate in intentionally uncomfortable experiential learning exercises. I further suggest that acknowledging the reality of cultural adjustment might be useful for all graduate students as well. Finally, I offer my own experience in this research—my

experience of crossing boundaries and engaging in research as an act of love—as pointing to possible ways forward.

International Students as Transformative Learners

The context of internationalization at UVic outlined in Act Two contains an assumption that the increasing presence of international students presents somewhat of a challenge for the university, a problem to be addressed. There is, of course, some truth in this and students certainly expressed that they felt they were being underserved. Repositioning international students as potential *transformative learners*, however, implies that such students are also part of the solution(s).

The challenge presented by the last two Acts about transformative learning and intersectionality becomes one of how to encourage all students—and by extension, all members of the university—to risk pushing back by raising their voices and taking action. For the purpose of discussion, I will stay focused on students and acknowledge that the real, structural and inter-personal constraints and power differentials that prohibit students from pushing back cannot be ignored. However, as suggested in Act Three, this research project is evidence that while students may have *less power* in the university hierarchy, they/we are not *powerless*. What is more, international students who become transformed, or even politicized in the context of their university degrees, do so on a global stage. In this way, both the affirming and the discouraging lessons students learn in Canada will be carried with them around the world. As the performance of UNSETTLED demonstrates, members of this university would do well to focus on generating more affirming lessons.

In all the students' comments, including my own, there is evidence of much empathy, some spiritual growth, and new forms of inter-subjective understanding that emerged both through struggle and through relationships across perceived differences, including power differences. Many educators seek ways to shake up students' beliefs and question the underlying assumptions that maintain the status quo. This, however, is an intentional kind of transformative learning built into pedagogical strategies. Since this learning can also occur through traumatic experiences, institutions and individuals that value transformative learning should also be committed to supporting people through the emotions and immediate repercussions of such trauma. In this sense, transformative learning can be seen as a sacred kind of learning, not to be treated lightly.

What would an institution with the core values of transformative learning entail? In this final section, I propose four means of fostering transformative learning in universities and beyond.

Building Community through Relationship.

The students' comments highlighted the importance of community and authentic relationships, a subject also discussed in Act Four and integral to the Community Action Research approach (Reitsma-Street & Brown, 2004). Community is not an abstract site of learning, however. It is a system of 'knots,' overlapping relationships, in this case bound in place. How do we tie more knots of relationship in the university setting? Classrooms and research projects are the most obvious sites, and relationships can be better fostered through choices in curricula, services, activities, and participatory projects that encourage people to work together. The arts, in particular, offer creative means for building such

community as described by Clover (2006a) and Davis-Manigaulte, Yorks & Kasl (2006). Students, staff, and faculty alike can always, in small ways, in the context of their everyday lives, seek out opportunities for further relationship-building and cooperation.

It is important to acknowledge that it is not only international students who stand to benefit from such an effort. As anonymous feedback, one respondent wrote, “creating a wonderful environment for international [students] is also very meaningful for UVic.” In addition, with current patterns of transnational migration, these knots of relationship extend the university community into greater Victoria and around the globe. In this way, each interaction, whether during the admissions process, in a classroom, in a student-supervisor relationship, or at the corner store, presents a new opportunity to realize the inter-connectedness of all humanity.

Active Listening and Inclusion.

Institutional values of transformative learning would reposition everyone, students, staff and faculty alike, as lifelong learners who have knowledge to contribute and the capacity to take action. A discussion on institutional values, however, can quickly turn to empty rhetoric. Countless strategic plans, mission statements, vision statements, and the like already exist and evidence of how these affected the lives of international students was scarce. The process of creating such plans can at times be more valuable as it creates the opportunity for people to work together, to have a shared goal. However, Kothari (2001) warns that in participatory processes “the very act of inclusion...can symbolize an exercise of...control over an individual” (p.142). Therefore, such processes ought to be undertaken with much care.

Nevertheless, as Chamberlin-Quinlisk (2005) stated, part of the privilege of whiteness includes “the ability to not pay attention to certain things, such as people whom they expect to be different” (p.474). Likewise, part of the privilege of institutional power is the ability not to pay attention to those at the lower end of the hierarchy. Repositioning students as potential contributors to institutional change implies more than token participation on committees and advisory councils. Inviting and encouraging more international students to participate authentically in the processes of institutional change is one way for their voices to be heard. Democratically *listening* (Garrison, 1995) to them when they raise their voices elsewhere is another still.

Intentionally Uncomfortable Learning Opportunities.

As the students suggested, professors (among others) are equally in need of empathetic consciousness-raising as are fellow students. Many of the lessons students learned were not the result of intentional curriculum, but the consequence of being pushed too far or of witnessing how *not* to behave. Such comments suggest that services for international students and curricular changes are not enough to create a respectful working and learning environment for everyone. A systematic intersectional analysis of institutionalized oppression is needed. In this vein, more professional development opportunities for staff, faculty, and students alike could be encouraged, opportunities that, as another anonymous respondent wrote, “bring up controversial issues that may cause discomfort among participants. It is this place of discomfort that allows for growth and learning. I wish there were more opportunities to openly explore this discomfort in the context of a respectful, dialogical and open learning community.”

Learning from emotions, controversy, and discomfort are key elements of experiential learning techniques, as experienced in this kind of theatre for instance, and have broader applicability than for students alone. The three-phase model advocated by McDonald & Coleman (1999) that includes acknowledging harm, moving through emotions stemming from this acknowledgment, and creating a newly politicized, action-oriented identity can be further applied in the context of classrooms, retreats and professional development. While cautious not to remain in a confessional mode (Lee & Lutz, 2005) an experiential understanding of our own power and privilege and how these perpetuate dominance can be the first step in mobilizing political action. Moreover, as multiple, unique struggles and perspectives can emerge from an infinitely diverse population, learning and acting across difference becomes a lifelong process.

The Reality of Cultural Adjustment.

It is important to acknowledge that the ‘disorienting dilemma’ of living and studying in a new country is not likely to disappear—in fact it is part of what makes such experiences transformative. Nevertheless, further support can be provided. In the same way that Canadian interns preparing to depart for international placements are often introduced to theories of cultural adjustment, so too could international students be upon arrival. By extension, all graduate students could be introduced to this theory, suggesting that institutional culture can also be disorienting. Acknowledging the potential struggle to come will likely not lessen the emotional impact of the moment, but it may lessen the sense of isolation and people’s feelings that they are somehow unique, emotionally unstable, or otherwise individually inadequate. A heightened sensitivity to students’

vulnerability upon arrival and the extent of emotional struggle would enable fellow students, staff, and faculty to be more supportive as well.

Boundary-Crossing Methodology.

In Act Three, I mentioned Wilkinson's (2003) advocacy for using multiple methods in intersectional analyses and research. In addition, in Act Five, I commented that this study allowed my identities as educator, activist, community developer, artist, and researcher to come together. A quote from Darling-Hammond (2002) further suggests that such boundary-crossing is a key element of social learning, and

This is true for learning across disciplines and methodologies, across communities and cultures, across ideas and ideologies, and across the many groups of individuals—parents and teachers, students and staff—who make up [an organization]. Teachers and schools that educate well actively strive to understand rather than to suppress diversity. In this way they build a larger and stronger common ground. (p.3)

As this research brought together seven interdisciplinary graduate students (and one infant) who represented unique identity positions, this is evidence that creative, arts-based studies offer a template for building such intersectional common ground. This model can be further applied to intentionally include willing members at all levels of institutional hierarchies as well.

Transformative Research as an Act of Love.

Finally, I ended Act Four with a discussion of transformative pedagogy as an act of love. Perhaps by now the reader is wondering how love relates to this study. ‘Let me say, with the risk of appearing ridiculous’ that I allowed myself to fall deeply in love with this research and with all the people with whom it brought me into contact. Falling in love meant that my heart was broken on some occasions, but new insights quickly spilled in through the cracks. The Dalai Lama believes that “too much energy... [is spent] developing the mind instead of the heart” and encourages us instead to develop our hearts. Perhaps *this* is the secret to transformative research. Like transformative pedagogy, transformative research may require the courage to love.

Summary

This Act has offered some closing thoughts to weave together the theoretical, methodological, and practical lessons from this research. In repositioning students as potential agents of change, I have suggested that their increased presence gives rise to new opportunities for the university to become an institution of transformative learning. Values and actions might include building community through relationships, active listening and inclusion, and increased opportunities for intentionally uncomfortable learning. Practical suggestions include acknowledging the cycle of cultural adjustment, encouraging the crossing of boundaries, and finally, having the courage to engage in transformative research as an act of love.

Drawing the Curtain: The Final Act

The time to draw the curtain is near and in this moment I am both giddy in anticipation of the after-party and exhausted from the performance. While I have the stage for a few moments longer, I will take the opportunity to remind you of the journey that brought me to this point.

This journey began in my childhood living room, where I learned that music and the physical sensations it evoked were valid ways of knowing, filtering experiences and finding truths. Coming to the Academy I realized there were words to describe this kind of knowledge, namely, experiential or arts-based learning, and I had a desire to learn more about both of these.

The context in which I decided to learn was one of a community of graduate students at the University of Victoria. Through my connections with other students, I came to understand a few of the specific kinds of struggles faced by immigrant and international students. Fuelled by my perceptions of injustice, I filtered these struggles through my practical and theoretical understanding of racism and decided to use research to attempt to take action.

Conceptually, I learned that theories of racism, while useful, were insufficient for describing the complexity of students' experiences. While students do experience racism, they are not merely the passive victims of actions driven by ignorance and ideology. They are also agentive and have the capacity to use these struggles as opportunities for transformative learning.

I also came to experientially understand that, while perhaps abstractly united by a collective sense of marginalization, 'they' do not exist. A more nuanced analytic

framework was needed to understand the problem I was attempting to address, which I found through the concept of intersectionality.

To investigate this problem I drew from the methodological tradition of arts-based research, which has notably been advanced in the discipline of Education. I was attracted to the method of popular theatre, particularly as it is practiced by a director from my previous city of residence: David Diamond in Vancouver, British Columbia. I spent close to one hundred hours training in his method of 'Theatre for Living,' during two six-day courses. After all this practice, I feel confident enough to claim that I am officially a *beginner*. And, in my own way, I am also an *artist*.

Though this was not as I intended, the data collection process itself was an act of praxis. I conducted four workshops over the summer of 2006, decided I needed more training, and then embarked on the process of creating theatre in earnest. Six fellow graduate students responded to my invitation and they brought with them one infant, the support of their families, and much experiential and professional skill and knowledge.

Together we analyzed the sensory and verbal data that came out of this process and presented it back to the community in the form of an interactive theatre production entitled, UNSETTLED. We knew we had presented a valid depiction of reality, as this production resonated with members of the UVic community, the Greater Victoria community, and beyond.

Following the performance, I returned to the more individual pursuit of analyzing all the data that I had gathered. Through sitting and writing with the data and filtering them through various analytic tools and frameworks, I found a way to continue speaking in solidarity with the research participants.

From the participants, I gained an understanding of how the theory of transformative learning applies to international students. They told me that they understood that struggle is, somehow, part of the journey and with time and perspective they eventually learned to laugh and learned empathy. Many participants reached a turning point, a point of perspective transformation, where they also began learning to raise their voices. Many of these lessons came from finding a place to belong and we, at UVic, in Canada, and elsewhere, would be wise to find more strategies to foster this sense of belonging.

I also gained an experiential understanding of how privileging racism as the key aspect of struggle is insufficient for understanding and taking action to solve the problem I aimed to address through this research. While we can learn how to prevent systems of racism from being reproduced, in increasingly internationalized university settings and communities, there are many different kinds of struggles that should also be acknowledged to create sustainable solutions. One such solution is right in front of us, everyday. It is found in the wisdom of seeking genuine relationships with those with whom we come into contact and acknowledging that we are, in fact, interconnected and interdependent.

Based on these lessons, I offered some suggestions for how this institution might encourage and support an intersectional approach to transformative learning. These included positioning international students as part of the solution, not the problem, and as potential agents of change on the global stage.

At the end of this performance, the structure in which I am working urges me to write a sweeping, omniscient conclusion about the world and how I have now learned

everything I need to know to go forth and conquer it. Out of respect for this work, and out of respect for you—for the knowledge you brought when you started reading and for any new knowledge you may have gained in the pages and images of this dissertation—I will close with a question instead: *What's inside this for you?*

How does this performance-as-dissertation make you feel? I mean the actual physical sensations on your body as well as the emotions, thoughts, and judgements that are coming up for you right now, in this moment.

And, on a symbolic level, what can you learn from these sensations and emotions? How can you generalize them to the larger context of your life and the issues we and I have presented here?

Having raised these questions, it is now time for me to take my bow. I will leave you to ponder as I step behind the curtain to embrace the backstage crew.

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Appendix A: Frame

Frame
by Liu Wu

I have been at UVic for almost three months
I have a strong feeling that I live in a frame

There is small window in my room
I watch the campus view from the window
The window is a frame

I am in the cafeteria
The sunbeam is shining on the tree
The window is a frame

Beside the road
A policeman is talking with someone using his phone
He sits in his car
The window is a frame

There are some people drinking in a bar
They are in the window
I am out of the window
The window is a frame

One day, I went to the book store
I found Jean-Paul Sartre, the philosopher
He was in a frame
He was printed on the cover of a book
The book is on the shelf
The cover is a frame, the shelf is a frame

Sartre, Sartre
Could you tell me,
When will the frame disappear from my life?

(Author's name used with permission)

Appendix B: Director's Notes

CAST:

(Presented in the order of introduction in Act 1)

Zhou He plays a graduate student in scenes one and two.

Susan plays a graduate student in all three scenes. She also stands in a frozen image of a frame during the opening poem, foreshadowing her character's participation in scene three. She named her character "Mary" in scene one.

Lawrence plays a graduate student in scenes two and three. He also reads his poem to introduce the plays, similarly foreshadowing his character's role in scene three.

Coco plays a graduate student in scenes one and two.

Maria-Luisa plays a role in each of the scenes. She stands frozen in the frame during the introductory poem, foreshadowing her participation in scene three. She plays an instructor in scenes one and two and a graduate student in scene three. She named her character as the instructor "Rose."

Phyllis plays a graduate student in scenes one and two. Note that because she was playing antagonists and needed to distance herself from the identity of each of these characters, she named herself "Francine" in scene one and "Jane" in scene two. While she is a mother in both, she only symbolically brings her child with her to the classroom during scene two of the November 8, 2006 performance. In all other performances, her daughter, Margaret, is with her in both scenes.

Margaret plays Phyllis' daughter in scenes one and two. While she did not act in the November 8, 2006 performance, she played a 1 month-old infant during the rehearsal, a 5-month-old infant during the performance for the group of university and college administrators, and an 8-month old infant during the performance in Vancouver.

* * *

OPENING ACT: Reading of the poem, 'Frame'

Susan and Maria-Luisa stand in the position of a frame over top of Lawrence while he is sitting and reading his poem (see Appendix A). Lawrence created this frozen image early in the workshop and this was the first seed of inspiration for his poem. The audience sees him in a frame, just as he describes how he sees the world in a series of frames. The image of the frame is taken up in scene three.

SCENE ONE: 'Group Work'

This scene was the result of amalgamating the two initial plays on the theme of language (Figures 8.4 and 8.5) as described in Act Eight. The scene takes place in a classroom, where we meet the instructor (Maria-Luisa as Rose) and four of the students (Susan [as

Mary], Phyllis [as Francine], Zhou He and Coco). Intentionally unspoken details we built into this play, or details that were revealed during some of the interventions, include:

1. This is a research methods class where students are expected to work in groups on a research project, as outlined in their course syllabus.
2. The instructor, Rose, has a big pile of marking to get through. She is worried about handing in her marks late because her position as a sessional instructor is not stable.
3. Phyllis is watching the clock because she has to pick up one of her children from soccer practice.
4. Zhou He has learned English in China and excelled on the TOEFL test, but is quickly realizing that the pronunciation she learned at home differs from the Canadian (Victoria, BC) dialect.
5. Phyllis learned French as a child in a French immersion programme. She does not understand the difference between her experience and learning a second language as an adult.
6. Collectively, students have knowledge of four languages: English, Mandarin, Japanese, and French.

OUTLINE OF SCENE ONE:

Scene opens with the instructor, Rose, saying,
 Okay class, as outlined in the course syllabus, today we're going to divide into groups to work on the Research Assignment. I want you to self-select into groups according to three subjects: those who are interested in language learning come to this side of the room, those who are interested in poverty go over there, and those who are interested in public transportation meet at the back of the room.

Four students gather around the designated "language learning" area.

Rose (Maria-Luisa): It looks like you've all made your choice, so for the rest of the class I want you to work on your assignment in your small groups. I'll be sitting over here marking your papers if anyone needs me.

Students take their seats.

Coco: Hi, I'm Coco.

Mary (Susan): I'm Mary

Zhou He: Hi, I'm Zhou He. I'm new to Canada. Can you please help me?

Coco (to Francine): And you're...

Francine (Phyllis): Francine

Coco: Right Francine. So, how are we going to start?

Francine: Well, has everyone read the instructions in the syllabus?

Mary (Susan) & Coco: Yes, yes.

Scene one, continued...

Zhou He: Mmm, syllabus. What is syllabus?

Francine: You know, the syllabus (points to a piece of paper in her hand).

Zhou He: How do you spell it?

Francine: (pointing to the paper) S-Y-double L-A-B-U-S

Zhou He: (typing in her electronic dictionary) Oh! Oh yes. I know that word. Yes, I've read it.

Francine: Right... So I guess we're doing something on language learning. How should we do this?

Mary: Well, what about doing a survey of international students?

Coco: Do you mean international students at the language centre, or students in an academic setting?

Mary: How about an academic setting, like undergraduate or graduate students.

Coco: Yeah, that sounds good, like the challenges undergraduate ESL students face when they're adjusting to an academic setting.

Zhou He: Sorry, what is academic setting?

Francine: (exasperated sigh)

Coco: You know, like we're in now, in a university. When you're shopping downtown with your friends that's not an academic setting.

Zhou He: Ohh! Academic (pronounces it slightly differently and spells it out). A-C-A-D-E-M-I-C.

Francine: (interrupts, speaks quickly, not looking at Zhou He, but comments are directed at Zhou He) I don't mean to be rude, but don't you think international students should have some of those language "challenges" worked out before they arrive in Canada. I mean, Canada is a multicultural country, but there are two official languages to choose from, English or French, *n'est pas?*

Zhou He: I'm sorry, I don't understand you; you're speaking too quickly.

Francine: (frustrated sound) I don't have time for this.

END

SCENE TWO: ‘Human Rights’

This scene includes all the actors, with Maria-Luisa (Rose) as the instructor. Phyllis’ character is named “Jane” in this scene and Lawrence has the English name “Willis”. We intentionally placed this one second as it is the most tense of the three scenes and we wanted the audience members get used to the format during the first scene. Intentionally unspoken details (some of which are described in Act Twelve) include:

1. Jane had recently read a magazine story in “Marie-Claire” about a female infant left to die in the gutter and was struggling with a sense of hostility toward Chinese men. A copy of this story is available online at:
<http://www.taliacarner.com/deadnewborningutter.html>
2. Jane and the instructor have a good relationship; Jane *loves* and admires Rose.
3. Different kinds of accommodation are introduced (Jane bringing her child to class; Susan getting a job through her relationship with a mentor at the Inter-cultural Association) and these are juxtaposed with the little accommodation of Lawrence’s struggle to use English.
4. Although the scene is meant to take place a few weeks into the term, Zhou He and Lawrence had never spoken prior to this day—predominantly due to gender differences, but also because of each character’s personality.
5. Lawrence has one child in China, a daughter. He is also of the generation and political orientation to have intimate knowledge of the 1989 incidents of Tiananmen Square.
6. Coco is also familiar with the history of Japanese internment camps in Canada.
7. Lawrence and Zhou He’s conversation is intentionally in Mandarin. (Surprisingly, not once did anyone ask for a translation, though several audience members audibly gasp and giggle their recognition during this scene.)
8. Zhou He, Susan, and Coco, three ‘daughters’ of Asian descent, are intentionally silent (silenced) during this scene.
9. Phyllis intentionally tries to get Coco on her side of the argument as Coco is the “most Canadian” of the group.
10. Working for the Inter-cultural Association, Susan is very familiar with Phyllis’ sentiment. She has encountered it so many times that she is no longer willing to engage in a discussion unless the speaker expresses openness to listening to her side of the story.

OUTLINE OF SCENE TWO:

Scene opens with three small groups, Phyllis (as Jane) talking to the Instructor (Maria-Luisa, as Rose); Coco talking to Susan; Zhou He talking to Lawrence (as Willis).

Jane: So I really loved the articles you gave us this week, I’m looking forward to today’s discussion.

Rose: Oh, good. So how are things going for you? Are you balancing everything okay with the baby?

Scene two, continued...

Phyllis: Well it's hard, but most of my professors have been really accommodating...

(The two keep talking to each other, without making any sound. Audience focus moves to next group.)

Coco: So how did you manage to get that job at the Intercultural Association?

Susan: Actually I met the director when I was in high school. She kind of became a mentor for me.

Coco: Oh, a mentor, that's great...

(The two keep talking to each other, without making any sound. Audience focus moves to next group.)

Zhou He: Oh, you're from Beijing? (extends hand) I'm also from Beijing. Nice to meet you.

Willis: Can we speak in Chinese?

Zhou He: (in Mandarin, approximately) Yes, of course.

Willis: (in Mandarin) How do I speak up in a Canadian classroom?

Zhou He: (in Mandarin) You just need to assert yourself in Canada, raise your hand.

Rose: (interrupts discussion) Good morning class. I hope you all had a good week. I know I assigned lots of reading this week so I'd like to get started. Please turn to the article on poverty and homelessness in Africa. What did you think about it?

Willis: (stands up out of habit instead of raising his hand)

Rose: Yes...uh...I'm sorry, I don't know how to pronounce your name. Do you have an English name you go by?

Willis: Yes, I just got a name, I don't really know, it's...Will...Willis.

Rose: Willis. Ahhh, great. Yes, Willis, what did you think of this article?

Willis: I'm sorry, my English is not so good. Umm. Well this article is about poverty in Africa. The author concludes that it's the same around the world, but it's a little different in our country.

Scene two, continued...

Jane: Ahh, excuse me “Willis”, which country is that?

Willis: China.

Jane: Right. (Turning, conspiratorially, to Coco beside her and then under her breath) What the heck would he know about human rights?

Zhou He, Susan, and Coco all notice this comment, but don’t say anything. Lawrence also hears and is shocked into silence. Zhou He pulls on Willis’ arm, encouraging him to sit down.

Rose: (not knowing what to do, interrupts) Ohhhhh, okay, let’s see what others think about this. Susan?

Susan: (nervously) *Welllll....* END

SCENE THREE: ‘Frame’

This scene was intentionally placed last to close the performance with the same theme introduced during the introductory poem. Some participants worried, at first, that it might be too subtle for the audience grasp, but after the rehearsal we immediately knew that it was not. It was also a more gentle scene that we hoped would release any lingering tension from scene two and suggest that sometimes social change really is as easy as ‘saying hello’. Although it expresses Lawrence’s experience, which I interpreted as isolation and loneliness, it also demonstrates the shared responsibility to ‘say hello.’ It took us one hour to come up with this short scene. The key point we needed to find was what Coco described as a “motionless moment” where Susan and Lawrence see each other, but both choose not to say hello.

There were several unspoken emotions in this scene:

1. In creating this scene, Maria-Luisa described her internal struggle of often wanting to be more inviting, but frequently feeling that she is just too busy.
2. Phyllis commented that in her experience living abroad she really appreciated the people who did take the time to invite her in, even though she knew that they too were busy.
3. Coco described how she now believes that when Canadians say “let’s get together sometime,” this is just a courtesy, whereas in her home country it is a serious invitation. She also described an experience of teaching ESL students. She asked students to practice their English with Canadian friends, but it turned out that none of her students had any Canadian friends.
4. Many participants expressed how the “next time” seems to never come.

OUTLINE OF SCENE THREE:

Scene opens with Maria-Luisa and Susan sitting together in a campus cafeteria. They are students in the same class, discussing an assignment they are working on together. Lawrence, also a student in their class, starts walking by in the background.

Maria-Luisa: So I just found this article and I think it will be very useful for our presentation.

(As she is saying this Lawrence walks by, Susan looks up and sees him, they make eye contact, *the audience sees that they see each other*, and they both look away.

Lawrence hesitates, but keeps walking, stopping again at a short distance to look over his shoulder at the two students from his class. He turns again and walks away. Maria-Luisa is engulfed in the conversation and is looking down at the article in her hand. She does not see Lawrence.)

Susan: (after a brief moment turns around to look in Lawrence's direction) Hey, wasn't that 'that Lawrence guy' from our class?

Maria-Luisa: (looks over and sees Lawrence at a distance) Oh yeah, it is. (Then, uncertainly) Do you think we should invite him to have lunch with us?

Lawrence sits down and holds an opaque frame in front of his face. The audience can still see him, but, symbolically, Susan and Maria-Luisa cannot.

Susan: (turns around again) Oh, he's gone already. *Anyway*, we have work to do.

Maria-Luisa: Yeah, you're right. Maybe next time.

Susan: Yeah, next time.

END

Appendix C: Participant Consent Form for Actors in the Final Performance



University of Victoria

Faculty of Education

[Original title] Acting for the sake of acting: Doing participatory ethnography as a popular theatre project with international and immigrant graduate students

I, Catherine Etmanski, am inviting you to participate in a study entitled *Acting for the sake of acting: Doing participatory ethnography as a popular theatre project with international and immigrant graduate students*.

I am a PhD Student in the Faculty of Education, Leadership Studies Section at the University of Victoria (UVic). **If you have further questions you may contact me by telephone: 472-5164, e-mail: etmanski@uvic.ca, or in person: office A467 in the MacLaurin Building.**

As a graduate student, I must conduct research as part of the requirements for a degree in the Faculty of Education. My research is under the supervision of Dr. Darlene Clover, and you may contact her at: 721-7785, or clover@uvic.ca.

This research will investigate the potential differences between the welcoming language often used to describe Canada and the real experiences of international and immigrant graduate students at UVic. As more and more international and immigrant students are coming to Canadian Universities, this kind of information can help to make universities more supportive for students, staff and faculty. You are being asked to participate in this study because you are a graduate student at UVic.

The research project uses a unique and fun methodology that creates an interesting outcome. Your time commitment will include a weekend (two and a half-day) workshop with other graduate students, at least one three-hour public performance, plus some follow up activities like a party and conversations with me. Participating in the full project could include up to 30 hours over a one or two month period. During the research you will share your experiences of being a graduate student at UVic by expressing yourself verbally and through creative theatre activities.

The purpose of the workshop is to create short (less than 10 minute) plays based on the common experiences of graduate students, with a focus on international and immigrant students. These plays will be performed in front of the UVic community and invited guests. You will not be forced to participate in these public plays, but you will be encouraged to contribute to the final performance in some way. The research will be video-recorded and some photographs will be taken for the purpose of analysis, but I will ask your permission again before showing any videos and photographs to others.

As part of this research, I will also be speaking to members of a cross-campus advisory committee. I will be meeting separately with this committee, and the members will advise me on UVic policies and practices concerning international and immigrant students, and they will also attend the final performance. Their involvement in this research is important because they are in positions to work toward policy change that could make UVic more welcoming for all students.

I believe this process will be fun, and there are many benefits to participating, including: meeting new people, gaining confidence, increasing your ability to speak in public, learning about theatre, and learning about creative and participatory kinds of research. This may also be an opportunity to influence how UVic supports international and immigrant students. When you share your stories with the public, this may improve public understanding about any challenges graduate students may face in a Canadian University. This research will contribute to theories about multiculturalism and their relevance to graduate education as well. It will also help to understand how theatre can be used as a research method.

If you decide to participate in the workshop, you will be invited to share both positive and negative experiences of being a student at UVic: sometimes using theatre, sometimes using words. You will never be forced to share negative experiences, but if you choose to share these experiences, you may at times feel uncomfortable or embarrassed. It is okay and even normal to feel a little uncomfortable sharing personal stories, but if you decide to share something personal and if this makes you feel very upset, I will assist you in finding the help and support you need, for example, from other students, from counsellors, or from organizations in the Victoria community (like the Inter-cultural Association).

Your participation in this research is voluntary and you may withdraw at any time without any consequences or explanation. Before the workshop, we will discuss how we will work together as a group and how everyone's participation is voluntary. This is a group process so the data will rarely be about you alone. If you do withdraw from the study, I will keep the audio and/or video recordings and photographs of your initial participation in the group and I will contact you again to discuss how this data will be used in my research findings.

If you choose to participate in the public performance of the plays, I cannot guarantee your anonymity or confidentiality. However, during the play it will be made clear to the audience that the "actors" are not playing themselves – they will be acting out a fictional character's role that is based on shared stories from the research process. You may choose to use a different name throughout the workshop, but this will not necessarily keep your identity secret because others in the research group or audience may know you.

All video recordings, photographs, and computer disks will be kept in a locked filing cabinet in my campus office. All electronic documents will be kept under password on my office computer with back up copies on my home computer. All electronic data from this study will be erased, and paper copies will be shredded five years after I defend my dissertation. The consent forms will be kept separately and will be shredded two years after the data is collected.

I anticipate that the results of this study will be shared with others in the following ways: in the public performances of the plays, in my report of policy recommendations, in my dissertation, in articles presented at scholarly meetings or published in journals, in a book, and in an educational video that will be made available through the UVic libraries.

Should you choose to withdraw from the study, I will follow up with you after the public performance of the plays to request consent for use of photographs obtained during your initial participation. Because the photographs will likely contain images of several people at once, it will sometimes be impossible to remove your individual image. We will look at all the photographs and you can decide whether or not I can continue to use them in my study. I will destroy the photographs you do not wish me to use.

A draft version of the educational video will also be shown to you and the other research participants who appear in the video – even those who have withdrawn from the study. You will all have the opportunity to give feedback on the video and I will ask you again whether you consent to having your image shown in this video. If you do not consent, images of you will be removed from the video.

In addition to being able to contact me or my supervisor, you may verify the ethical approval of this study, or raise any concerns you might have, by contacting the Associate Vice-President, Research at the University of Victoria (250-472-4545).

Your signature below indicates that you understand the above conditions of participation in this study and that you have had the opportunity to have your questions answered.

Signature of Researcher

Date

Participant Name
(Please print)

Signature

Date

Phone number of *Participant*: _____

E-mail: _____

UVic Department: _____

Year of Study: _____

If you wish me to use a different name for you, please write that name here:

Appendix D: Audience Member Consent Form



Welcome to the public performance of:
U N S E T T L E D

This play is part of Catherine Etmanski's doctoral study [originally] entitled, *Acting for the sake of acting: Doing participatory ethnography as a popular theatre project with international and immigrant graduate students*. This research aims to investigate the potential differences between the welcoming language often used to describe Canada and the lived experiences of international and immigrant graduate students at UVic. It is also hoped that audience interaction with the plays will spark new ideas for policies and practices concerning international and immigrant students on campus.

This play is interactive, which means that audience members will have the opportunity to come on stage and/or give feedback about the play afterwards in the form of audience dialogues. Your active participation will enhance the process, **but you will never be required to speak or forced participate in any way.**

Please note that this play will be photographed and video-recorded for the purpose of analysis and potentially for use in an educational video. Most of the recordings will be focussed on the stage, but some general shots of the audience or of individual speakers may also be taken. As an audience member, you may therefore become a secondary participant in this study. **By signing in at the entrance you are consenting to the possibility of being photographed or video-recorded during this performance. Your name will not be associated with any images.**

If you have any questions or feedback about this research following this performance, or should you wish any photographs or video-recordings of you not to be used, please contact **Catherine Etmanski before November 22, 2006 at 472-5164 or etmanski@uvic.ca**. You are also free to contact her research supervisor, Dr. Darlene Clover, at 721-7816 or clover@uvic.ca, or the UVic Research Office at: 472-4545.

Please keep this form for future reference.

Please sign in at the door. The researcher will keep your signature on file in a locked filing cabinet for two years.

[This form was also enlarged to poster size and hung in two conspicuous areas in the entrance to the performance hall. Sign in sheet used at the door follows.]

**Your signature below indicates that you have read
the audience member consent form and agree to
the conditions therein:**

	Print Name	Signature	OPTIONAL INFORMATION			
			How did you hear about this performance?	What is your affiliation with UVic?	Contact information (e-mail or telephone)	Send copy of the final report? Y/N
1						
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