PRE-SERVICE TEACHERS' PERSPECTIVES ON THE USE OF PEDAGOGY AND THEATER OF THE OPPRESSED IN TEACHING AND TEACHER EDUCATION: OUTCOMES AND POTENTIAL

by

FORAM ARVIND BHUKHANWALA

(Under the Direction of Penelope Oldfather)

ABSTRACT

This collaborative, arts-based, multi case study research focused on pre-service teachers' perspectives on outcomes and potentials of Augusto Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed (PTO) in teaching and teacher education. Seven student teachers and their course instructor met for six seminar meetings during their student teaching and participated in Image and Forum Theater to examine their experiences in the field. Sessions were video recorded and photographed. Data included transcribed interviews, video, observations, field notes, and stimulated photo recall involving four focal students. Individual cases were constructed and were the basis for cross-case analysis. This study contributes new understandings to the field of ways in which PTO can be used to engage student teachers in relevant and empowering reflection, and considerations of multiple perspectives and alternative actions.

INDEX WORDS: Pre-service teachers, Teacher education, Pedagogy and theater of the oppressed
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CHAPTER 1

INTRODUCTION: PROSCENIUM

Overview of the Study

This collaborative qualitative research study was conducted to explore the potential of using Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in teacher education. The guiding research question was follows: What happens when pre-service teachers participate in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed? The specific research questions were as follows:

1. What were the pre-service teachers' perspectives on outcomes of their participation in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed?
2. What potential of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed do preservice teachers see in teaching and teacher education?

In this chapter, I explain the rationale for this study, a subjectivity statement, and finally explain the theoretical framework used in this research.

Rationale of the Study

The rationale for this study has emerged both from my personal desires and after studying the literature in the field of teaching and teacher education. I share in detail my personal connections with this study in my subjectivity statement (p. 8). Specifically, Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed brought alive my desire to work with a pedagogy that was arts-based, student centered, and helped to initiate dialogues that addressed issues of social justice and helped in building democratic learning environments. In addition to my personal desires, reading
the literature on teaching and teacher education helped me to develop a focus for this study. I first present a literature-based rationale followed by my subjectivity statement. Zeichner (1993) argued that teacher development, teacher learning, and teacher empowerment have become important aspects in teacher education to meet our visions of reaching out to and teaching everybody’s children. Noddings (1992) reminded us that in our pursuit of social justice our commitment to the quality of relationships (i.e., an ethic of care) must not be abandoned and the connection to ‘everyone’ must not be forgotten. I present the rationale of the study by highlighting the following topics: The Problem: Challenges for Teacher Educators in Teacher Preparation in the 21st Century, Importance of Reflection in Teacher Education, Potential of Arts as a Reflective Tool, and Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed. I end this chapter by discussing my subjectivity statement and the theoretical framework that guides this study.

The Problem: Challenges for Teacher Educators in Teacher Preparation in the 21st Century

Educators and educational researchers (e.g., Cochran-Smith, 2004, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 1994; Zeichner & Liston, 1987) have much written about the challenges faced by the teacher educators in the 21st century. Some of the issues they have discussed are as follows:

In the recent years we have witnessed a paradigm shift from a behaviorist orientation to a constructivist orientation which emphasized teacher preparation as a process of inquiry rather than as training. The new visions of teacher education emphasized the role of the pre-service teachers as learners and encouraged inquiry as a way of learning. Furthermore, this new vision perceived the learner as active and having ownership in knowing not only as students in teacher education programs but also as future teachers who would engage their students in the same.
However, the challenge is that not all teacher education programs have focused their attention on developing programs where inquiry is a way of learning.

The changes in the demographic environment have brought forth new challenges in teacher preparation. If schools are believed to be vehicles for preparing students to accept multiple perspectives and to build democratic society, then we also need to prepare our pre-service teachers who would create learning environments that encourage and celebrate diversity and multiple perspectives.

Those who advocate a social justice agenda want teachers to be professional educators as well as advocates for their students and have goals for teaching that involves developing dispositions of tolerance and critical habits of mind (Cochran-Smith, 2004, 2006; Darling-Hammond, 2000). Unfortunately, not all teacher education programs actively advocate for a social justice agenda in teacher preparation and facilitate students’ understandings of the political nature of schooling.

In the recent years, there has been a call for building teacher education programs that emphasize the teachers’ developing purposes for their teaching at the center of their curriculum (Darling-Hammond & Bransford, 2005). According to these researchers, the process of developing their own visions would help teachers to “define and defend the goals they select to students, parents, colleagues, administrators, and themselves” (p. 185). However, the problem is that not all teacher education programs help student teachers to develop their own visions that would guide them in their thinking about teaching and learning in the 21st century.

In a standards-driven curriculum and the current high-stakes testing environment, many teachers have reported feeling overwhelmed and constrained. The work of Belenky and her group of researchers (1997) suggested that support and connectedness positively influenced the
ability of the individual to create provisions of spaces where choices could be made. ‘Connected teaching’ for example, involved what Nel Noddings described as ‘care’ (1984, pp. 15-16).

Finally, it has been well established that if we want teachers to build democratic learning environments and pursue a social justice agenda in their classrooms, they need to experience such an environment in their teacher preparation program. In addition, the pre-service teachers need to engage in critical reflections in which they address issues of power, or example, in relation to student-teacher relationship, home-school connections, socio-emotional issues in their students, and holistic assessment. Encouraging pre-service teachers to be reflective practitioners has been noted since early 1930s. I further discuss the importance of reflection in teacher education followed by the various types of reflections.

The Importance of Reflection in Teacher Education

There has been a long tradition in teacher education to try to prepare reflective teachers. At least since the time of Dewey (1938) who introduced the idea of reflective thought, described as an active consideration of any belief in the light of prior knowledge and future objectives; teacher educators have been concerned with how to prepare teachers who not only are accomplished in content and pedagogical knowledge, but also have the capability and the orientation to think about the purposes and consequences of their practice. Schön (1983) distinguished between reflection-in-action and reflection-on-action. Reflection-in-action involves an adjustment based on one's intuitive knowing. Reflection-on-action takes place after the action itself and involves inquiry into the personal theories that lie at the basis of one's actions, with the ultimate goal of changing future actions. In such a view, teachers must learn to question themselves, their goals and their actions as they plan for and work with children in schools. Reflection and reflective practice are now part of many teacher education programs and
the ‘inquiry-oriented’ teacher education rests on this conception of reflective teaching. Teacher educators working within this paradigm see student teachers as empowered decision makers and agents for change and teaching as thoughtful and intelligent action which requires an ability to analyze one's work and learn from one's experiences (Han, 1995; Johnston, 1994). Thus, reflection or the process by which teachers looked back upon their work to learn from their experiences was fundamental to this construction of teaching.

Types of Reflective Practices

The teacher educators often engaged the student teachers in a variety of reflective activities. These activities had a narrative character that helped the student teachers to deeply examine their experience and facilitate further learning and inquiry (Korthagen & Wubbels, 2001). Some of the narratives were developed orally or in writing and may be structured or unstructured. Schön (1987) and Seibert and Daudelin (1999) described the role of a coach or a mentor to guide students in developing habits of reflective practice. Loughran (1996) advocated for seminar group discussions, Richert (1990) suggested the use of reflective journals. Brookfield (1990) argued for the use of critical incidents, while Walker (1985) promoted the making of portfolios. A different approach to fostering reflection was proposed by Langer (1989). She believed exploring multiple perspectives in the middle of challenging situations could facilitate mindfulness and in turn enhance the student teachers' professional effectiveness. Most of these methods often opened channels of communication between the mentor teacher and the student teacher and/or between the student teacher and the university facilitator and engaged them in uncovering their assumptions. Though many pedagogical tools were reported in the research literature, there appeared to be a dearth of research on using arts and specifically theater as a reflective tool in teacher education. Therefore, the focus of this research is to examine the role of
arts, and specifically the role of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed as a reflective tool in
teacher education.

Epistemologies and Reflective Thoughts

Reflection does not occur in vacuum but is guided by one's epistemologies. In other
words, social constructivists posit that meaning is constructed within the context in which the
specific events occur and on the framework the knowers use to understand the event. For
example, if you are a received knower, in your reflection the stance you may take is that of being
a transmitter of knowledge while if you are a constructed knower then you may see teacher as a
facilitator. To expand on the notions of ways of knowing, I turn to the works of Belenky,
Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997) who explained that people come to know in different
ways--by receiving the word of a powerful other, by relying on personal feelings, by using
impersonal external standards, and/or by empathizing with the other. Each of these ways of
knowing created awareness of themselves and their world to the person doing the inquiry and
this knowledge in turn created a sense of self. Individuals who used empathy as a lens to
understand the other were able to enter into perspectives that may be different from their own.
Probably, their sense of self emerged through acts of connections and care (hooks, 1994;
Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2000; Noddings, 1992). This understanding of interweaving of voice, self,
and mind (Belenky et al., 1997) motivated me to understand student teachers' epistemologies in
this research.

As noted above, reflection was seen valuable in professional growth and development of
the teacher. If as teacher educators, we are seriously interested in education that helps us to build
caring democratic learning environments and open spaces for students and teachers to consider
the world from multiple perspectives and offer voices, I believe that it is important to find as many different ways as possible that allows for the same,

Philosophical and research-based literature had brought to my notice that the arts have the potential to engage individuals in relational knowing, in releasing one's imagination, and in interpreting the world from multiple vantage points. Acknowledging that the paths may be many, I discuss the potential using arts as a tool for reflection.

**Potential of Arts as a Reflective Tool**

What makes an experience stand out from the flux of life is that something in particular happens that surprises us through this, if we take what happens seriously, it transforms us. Thus experience (and a good lesson) does not end in a closure, but rather in openness (Field & Latta, 2001, p. 889-890).

Art has the potential to break our attention from the routine, the ordinary, and the merely repetitive. It has the potential to awaken and open our minds to multiple perspectives. Greene (1997) emphasized that,

Art forms that not only awakens teachers to all sorts of new perspectives upon the lived world, past and present, but also provides occasions for authentic active learning of the kind that is paradigmatic for the learning excellent teachers are supposed to make possible for the young (p. 33).

Arts have the potential to promote personal agency, passion, imagination, and a making of meaning (Eisner, 2003; Greene, 1995). The role of the arts, though advocated in teacher education, is rarely researched in this area. On the other hand, the role of arts was widely researched in the field of elementary education. Drawing from this literature, many have argued the value of arts in education. Arts based pedagogy was known for promoting all round
development in children (Easton, 1997; Heath & Roach, 2002; Steiner, 1995; Upitis, 2003); promoting socio-emotional development (Crawford, 2004; Fox & Goodheart, 2001; Stevens, 2002); engaging students in critical thinking (Botstein, 1998; Crawford, 2004); and enhancing imagination (Eisner, 2003; Greene, 1995). In addition, Gablik (1995) state that connective aesthetics promote shared understanding, recognizing and understanding the interdependence and giving voices to self and others. Giving voices helped in building communities and made art socially responsive. The specific arts-based pedagogy I explored in this research was Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed.

Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed

Influenced by Paulo Freire’s views on democratic education, Augusto Boal developed the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed to humanize the all of humanity (Freire, 1998). Specifically, the Theater of the Oppressed offered an aesthetic means to people to analyze their past, in the context of their present, and subsequently to invent their future without passively waiting for it. Theater of the Oppressed created a safe space for people to come together to practice for reality and restore a dialogue among human beings (Boal, 2003, 2006).

In a safe environment, by participating in various theater games, teachers and students may have the opportunity to reflect on themselves, their thoughts, their feelings, their sense of agency for alternative actions, and the possible effects their actions may have on the others. Boal (2003) believed that through Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed, awareness could be heightened. It was our awareness of being unfinished that made us educable and motivated us to be seekers of knowledge and knowing (Freire, 1998).

The oppressions were often “kinesthetically-inscribed” in nature and therefore for an individual to feel liberated the response, too, must be kinesthetic (Creel, Kuhne, & Riggle, 2000).
Kinesthetic or embodied knowing involved tuning in, responding to, and trusting our bodies as well as their needs, signals, and innate wisdom. Jon Kabat-Zinn (1994) described an ancient Buddhist practice called mindfulness, as examining who we are, appreciating the fullness of each moment, and questioning the quality of our lives and our place in the world. Mindfulness began with feeling at home in your body, feeling real and alive to yourself, feeling the space that you occupy, feeling subtle movements of energy within yourself, the taste of food, the wind on your face. Each of these moments in turn became moments of wonder and awe - causes of celebration. Unfortunately, our schools only reward productive ‘doing’ rather than silent mindful ‘being’.

On the other hand, Freire (1998) asserted that as humans we were conditioned and our conditioning limited the possibilities we made available for ourselves.

I like to be human because in my unfinishedness I know that I am conditioned. Yet conscious of such conditioning, I know that I can go beyond it, which is the essential difference between conditioned and determined existence (p. 54).

Thus, for Freire, conscientization as a process of being in the world and being with the world and was a process of deepening our awareness of our world and of the demands of human consciousness to develop our capacity for epistemological curiosity. In this sense, Boal (2003) posited that participation in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed could promote awareness so that we may more deeply ‘seeing what we are looking at, to listening to what we are hearing, to feeling what we touch, to writing what we think’ (Boal, 2006; pp. 29-30). Being in the moment, creating, and re-creating experiences may bring experiences back to life and as a result make the participation more alive and relevant. Such awareness may pave roads for future actions. Thus, Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed activities open spaces for reflections and dialogues to motivate student teachers to reach out to their own initiatives.
I situate my work in social constructivism (Bakhtin, 1981; Dewey, 1938; Oldfather, West, White & Wilmarth, 1999; Vygotsky, 1978) and ethics of care in education (Noddings, 1992). Social Constructivists believe that knowledge is constructed through interactions with others within a specific socio-cultural context. Within this paradigm, educators hold the view that learning is a collaborative process of sense-making within a socio-cultural perspective rather than memorization of facts. The teacher in such situations is a facilitator, an ally in the process of knowledge construction, rather than a depositor of knowledge. Vygotsky (1978) and Noddings (1992) clearly addressed the necessity for valuing individual experience as an authentic and central focus of the learning process. Similarly, Boal interpreted the constructivist approach in his work in the necessary role of the participants as active *spect-actors* rather than passive spectators. This role became the crucial ingredient in his process of thought and action.

Despite the potential significance of Boal's ideas for teacher education, there is scant research referring to the use of Boal's pedagogy in teacher education. This study is undertaken in an effort to develop a deeper understanding of this potential.

Subjectivity Statement

Many qualitative researchers acknowledge that research is never free from the researchers' biases that are deeply embedded in his or her consciousness. Therefore, it is highly recommended that a researcher, in the beginning of his/her inquiry reflects on his/her subjectivity and brings his/her various biases to the fore as a way of facilitating critical reflections on his/her own research process and to provide the consumers of research with a means of taking those biases and assumptions into account in interpreting the research findings. Therefore, I will here describe my personal and professional journey up to the point where I became interested in these
specific issues in teacher education, and at last, decided to work on these research questions as my dissertation study.

Let me start with my very purposes of research. Why do I want to do research? As Maxwell (1996) asserted, personal values and identity are important factors in qualitative research. I am interested in developing a holistic understanding of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed by listening to the participants' experiences and the meanings they discover from their experiences. Further, I am interested in taking this learning to consider the applications of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in teaching and teacher education. I chose this research topic because I wanted to do research that helped students to reflect, become aware, and enable them to find their ways of transforming or healing themselves and the world they live in. This desire emerged from my own life experiences.

I was born in Mumbai (Bombay), India, an economically, culturally, and linguistically diverse metro city. By interacting in a society where the gap between the rich/middle class and the poor is very high, I from very early in my life was puzzled by why so many children were out living in the streets. Why were they not in school, when all my friends and I got to be in school?

My experiences growing up and interacting with friends and their families, who followed different religions and often followed different religious practices even though we were Hindus, helped me to believe in secularism. Specifically, I came to believe that there was one God and we human beings have constructed many religions and given Him various names and forms. I came to understand diversity by interacting in a society where many languages were spoken; I became aware of the multiplicity and from my day to day interactions learned to speak the dominant languages I heard. In these interactions, I also learned that not everyone was fluent with a language and learned to use imagination and logic to make sense of the incomplete
conversations I had in those early years. Thus, my experiences growing up helped me to create a vision of a secular society that accepted and appreciated diversity.

I grew up in a large extended family of caring individuals. My parents and other adults were involved with the children in the house (my cousins, sister, and me). It was a warm, comfortable, loving community. Through my interactions here, I learned to trust, care, and build relationships. I grew to value personal connections with my work and my world.

My school was based on the Gandhian philosophy that fostered all round development and encouraged the belief of “serva dharma samai” (all religions are equal) and focused on reaching out to the poor by raising funds and volunteering our services, time, and energy. In school, we participated in many co-curricular arts-based activities that fostered collaboration, fun, and meaningful learning. However, the world of arts rarely penetrated the classroom walls as a pedagogical tool. The teaching and learning environment in class included preparation for a teacher-created test at the end of the year. The classroom culture taught me that the teacher was the authority and our task was to regurgitate the learned materials and answer the tests at the end of the year. I detested rote memorization and often was unable to understand why I had to reproduce the same words from the text to help my teacher understand that I “knew” the concept. I rarely memorized and I never made in the top three ranks we got at the end of each year. Luckily, I came from a family that was more process-oriented than grade conscious. My parents encouraged me to do my best, create deeper value in what I was doing rather than learning only to pass a test. In those years, I wondered, what the value of memorized facts was and questioned why the arts-based activities that I had so much fun with could not be a part of my classroom environment.
For my undergraduate degree, I attended a college that strongly believed in service to the community. Philosophically, this seemed a natural extension of my school. Here, I received my undergraduate degree in Human Development. It was in this environment that I blossomed as a learner. Here, I came in touch with many different teachers. The ones that I remember and was influenced by the most were those who created learning environments that were interactive, discussion-based, learner and learning-centered. These teachers fostered my identity as a knower, capable of constructing knowledge. We listened, shared, questioned, collaborated, and supported each other. My experiences in the classrooms where I was an active participant helped me to understand the value of active learning and knowing. I was motivated, engaged, and worked with my peers to develop deeper insights. The teachers who created interactive learning environments encouraged us to question and search for our own answers rather than only give us their answers. Through these experiences I began to develop my teaching philosophy that engaged students as active learners and constructors of knowledge. I came to understand that learning environments were not created by chance but were created based on the epistemologies of the teachers. I further learned that effective learning environments were built when teachers connected with their students and started from where the students were.

The classroom discourses often led themselves to facilitating critical reflections and deepening my understanding of secularism, diversity, and solidarity. It was through the courses like Women in India, Contemporary Society, Contemporary Issues in Developing Society, Family and Child Welfare, and doing my fieldwork in schools that catered to children from the underprivileged society; I came to deeply consider issues of democracy and social justice.

My beliefs of secular India were questioned as I became aware that religion, language, and social class in reality differentiated people, categorizing them in specific ways. For the first
time in my life, I saw India including Mumbai, being torn apart by communal riots in 1993. I was shocked by listening to the personal accounts of my friends and the news that filtered into my house through television and newspapers. Why did people engage in such inhuman acts in the name of God? Where in The Quran or in The Gita, has God asked us to kill other fellow human beings to protect our religion? Was this the idea of religion I wanted to identify with? I came to believe in human solidarity, oneness of all, and connections between human beings.

In my effort to bring together my emerging teaching philosophy and my commitment to work for a socially disadvantaged group, I chose to work as a Child Development Officer in The Vatsalya Foundation, a project for children on the streets in Mumbai. My work in Vatsalya grew and became more meaningful as I developed a deeper understanding of the children and their life circumstances. I worked as a team member in one of the centers that offered a non-formal education program and reached out to the children (3-14 years) who lived with their families on the streets in kuccha houses (huts made with poles and a plastic sheet over it). I soon learned that many of the children coming to the center though enrolled in formal schools, rarely attended school. The non-motivating classroom environment and their own life circumstances both pushed and pulled the children out of mainstream education. Many children stayed out of school as they contributed to meet the financial needs of the family or stayed at home so that their parents could earn a livelihood. The children loved to come to the center however they were not very regular, and even if they did come they were not inhibited from leaving, if the activities were not engaging. In my team we found ourselves challenged to address the educational needs of these students. What do we teach? How do we teach? How can we create a learning environment that is engaging and motivating for the children? I focused on working with teachers to construct a culturally and linguistically relevant curriculum. Through these
experiences, I began to grasp the life situations these children faced and discovered the overwhelming need to use creative activities for engaging these children who had little motivation to read and write. From them, I learned that intrinsic motivation is felt when one sees an authentic and a relevant purpose in what one is learning. I also gained an appreciation of the value of life in difficult situations. I came to understand that children growing up in difficult situations were able to reach their potential in a supportive environment. Our days in Vatsalya were often long and hard. Even though change was a slow process, we learned to ask difficult questions and then find alternative ways so that we could reach out to the children on the streets. I learned the lessons of hope and searching for possibilities in situations that were constraining.

My experiences have heightened my awareness to issues of power and of building learning environments that are more inclusive. I am likely to believe that challenging situations can be worked through, and that change though slow is possible. In addition, I also came to believe that the process of change is a collaborative unfolding. My purpose here is not to ‘fix’ anyone by following some abstract set of norms but to create safe spaces and to open doors to engage in critical dialogues, reflect on our assumptions, and consider alternative possibilities based on what each person brings to the table and where each person would like to go. In sum, my purpose is to engage in dialogues that would allow us to be more optimistic, open-minded, and accepting of self and the multiple views.

Through all these varied experiences, I came to believe that the purpose of education was to create awareness that motivated us to question, reflect, and consider possibilities. Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed brought alive my desire to work with a pedagogy that was arts-based, student centered, and helped to initiate dialogues that addressed issues of social justice and facilitated building democratic learning environments. I came to understand that one always
had a choice to give power away or to use their power to not to be a victim. Choice creates freedom, and freedom opens our hearts and minds to venture into the unknown and search for possibilities and takes actions that reflect our integrity. This is the main reason why I am interested in looking at the present research study. Since building democratic learning environments is something that many teachers are moving towards both in United States where I am currently pursuing the degree, and India, I believe that my inquiry will be worthwhile and contribute to educational literature in both countries.

I acknowledge that my subjectivity plays a critical role not only in selecting my research topic, but also in elaborating my theoretical framework for this research study. I think that the theoretical background of a study helps in building up my own understanding of the phenomenon under investigation and it provides a foundation from which I will be able to argue that the suggested inquiry is necessary, legitimate, and important.

My way of looking at the use of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed with student teachers is influenced by critical theory, feminist perspectives, and social constructivism. It is not by accident that I have selected these three theories for my research. Through my experiences of growing up in a metropolitan city, experiencing life, becoming aware of the social inequities, experiencing learning environments that were active and student-centered, I have come to believe that those theories offer me a vision of nurturing a world where solidarity, compassion, empathy, respect, equity, sharing of power, searching for possibilities, dialogue, and agency are valued. Further in my courses here at UGA, I had the opportunity to read the works of many researchers, educators, and philosophers. In those moments, the works of Bakhtin, Mary Field Belenky and her group of researchers, Augusto Boal, John Dewey, Paulo Freire, Maxine Greene, bell hooks, Nel Noddings, Penny Oldfather, and Lev Vygotsky communicated with me and
nurtured my emerging thoughts and feelings. Thus, my theoretical framework was conceived and created from both my experiences and my academic preparation.

**Theoretical Framework**

As stated above, I base my work in social constructivism, feminism, and critical theory. Here, I first explain the specific aspects of these theories which I highlight in my work. This is followed by an explanation of the connections of these theories with Boal’s Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed.

*Social Constructivism*

Social constructivists believed that meaningful learning was constructed through interactions with others within a specific socio-cultural context (Vygotsky, 1978). In addition, social constructivists focused on learning as a process of collaborative sense-making rather than acquiring knowledge that ‘existed’ somewhere outside the learner. Social Constructivists believed that the students had the potential to reach their optimum level through scaffolding by a knowledgeable other. Eisner (1991) explained that all learning should be an aesthetic experience. If knowledge was something a student constructed instead of acquired through transmission and the student/artist was one who gave form and shape to materials or ideas, then the making, constructing, or creating of knowledge was an aesthetic experience, and likewise, the work of art was the creation of knowledge as personal experience.

Social constructivists viewed their students as active participants fully engaged with others in the process of sense-making within a socio-cultural context. Students were believed to be knowers who were capable of sense-making. Belenky et al. (1997) in their study with 130 women found that on the basis of where the individual placed herself in the process of knowing, the knower could be understood on a continuum where one end of this continuum was silence
and the other end was a constructed knower. A silent knower perceived self as incapable of knowing and had little awareness of his or her intellectual capabilities while a constructed knower perceived self as being active and constructing knowledge by integrating both intuitive and logical thoughts. Other forms of knowing that Belenky and her group of researchers identified included a received knower (who learned from receiving the words of the powerful other), a subjective knower (who believed most trustworthy knowledge came from personal experiences and did tend to disregard expertise or rational analysis), a separate knower (who used impersonal standards), and a connected knower (who understood other people's ideas in their terms rather than in their own terms).

Social constructivists believed that they came to know their world by engaging in perspective-taking and empathic-knowing. Perspective-taking was helpful in understanding the world through the eyes of the speaker. Belenky et al. (1997) described perspective-taking as a procedure to understand the different experiences people have, including those that may be very different from ours. Through perspective-taking one could come to know what people thought, and how they went about forming their opinions, ideas, and feelings. Moskowitz (2005) posited that perspective-taking could help in reducing bias and as a result promoted feelings of connectedness between individuals. Perspective-taking skills were believed to foster empathy and sympathy (Bateson, 1991; Belenky et al., 1997) as well as moral reasoning, both of which could help in promoting prosocial behaviors (Moskowitz, 2005).

Like perspective-taking, empathic knowing also built connections. It helped the listener to understand the lived experiences of the other and the reasons that may have led the person to have a particular perception (Jaggar, 1983; Noddings, 1984; Rogers, 1995). Rogers (1995) asserted that empathy was not something one was born with; rather it was learned in an empathic
climate. Personal attributes like acceptance, trust, inclusion, and openness to others fostered our
capacity to build connections and this capacity could further initiate a desire to create change
(Jaggar, 1983). The desire to change in this case was grounded in ethics of care rather than in
ethics of abstract moral standards. Noddings (1984) explained the perception that motivated the
person to bring about a change as follows:

When we see the other's reality as a possibility for us, we must act to eliminate the
intolerable, to reduce the pain, to fill the need, to actualize the dream. When I am in this
sort of relationship with another, when the other's reality becomes a real possibility for, I
care (p. 14).

Thus, teachers who took social constructivists stance were likely to build learning environments
that could be characterized as collaborative, engaging the students in active learning and
constructing knowledge from multiple perspectives. In addition, teachers were more likely to
engage in perspective-taking and empathic knowing to see their students from a holistic
perspective, that is, by understanding their students' physical, emotional, and psychological needs
along with intellectual needs.

Feminist Theories

In a similar vein to social constructivism, feminist theorists like Boxer (1998), hooks
(1994), and Weiler (1988) also emphasized the importance of engaging students as active
learners and encouraged them ask questions, to make connections between materials being
studied and their own lives, and those of others. Boxer (1998) described the purpose of learning
as follows,

The purpose of learning in a feminist classroom is linked both to the personal and the
political, raising ethical issues, rethinking the relationship of reason and affect.
teachers do often focus on such themes as the role of the teacher as nurturer, the problem of exercising authority, and the importance of classroom dynamics, all reflecting the experience of consciousness raising, all germane to student empowerment" (p. 80).

Many researchers from feministic perspectives have adopted the concept of voice as a critical aspect of a feminist classroom. To them voice was not a mere vocal sound but had much more meaning and weight in our lives. Belenky and her colleagues (1997) argued that having or speaking one's voice had existential and epistemological meaning. Therefore, classroom spaces needed to be designed to allow these voices to interact with each other and through these on-going dialogues that new knowledge was constructed and identities emerged. Greene (1995) reminded us that the current challenge for educators was to find ways to fashion voices in a pluralistic classroom as marginalized students were often silenced and their voices were probably lost in a classroom. Butler (1991) proposed to respond to the issue of being silenced by transforming the way in which we conceptualized ourselves and the world. She called for replacing individualism with a "sense of communality and interdependence" (p. 75).

Thus, from a feminist perspective, teaching pre-service students was a purposeful and a political act that enabled the pre-service students and the teacher to build a community that collaboratively engaged in consciousness raising and promoted student empowerment to enable the students to reach closer to the goals they had set for themselves.

*Critical Theory*

Critical theory examines the current structure of society, in which dominant socioeconomic groups exploit and oppress subordinate groups such as ethic minorities, working class people, and women (deMarrais &LeCompte, 1998). Critical theorists believed that certain groups in any society were privileged over others, constituting an oppression that was most
forceful when subordinates accepted their social status as natural, necessary, and inevitable (McLaren & Giarelli, 1995). Yet critical theorists believed and were committed to the development and evolvement of a culture that supported the empowerment of culturally marginalized and economically disenfranchised by transforming those hegemonic structures that seek to perpetuate undemocratic life. The question for critical pedagogists then was how we move the young to break with the taken-for-granted and move them towards what might be.

Freire (1971) in his book *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* opposed the banking approach to education. In a classroom, he specifically perceived the teacher-student relationship as being oppressive where the teachers perceived themselves as reservoir of knowledge and students were the recipients. He advocated for a classroom environment where the hierarchical teacher-student relationship was transformed by teachers becoming students and students becoming teachers to create a relationship where teachers were allies and the power was shared. In such a classroom, the students were perceived as being active, having agency, engaging in critical reading of their world, and learning through problem-posing and problem-solving.


Critical theorists believed that critical reflections help in creating awareness of ourselves, our world, and our relationships to the world we live in. Freire (1998) asserted that becoming aware and naming the profound tensions we live in, in turn led us to the radical nature of hope
and agency—a knowing that I am able to intervene to improve. The establishment of genuine inclusion and caring communities helped student teachers to develop a ‘shared foundational purpose to support each other’s well-being’ (Wlodkowski & Ginsberg, 1995, p. 63) that was informational and emotional, yet still developmental. This sense of social agency offered an active element of culture (Ratner, 2000) where one felt acceptance, ownership, and empowerment through feelings of enhanced self-efficacy to act, speak, and make choices freely (Deci & Ryan, 1991; Goddard, Hoy, & Hoy, 2004). Johnston (2004) asserted that agency was a fundamental human desire and it emerged from awareness that the environment was responsive to our actions. When people felt that there was no relationship between what they did and what happened, they felt depressed and helpless.

Thus, from a critical theorist’s perspective a view of the student was active, critical reader of the world, engaging in problem-posing, generating possibilities and as having agency to make choices. According to this view, the student not only had a critical mind to make wise decisions but also had a sense of agency to put those possibilities in action.

Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed [PTO]

Influenced by Paulo Freire and his ideas of democratic education, Augusto Boal developed experimental theater approach to engage individuals in understanding the social and personal problems and to search for their solutions (Boal, 2005). The specific aspects of Social Constructivism, Feministic theory, and Critical theory discussed in the earlier section reflected in Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed converge with notions of ways of knowing, views of learner, feeling agency and empowerment.

Boal (2006) asserted that we came to know our world through perceptions. There are three levels of perception namely: the information, knowledge and tactical decision-making, and
the ethical consciousness. The first level the person engaged in sense-making by simply receiving the information. At the second level, the individuals were capable of taking creative decisions and seeking alternative decisions to respond to their perception. At the third level, the individuals made choices by making ethical considerations and understanding the feelings of the other. Boal (2006) believed that theater enabled the person to use thinking and feelings as legitimate pathways to knowing. It engaged the person to feel through their senses, think with their intelligence to make sense of social reality, and then take ethical decisions.

In his pedagogy, he viewed the spectators not as passive observers but as active critical thinkers capable of sense-making and problem-solving. He called them spect-actors and developed a type of theater caller Forum Theater where the cast would stop a performance and invite members of the audience to provide or demonstrate new ways of playing out the story onstage. No suggestion was better than another; however some may be more workable in particular contexts. The theater space became a safe place for rehearsing or learning future actions. Seeing alternatives and perceiving that these alternatives may work in my context could help the spect-actors to feel empowered and has a sense of agency.

Boal (2006) explained that PTO was an ethical theater where it was in the doing that the person's identity was created. The lessons of solidarity learned in the safe theatrical environment could be taken further as a collaborative action proposed or being done by the community.

In this way, Boal's work intertwined with the philosophic ideas I had explored in Social Constructivism, Feminist theory, and Critical theory. I leave the realm of theoretical framework with Maxine Greene's (1995) words guiding me. She wrote,
The pedagogies we devise ought to provoke a heightened sense of agency in those we teach, empower them to pursue their freedom, and perhaps, transform to some degree their lived worlds (p. 48).
CHAPTER 2

REVIEW OF LITERATURE: THE BACKDROP

The unveiling of reality falls within the space for possible change in which progressive and politically clear educators must operate. I believe that this space for change, however small, is always available. – Paulo Freire (1971).

The purpose of this chapter is to situate the present study in the available research. The selection of the topics to be discussed in this chapter is guided by the rationale of this study. Here, I provide an overview of the research done in the area of reflection in teacher education, the use of the arts in education, and the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed to situate the present study. This chapter is divided into seven sections: Introduction, Reflection in Teacher Education, Types of Reflective Practices, Outcomes of Reflection, Epistemologies and Reflective Thoughts, Use of Arts in Education, Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed, Connections with My Work.

Introduction

Liston and Zeichner (1987) and Zeichner (1983) argued that teacher development, teacher learning, and teacher empowerment have become important aspects in teacher education if teacher educators were to meet our visions of reaching out to and teaching everybody’s children. For these critical educators, the goal of such a reflective and critically-oriented teacher education program was “certainly not moral inculcation, but rather a reflective examination of educational goals and alternative courses of action” (Liston & Zeichner, 1987, p. 121). Noddings (1992) reminded us that in our pursuit of social justice our commitment to the quality of relationships (i.e., an ethic of care) is not abandoned and the connection to ‘everyone’ is not
forgotten. Reflection was an integral element in teacher education (Conway, 2001; Jay & Johnson, 2002; Korthagen & Vasalos, 2005, Liston & Zeichner, 1987), and teacher educators were constantly developing reflective practices that would engage pre-service teachers in critical reflections.

Reflection in Teacher Education

There has been a long tradition in teacher education of using reflective teaching for preparing reflective teachers. While the term “reflective teaching” is interpreted and defined in numerous ways and is often placed in varied conceptual orientations. Calderhead (1989) argued that terms such as “reflective practice,” “inquiry-oriented teacher education,” “reflection-in-action,” “teacher as researcher,” “teacher as decision-maker,” “teacher as problem-solver,” all included some notion of reflection in the process of professional development. For example, historically, Dewey (1933) had broadly defined reflection as “active, persistent and careful consideration of any belief or supposed form of knowledge in the light of the grounds that support it and the further conclusions to which it tends” (p. 9). For Dewey, reflection was a conscious process that involved focusing on one's underlying beliefs and knowledge within the context in which these beliefs and knowledge were constructed and being mindful about how it may influence future thoughts and actions.

Dewey (1933) included the following elements in reflective thinking: “(a) a state of perplexity, hesitation, doubt; and (b) an act of search or investigation directed toward bringing to light further facts which serve to corroborate or to nullify the suggested belief” (p. 9). In addition, Dewey (1933) believed that the actions that emerged from reflection were intelligent actions as opposed to impulsive actions. Furthermore, these actions promoted attitudes like open-mindedness, responsibility, wholeheartedness and reasoning.
Schön (1983, 1987) developed the concept of reflection-in-action which was derived, in part, from Dewey's concept of reflection. He articulated the meaning he attributed to reflection-in-action in his book *Educating the Reflective Practitioner* (1983) as follows:

Reflection-in-action is a reflective conversation with materials of a situation. Each person carries out his own evolving role, listens to the surprises ('back talk') that result from earlier moves, and responds through online production of new moves that give new meanings and directions to the development of the artifact (p. 31).

For Schön (1983), reflection-in-action was an iterative thinking process where the person, through interpretations and re-interpretations, was constructing new meanings and was planning new actions in light of the new awareness. Schön (1983) emphasized that understanding new views was not enough. The individual's adequacy and utility must still be discovered in action and this 'reflection-in-action necessarily involved experimentation' (p. 141), thus engaging the person to use higher order thinking and interpretive skills in order to analyze and solve problems of self and others (Calderhead, 1989).

Habermas's (1973) work offered another source of influence on the concept of reflective teaching. His concept of reflection as self determination had been used to support action-research or the teacher-as-researcher stance. Calderhead (1989) explained the connection between Habermas's ideas on reflection with teacher-as-researcher stance as follows:

[For Habermas] reflection is viewed as a process of becoming aware of one's context, of influence of societal and ideological constraints on previously taken-for-granted practices, and gaining control over the direction of these influences... [In teacher-as-researcher stance] teachers gain greater professional self-determination through
heightened awareness and understandings that accompany research on their own situation (p. 44).

Van Manen (1977) proposed three levels of reflections. The first level, technical reflection, is concerned with the efficiency and effectiveness of means to achieve certain ends, which they are not open to criticism or modification. The second, practical reflection, allows for open examination not only of means, but also of goals, the assumptions upon which they are based, and the actual outcomes. This kind of reflecting, in contrast to the technical form, recognizes that meanings are not absolute, but are embedded in, and negotiated through language. The third level, critical reflection, as well as including emphases from the previous two, also called for considerations involving moral and ethical criteria, making judgments about whether professional activity is equitable, just and respectful of persons or not. In addition, critical reflection locates any analysis of personal action within wider socio-historical and politico-cultural contexts.

Drawing from these different perspectives, I believe that insights gained from reflective practices help the student teachers to perceive teaching as a thoughtful and an intelligent action which required an ability to analyze one's work and learn from one's experiences. The awareness created from this practice could guide future activities. In this sense, reflective thinking could promote intrinsically directed professional development.

More recently, Korthagen and Vasalos (2005) have focused on the notion of core reflection. The focus of core reflection involved analyzing one's own personality structures, thus facilitating and constraining the interactions in a given context.

In core reflection, however, there is less emphasis on an extensive analysis of the problematic situation, because recent psychological research shows that this leads to a
narrowing of available action tendencies: the person is linked to think within the boundaries of the problematic framework (Fredrickson, 1998; Levenson, 1992), and in this way often loses contact with the deeper levels inside. In core reflection, the focus is much more on (re)establishing this contact, and on creating room for new possibilities (p. 54).

By stepping back, the teachers may become aware of what they would like to do in situations that constrain them. Sheldon, Williams, and Joiner (2003) claimed that this awareness of having a choice played an important role in a person's development because it contributed to personal freedom.

Types of Reflective Practices

Teacher educators use diverse techniques to engage student teachers in reflective activities. These activities have a narrative character that help the student teachers to deeply examine their experiences and facilitate further learning and inquiry (Korthagen & Wubbels, 2001). Some of the narratives were developed orally or in writing and could be structured or unstructured activities. According to Rogers (2001), Dewey suggested the use of language (e.g., enlarging student's vocabulary), the use of observation and recitation to help students engage in reflective practice in their habit of mind.

Schön (1987) drew on the examples of conservatories of music and dance and of studios of art and design to suggest that professional education ‘combine the teaching of applied science with coaching in the artistry of reflection-in-action’ (p. xii). In his view, the role of a coach or a mentor was to develop habits of reflective practice by establishing a mutual dialogue that involved processes such as listening, telling, demonstrating, and imitating. Similarly, Seibert and Daudelin (1999) advocated the role of a coach or a mentor to guide proactive reflection among
managers. Loughran (1996) also advocated for the role of a mentor in developing habits of reflective thought in students. He modeled for the students by thinking out loud in the classrooms about his pedagogy and choices.

Many researchers and educators have studied the use of structured experiences to foster reflection in students. Rogers (2001) argued that the lived experiences offered a framework for guiding individuals in expanding their analysis and synthesis of challenging situations and of integrating their awareness to enhance their professional effectiveness. Such experiences may be used by groups or individuals. Loughran (1996) suggested the use of reflective journals. Brookfield (1990) argued for the use of critical incidents while Richert (1990) and Walker (1985) promoted the use of portfolios. A different approach to fostering reflection was proposed by Langer (1989). She believed that exploring multiple perspectives in the middle of challenging situations could facilitate mindfulness and, in turn, enhances the student teachers’ professional effectiveness.

In the more recent past, Korthagen & Vasalos (2005) proposed a model that allowed students to include thinking, feeling, wanting, and acting as compared to a strong focus only on rational analysis. They proposed a set of questions the teachers could ask to understand their own thoughts and feelings and those of their students. The nine questions they identified were as follows: What was the context? What did you want? What did you do? What were you thinking? How did you feel? What did pupils want? What did pupils do? What were the pupils thinking? And how did the pupils feel?

From this review, I came to understand that there are many tools available for reflection. Many of these tools relied on oral or written expression, however, there was not much being researched on using theater and drama as a tool for reflection. Theater gave learning a context
and helped the individual to understand the dilemma from the perspective of the other by putting themselves in their shoes. In this sense, theater provided opportunities for engaging in an embodied, experiential learning environment.

Outcomes of Reflection

The most commonly discussed outcome in the research literature on reflection was learning. Loughran (1996) reasoned that reflection focused the individual’s attention from a meaningful inquiry to the experience itself and the awareness thus generated promoted learning. Mezirow (1991) agreed with Loughran and added that reflection could enable individuals to change their habits of expectation and, as a result, develop more accurate perceptions. Langer (1989) and Mezirow (1991) both agreed that people benefited from developing mindfulness. In addition, Langer (1989) asserted that the individual may perceive increased capacity for change, greater freedom for alternative action, and greater creativity. The awareness opened doors to possibilities of alternatives, and the seeing possibilities and having choices created feelings of freedom. Schön (1983) posited that reflection-in-action resulted in formation of a new frame or theory which guided future actions. Korthagen & Vasalos (2005) asserted that the process of core reflection was as enjoyable as it was rewarding because the person could get in touch with his/her inner potential (especially his/her emotional side) and use his/her emotions, needs, feelings, and values as a basis for future action.

Thus, the research on outcomes of reflection fostered the link between reflective thinking and learning. Recognizing the value of reflective thinking and noticing the dearth of literature on the use of arts-based activities as a reflective tool helped me to focus my research on the outcomes experienced by the pre-service teachers in their participation in Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed.
Reflection does not occur in a vacuum but is guided by the individual's relationship with the known. Social constructivists stated that meanings are constructed within the context in which the specific event occurs and within the framework, the knowers use to understand the event. For example, if as a teacher, you are a received knower, in your reflection the stance you may take is that of being a transmitter of knowledge while if you are a constructed knower, then you may see the role of a teacher as a facilitator. To expand on the notions of ways of knowing, I turn to the works of Belenky et al. (1997) who explained that people came to know in different ways—by receiving the word of a powerful other, by relying on personal feelings, by using impersonal external standards, and/or by empathizing with the other. Each of these ways of knowing created an awareness of self and world for the person doing the inquiry, and this knowledge, in turn, created a sense of self. Individuals who used empathy as a lens to understand the other were able to enter into perspectives that may be different from their own. Their sense of self may emerge through acts of connections with others and care (hooks, 1994; Lawrence-Lightfoot, 2000; Noddings, 1992). This understanding of interweaving of voice, self, and mind (Belenky et al., 1997) had motivated me to understand student teachers' epistemologies in this research.

Use of Arts in Education

What makes an experience stand out from the flux of life is that something in particular happens that surprises us through this, if we take what happens seriously, transforms us. In other words experiences re-members us, requires us to be different person in a different place. Thus experience (and a good lesson) does not end in a closure, but rather in openness (Field & Latta, 2001, pp. 889-890).
It can be noted that the arts have the potential to break our attention from the routine, the ordinary, and the merely repetitive. Greene (1997) emphasized the following:

Art forms that not only awakens teachers to all sorts of new perspectives upon the lived world, past and present, but also provides occasions for authentic active learning of the kind that is paradigmatic for the learning excellent teachers are supposed to make possible for the young (p. 33).

The arts have the potential to promote personal agency, passion, imagination, and the making of meaning (Eisner, 2003; Greene, 1995).

The role of the arts, though advocated in teaching and teacher education, is rarely researched in this area. From my search, I noticed that the role of arts is widely researched in the field of elementary education. Drawing from this literature, many have argued the value of the arts in education, including legitimizing thinking and feeling as pathways to knowing.

After reviewing the available literature on the value of the arts and aesthetics in schools, I synthesized the literature into five broad contributions that the arts and aesthetics could make to learning and child development. The first contribution I discuss is the role of the arts and aesthetics in promoting unity of mind, body, and soul. Secondly, the arts and aesthetics play a significant role in enhancing socio-emotional development in children. Thirdly, the arts offer potential for expanding children's mind. Fourthly, the arts and aesthetics are likely to promote multiple ways of learning; and finally the arts help in establishing the development of a democratic society. Each of these contributions is discussed in detail.

First, arts and aesthetics provided children with learning experiences that engaged the children in holistic development including their minds, hearts, and bodies (Dickinson, 2001; Easton, 1997; Heath & Roach, 2002; Steiner, 1995; Upitis, 2003). Art experiences encouraged
students to engage with the learning material at emotional, physiological, and intellectual levels. Embodying an experience and learning from it is likely to help in creating a unified body and mind that may deeply engage with the material at hand. The arts helped to engage children who were hard to reach (Heath & Roach, 2002).

Secondly, the arts could play a significant role in enhancing children's socio-emotional development (Crawford, 2004; Eisner, 1997; Fox & Goodheart, 2001; Greene, 2000; Stevens, 2002). Specifically children learned to express their emotions, to become aware of their routine and robot-like life, to challenge the taken-for-granted, and to imagine a world that could be otherwise (Boal, 2003; Caroll, 1997; Freire, 1971). Children collaborated with one another as they began to become interested in understanding each others' interpretations of the world. The arts provided children with the opportunity to collaborate, to engage in perspective taking and empathy building, and to pursue a common dream (Botstein, 1998; Greene, 1995; Mullen, 2002). Thus, the arts provided opportunities for students to use feelings and thinking as pathways to knowing.

Empathy and perspective taking required children to develop a feeling of caring. Developing an ability to sense what was happening in the other person's life and then ask, “What are you going through” (Noddings, 1998). Caring required being attentive to the people around. In order to care, children needed to be able to look outside of themselves--to look at the world in a way where they could let the outside in and the inside out. Imagination could help in perspective taking and in building a caring environment. Caring helped children to understand others in their incompleteness.

Thirdly, arts were likely to play a significant role in expanding one's 'mind.' Eisner (1997) distinguished between the brain and the mind. According to him, “Brains, in contrast to minds are
biological—they are given by nature. Minds are cultural—they are the result of experience (p. 348).

Therefore, each artistic creation the child made represent the child's experiences that may have led to the creation. There was a connection between the content and the form the art displays and between the time and space in which this art was created (Eisner, 1991). The arts, therefore, had the potential to express what the human mind was capable of thinking and creating based on his/her experiences in a given culture at a given time. To be able to do this, the observer needed to minimize the distance between the knower and the known and the artist needed to minimize the distance between the self and the object (Crawford, 2004). In both situations, the individual was to be a connected knower (Belenky et al., 1997). Art has the potential of helping children to develop empathy by helping them to develop procedures to understand art by gaining access to the mind of the creator. Additionally, arts was seen to have the potential to make learning more accessible to the students, to help them to think as 'knowers' who are capable of having ideas, and to help them act as sense makers (Bolstein, 1998).

Fourthly, arts have the potential to develop multiple intelligences (Eisner, 1997; Gardner, 1999) and use different learning styles (Selwyn, 1993, Upitis, 2003). Arts could create opportunities to learn in multiple ways such as kinesthetic, inter and intra personal, visual and auditory, and musical modes (Eisner, 2003). Arts developed imagination (Cooper, 2004; Greene, 1995). Engaging in arts could serve two purposes—(1) to provide opportunities for children to engage in their preferred learning styles and (2) to help children to feel comfortable with using learning styles that may not be their preferred or dominant ones (Selwyn, 1993).

Finally, arts based pedagogy could help in creating a democratic community (Boal, 2003; Eisner, 1997; Greene, 1995; Mullen, 2002). Such pedagogies provided opportunities for engaging in reciprocal learning where there may be multiple leaders (Mullen, 2002).
Additionally, children could connect school activities with their lived experiences. The arts offered possibilities to reach all children, including the hard to reach children, and could help reduce the hierarchical distance between teachers and children (Heath & Roach, 2002). Children could be enabled to see connections between what they were learning, what they were experiencing in their current lives, and how they could imagine a future that could be otherwise (Greene, 1995; Heath & Roach, 2002).

It was important to note here that the value of the arts in education is extensively researched, and together these findings suggest the value of using the arts in education. After understanding the overall potential of arts in education, the specific arts-based pedagogy I explored in this research was Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed.

**Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed**

Influenced by Paulo Freire’s views on democratic education, Augusto Boal developed the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed to humanize civilization (Freire, 1998). Specifically, the Theater of the Oppressed provided an aesthetic means for people to analyze their past in the context of their present and to subsequently invent their future without passively waiting for it. Theater of the Oppressed offered a safe space for people to come together to rehearse for reality and restore a dialogue among human beings (Boal 2003; 2006).

In a safe environment, by participating in various theater games, teachers and students may have the opportunity to reflect on themselves, their thoughts, their feelings, their sense of agency for alternative actions, and the possible effects their actions may have on the others. Boal (2003) believed that through Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed, awareness could be heightened. It was our awareness of being ‘unfinished’ that made us educable and motivated us to be seekers of knowledge and methods of knowing (Freire, 1998).
The oppressions were often embodied so for an individual to feel liberated the response also must be physical (Creel, Kuhne, & Riggle, 2000). Kinesthetic, or embodied knowing, involved tuning in, responding to, and trusting our bodies as well as being in tune with their needs, signals, and innate wisdom. On the other hand, Freire (1998) asserted that, as humans, we were conditioned and our conditioning limited the possibilities we made available for ourselves. For Freire (1998), conscientization, was a process of being in the world and being with the world, is a process of deepening our awareness of our world and of the demands of human consciousness to develop our capacity for epistemological curiosity. In this sense, Boal (2003, 2006) stated that participation in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed could promote awareness so that we may, more deeply, observe what we see, listen to what we hear, and feel what we touch. Being in the moment, creating, and re-creating experiences could bring experiences back to life and, as a result, make the participation more alive and relevant. This awareness could pave roads for future actions.

*Image Theater and Forum Theater*

The two specific techniques that I explored in this research were Image Theater and Forum Theater. Image theatre consisted of a series of games and exercises in which the actors created these images by molding their bodies as if they were clay in order to express the image in a realistic or a symbolic form (Boal, 2003). In a word-few environment, the images unveiled the various societal and cultural images, feelings, oppressions, dreams, and experiences of participants (Boal, 2003). When different images created through Image Theatre were put in a story that described an unresolved oppression and this story was then presented to a group to begin a dialogue, a Forum Theatre came into existence.
Forum Theatre was a theatrical game where participants chose to enact an unresolved oppressive situation (Boal, 2003). In an ideal situation, the actors and the spect-actors both had experienced or have familiarity with the oppression that is unfolded through the medium of theatre. The purpose of having familiarity with the oppression was to help spect-actors to identify with the oppression and to generate as many different alternative solutions as possible (Boal, 2003).

The process of Forum Theatre includes several steps. The first was creating text from one's lived experiences. In the second step, the story was rehearsed by the participants. In the third step the play was enacted in front of an audience. This would be a “model” play where the entire play was enacted in full length. After this, the spect-actors (the audience members) were asked to say STOP and then join in the process of problem-solving by enacting their alternative possibility or their intervention. The audience was asked if they agreed or disagreed with the suggested possibility. The play was enacted again and different spect-actors were encouraged to come up to try their interventions.

Boal (2003) called the facilitator of this theatrical game a ‘Joker’. The roles of the joker were to begin the session with some ‘warm ups,’ explain Theatre of the Oppressed, narrate the experiences of Forum shows, and set ground rules. Boal (2003) asserted that the ‘Joker’ played an important role in facilitating the game between the actors and the spect-actors. Additionally, after each alternative solution was presented, the ‘Joker’ checked with the audience about the feasibility of the solution in real life. This was intentionally done to provoke discussion and to lead to further interventions (Bowman, 1997; Day, 2002). However, the “Joker” and the rules were not fixed entities. They could be changed depending on the wishes of the audience.
Thus, Image Theater and Forum Theater created a platform for individuals to come together to share their desires, dreams, challenges, and constraints.

*Research on Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed*

To more clearly understand the possible potential of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in teaching and teacher education, I searched for available research in this area. From this search that I found how little research has been conducted on this pedagogy researched in teaching and teacher education. I explain the few research findings I found in this area. I first share the outcomes of the research conducted with students and then describe the research in the context of teacher education.

Two research studies were found in which Boal's Theater was used with students in a school. Day (2002) worked with secondary school students to address issues of refugees at school in London. Sanders (2004) worked with inner city adolescent students to address issues of racism. The outcomes of these studies are explained below.

Day (2002) conducted a qualitative study to investigate the experiences and interactions between the participants of a Forum Theatre. The study was conducted in three secondary state schools. The schools were ethnically diverse. Students and their teachers participated in approximately an hour and a half long workshop where the students participated in Forum Theater. The theater company presented a play that addressed the issues of homelessness and refugee children in school to the students and their teachers. After the play was performed once, the students and their teachers were invited to generate alternatives to address the problematic situation. The time was divided into five phases as follows: introduction of the joker and the theater company, the presentation of the play, brief response-based conversation between the joker and the students, group discussion where the actors talked with the students and asked them
to consider feelings of the characters and consider what they would do in this character's situation, and the invitation to students to participate in the drama as spect-actors. In her findings, Day (2002) reported that students were able to empathize with the protagonist and think and feel with the character to create alternative solutions. Students were stimulated to evaluate and re-evaluate their social and moral values as an outcome of participating in the Forum Theatre. Day concluded that through role playing students developed empathy and engaged in finding alternative solutions. Furthermore, participation in PTO encouraged the students to become moral agents in their own lives.

A narrative of his experience was published by Sanders (2004) which revealed similar findings. Sanders worked with innercity adolescent students in a community-based pedagogical and theatrical project where actors, teachers, writers, storytellers, and musicians collaborated to provide experiences that would normally be a part of a formal schooling for these adolescents. Students participated in Image Theater and Forum Theater where they were asked to create images from their own experiences of racism. This experience was followed by the creation of a skit for the Forum Theater. The Forum Theater was followed by a discussion on racism and sexism. From his observations, Sanders (2004) noted that Forum Theatre helped students gain a deeper understanding of racism and feel what it could be like to be oppressed. In addition, the creative writing teacher noted a change in students' writing after the students had finished the theater-forum experience. It was noted that the students, through this experience, developed empathy and began to see themselves as agents for social change “where they had the ability and the power to stop hate and establish change’ (Sanders, 2004, p. 99).

In addition, to the research with students in schools, there is evidence of a few research studies conducted with students in higher education. Burgoyne et al. (2005) conducted a
A qualitative research study to examine TO practices from the participants' perspectives. Fifteen graduate and undergraduate students enrolled in a course that was designed to teach TO techniques at the University of Missouri-Columbia in Fall 2000. The participants recorded their reactions to the incident in journals. Their journal entries served as the main source of data. Their findings revealed that the participants became more aware of options regarding actions to take in oppressive situations. Through their experiences, the researchers also learned the challenges of using TO and recommended emphasizing respecting each other despite the differing views to prevent feelings of being unheard or not accepted in the group.

Creel, Kuhne, and Riggle (2000) studied the use of Boal's Theater with students who attend the two-year urban college. The students in this program came from working class and the working poor family backgrounds. The students worked and studied at the same time, and the majority worked for over 30 hours a week. Many were first generation college students and the majority were non-native speakers of English. They participated in Boal's Rainbow of Desire activities to overcome their writing anxiety.

The instructors used the 'cops in the head' to help students understand their internal editors which create writing anxieties. The group also participated in theater games like Colombian Hypnosis and Circle of the Knots. Finally, the students engaged in Forum Theater. TO brought individual anxieties into a public space and provided new insights to the students and the instructors. TO activities provided students and instructors with a space in which they could direct the course of action in meaningful and constructive ways.

Attanucci (2003) reported her use of Forum Theater in her undergraduate course named Psychological Theories and Women's Lives to address a student's report of her friend feeling threatened at a school where she was teaching. Reflecting on the experience, Attanucci reported,
The students' experiences and insights should shape new policies and procedures. If not, with more forum theater, students know how to challenge the oppression they see and discover ways to create their own liberation while actively claiming their education (p. 73).

She concluded that Forum Theater has the potential to bring to the surface the unspoken moral dilemmas of the student teachers.

Kaye and Ragusa (1998) used Boal's Theater in their teacher education coursework to develop critical thinking strategies for classroom dilemmas and to articulate diversity in perspective-taking. The students kept reflective journals in which they responded to educational issues presented by readings and classroom discussions. They also participated in various classroom activities that developed critical thinking strategies. The findings revealed that the participatory nature of the theater created a safe space for the researchers and students to reflect on their experiences with manipulation. The process encouraged the students to explore, to question, to find solutions, and to become an active part of the multicultural community.

Rymes, Souto-Manning, and Cahnmann (2005), in their qualitative research study, used Boal's Theater to provide academic and social support to bilingual teachers. The purpose of this study was to analyze the discourse among the minority, bi-lingual pre-service and in-service teachers. To foster awareness and reflexive practice the group met bi-annually and, in this set up, used Boal's Image Theater and Forum Theater. In the small group, the members selected one story for creating a play. The participants were encouraged to narrate stories that related to oppression. Their findings suggest that awareness that language tools shape individual relationships and having alternatives leave the individual with options to approach the conflict in new ways.
The available research on Boal's Theater in teaching and teacher education are suggestive of the potential of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed, and at the same time, the dearth of the research calls for more evidence-based work in this area.

*What have I Learned from the Inquiry?*

Reading the research studies and the narrative accounts of practitioners/researchers who have used TO in their work has helped me to form my study philosophically and methodologically. I came to understand the potential of PTO in addressing issues of power, injustice, and personal anxieties. I also noticed that most of these practitioners/researchers created spaces for their students to bring their stories to work with.

I learned that many used a workshop format, dividing their time between actively engaging in TO work followed by a discussion. The conversations were an important part of their meetings.

The findings of these studies are suggestive that the participants left the group with considerations that could help them to have more options and have a sense of agency.

Burgoyne et al. (2005) have reported the messiness and the challenges they faced while facilitating TO activities. Building safe environments and maintaining respect for each other are some of the aspects of the learning environment that I will be conscious of in my work.

*Connections with My Work*

The extensive research on reflective thinking in teacher education has well established the importance of reflection in pre-service and in-service teachers' development. Engaging in reflection can enable student teachers to systematically witness themselves in action and consider things that facilitate or restrain them from reaching their goals. However, this awareness opens doors to newer ways of thinking, feeling, and acting.
Though many reflective tools are available, there is little research on the use of the arts to promote reflective practices. Through my research I bring together my passion in the arts as pedagogy and address this gap in literature that I notice by examining the potential of Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in teaching and teacher education.

The research available on the use of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in teaching and teacher education, though scarce, seems very promising. There is little known about PTO as seen through the eyes of the participants; therefore this study offers a unique and important contribution by bringing in the voices of the participants who show some ownership of the inquiry.
CHAPTER 3
RESEARCH METHODOLOGY: STAGE CRAFT

Thinking and writing a chapter on research methodology is like writing a script for a play. The script for this research was guided by my epistemologies, my experiences, my course work, and my visions about research questions and processes. The methodological process, though written here in a linear manner, in reality, was an organic and an iterative process. I explain the process of organic unfolding by describing in this chapter the pilot studies and my learnings from them. I purposefully explain these studies in this chapter, as I believe that the methodology I used in the present study is grounded in my experiences and learnings from these earlier studies. This chapter is organized according to the following sections: Rationale for Collaborative Research, Outcomes from Pilot Studies, Learnings from the Pilot Studies, The Context of the Present Study, Field Entry, Methods, Data Analysis, Time Line, and Format of the Report of the Findings.

Rationale for Collaborative Research

The design of a study is constructed based on the researcher's epistemological assumptions and the purposes of the study. As a constructivist, my view is that knowledge is constructed by the knower. The knowledge construction takes place by interpreting one's lived experiences within a socio-cultural context. One of my own beliefs is that when one is able to share with others the experiences that lead to knowledge construction, the identity of the knower is created and a deeper understanding of human nature is discovered. Since every individual is constantly engaged in interpreting lived experiences, each one is an expert in relation to his/her
own life. It is therefore important to listen and to nurture the voices of others to understand their interpretations of their lived experiences. I acknowledge my participants not as ‘subjects’ of this study but as ‘experts’ and posture myself as a learner of their lives. I believe that voices can be expressed through oral, written, and artistic media. Each of these forms helps to reach into the mind of the knower and understand the world from his/her vantage point. I bring this stance into the forefront by turning to the research participants’ own voices (oral, written, and artistic expression) (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994; Oldfather et al., 1999) in order to understand better their interpretations of their experiences during student teaching and their experiences with the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed.

I believe that there are multiple ways in which the world can be known. Art-based methods offer opportunities for a personal and an experiential language (Botstein, 1998; Greene, 1995). Like words, art helps in understanding the ideas, desires, and emotions of the creator. In this sense, we come to know not only the meaning of the art but also it helps to bring to life the person behind the creation. In addition, we engage in the art to become more aware of, ‘Ourselves and our world, more aware of our inter-subjective predicaments, and then, importantly, to act on our awareness. To act on what we find; to act even with partial consciousness; to act, even with contingent understanding; to act, to be a participant in the world’ (Ayers & Miller, 1998; p. ix).

Another epistemological assumption that I hold is that truth is embedded in a particular context. Thus, my interest is in understanding what happens when student teachers participate in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed. Furthermore, I want to learn more about the potential of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in teacher education. My purpose here is not to test a hypothesis, impose theories, or prove generalizations about student teaching experiences or Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed; on the contrary, my purpose is to deepen my
understanding by listening to the voices of the participants. I therefore position myself as an active listener interested in learning more about the experiences of the participants. Feminist literature recognizes this epistemological position as *connected knowing*. According to Belenky et al. (1997), connected knowing is an epistemological position where the knower believes that truth is ‘personal, particular, and grounded in firsthand experience’ (p. 113). In addition, a connected knower uses empathy to understand the other by believing the other, receiving the other into oneself, and seeing and feeling with the other (Elbow, 1973).

In addition to the researcher’s epistemological position, the purpose of this research further influences the design of this study. I believe that participation in research has the potential to become a rich culture for growth and development for the participants. Patton (2002), Cousins and Earl (1995), and Reason (1994) articulate that growth and development can be often perceived by the participants as an increased sense of being in control of, deliberating about, and reflecting on their own lives and situations. Thus, participation in collaborative research can help participants help themselves by learning to study and report on their own issues and concerns. Patton (2002) argues that participants’ issues and concerns can provide meaningful insights in program evaluation and in considering ways of strengthening it. I believe that including the participants in program evaluation and in program development also has an additional purpose. When the participants’ voices are included to guide program development, the participants’ roles shift from being passive consumers and receivers of a program to active collaborators and co-creators of the program. In this research, the participants became co-researchers as they played a key role in identifying the topics of inquiry to be pursued in each seminar meeting. The process of topic generation was both formal and informal. An example of a formal way of co-researchers’ sharing was a response to my question at the end of each
meeting. The question asked what topic(s) they would like to examine in the next meeting. An informal way of sharing took place in a more spontaneous way during the meeting. I refer to an incident from Seminar Meeting #3 to further explain the informal way of topic generation. In this meeting, Meredith came into class looking very frustrated and she talked about one particular lesson she taught that week. She explained that one student had been interrupting her while she taught. Aura suggested that we could take Meredith's story and enact the situation to understand and to generate alternative ways of thinking. Taking Aura's suggestion and having Meredith's permission, we spent part of the meeting working on the dilemma Meredith had presented for us. Thus, all the topics pursued in the seminar meetings were student teacher led. The topics were informed by their day-to-day experiences in the field and not by my understanding of the literature on teacher preparation. Throughout the seminar meetings the student teachers' engaged with their peers and course instructor in actively reflecting, deliberating on their lived experiences, and searching for ways in which they could be in control of their lives as student teachers. Further, their reflections and deliberations offered insights to the course instructor about the needs of these student teachers and motivated her to consider ways for further mentoring them. The student teachers in turn appreciated their interactions with the course instructor and felt further supported during student teaching. In this way, the research inquiry helped the participants and the course instructor to build a collaborative learning environment.

In keeping with the tradition of qualitative research (Patton, 2002); I entered the field with an open ended question: What happens when pre-service teachers participate in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed? In the spirit of collaborative research, it was intentionally phrased in an open-ended manner, allowing for a wide range of student teachers' experiences in the field. As the data analysis progressed, it became evident that the student teachers brought to the
forefront four key areas in the seminar meetings: knowing self, relationships with their students, their purposes for teaching, and negotiating with traditions. Therefore, the original research question was revised to include the focus the student teachers had brought to the study. The guiding research question was follows: *What happens when pre-service teachers participate in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed?* The specific research questions were as follows:

1. What were the pre-service teachers' perspectives on outcomes of their participation in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed?
2. What potential of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed do preservice teachers see in teaching and teacher education?

**Arts-Based Research**

Philosophically my thinking about arts and arts-based research has been informed by the work of Maxine Greene (1995) and Elliot Eisner (1995). Specifically, Greene's (1995) beliefs about the use of arts for going beyond the taken-for-granted nature of the world, using arts for releasing one's imagination, and generating alternative possibilities had struck me. I came to understand that the world when perceived from this space seemed to be flexible and in-the-making rather than fixed and rigid. Also, arts offered the opportunities for putting one's self into the shoes of the other.

Eisner (1995) referred to use of art in education as providing “coherence, imagery, and particularity” (p. 15). In addition, Greene (1995) argued that “Art offers life; it offers hope; it offers the prospects of discovery; it offers light” (p. 133). In a similar vein, arts-based educational researchers like Barone (2005), Donmoyer (1997) and Eisner (1995) suggested that the value for the arts in educational research is to further shed light on, illustrate, and explain the complexities and ambiguities in educational practices and their consequences. They viewed the purposes of art
stated above to be inherent in the aesthetic experiences. Furthermore, Greene (1995) cautioned us that disregarding hope, freedom, reflectiveness, multiplicities in meanings, and searching for possibilities in an aesthetic encounter may only make teaching of aesthetic experiences pedagogic cannon. If these dimensions are ignored, the results may be to evoke feelings of being locked in a set of objective standards to be reached by the teacher and the students. Therefore, for Greene, art was about releasing, reflecting, repairing, and healing as a result of seeing more in our experiences, hearing more that was not normally unheard before, and becoming conscious of our habituated practices, conventions, and suppressions.

Aesthetic experiences require conscious participation of the individual who attends to the art perceptually, affectively, and cognitively. Eisner (1999) expressed that the perception played a central role in our knowledge of the world. Perception manifests itself in experience and is an outcome of the interactions between the qualities of the environment and the meanings we attribute to those qualities. The experiences tend to become more rich and alive when individuals are able to attend to different qualities and make fine-grained discriminations among complex and subtle qualities. This art of making such perceptual appreciations is what Eisner (1976; 1985) called connoisseurship.

Eisner (1998) believed that connoisseurship is a private act; where connoisseurship is most often is a quiet act of appreciation. However, if social utility is to be enhanced, being a connoisseur is not enough. The situation calls for the educational critic. He defined the roles of an educational critic as follows:

The task of the critic is to perform a mysterious feat well: to transform the qualities of a painting, play, novel, poem, classroom or school, or act of teaching and learning into a
public form that illuminates, interprets, and appraises the qualities that have been experienced (Eisner, 1998; p. 86).

The illuminations, interpretations, and appraisals that Eisner described above are not done in vacuum. These are influenced by our perceptions and therefore every act of criticism is a reconstruction, with possibilities of alternative interpretations (Eisner, 1998). Therefore, for Eisner (1998) the educational critic is first an educational connoisseur.

Eisner and Greene have different views on art in education. Extending the debate further about what can be considered as art work; I present an excerpt from an interview of Maxine Greene with Jonathan Matthews and Bruce Uhrmacher:

Maxine: [At AERA one year, Tom Barone read a fictional essay about education.] Is it right to say that if Tom Barone writes a fiction about a classroom, that we should call it art simply because he used fiction? I impolitely pointed out [at AERA] that Tom Barone is not Leo Tolstoy. You can use the form of fiction, but to say something is a work of art is another cup of tea.

Jonathan: Okay, that's an interesting distinction. So, you feel that art is more of an achievement, perhaps, and Elliot is saying it's a way of knowing or asking?

Maxine: That is really the difference. In my case, aesthetic education has to do with the kind of encounters that Dewey talks about when a work of art becomes an object of your experience and transforms your experience and makes you see things in your experience and the world you never saw before. And I think to get people to attend to that way, to get their lives, their energies into the veneer of a painting by Monet or a novel by Tolstoy, they have to be helped to see. And regardless of this, it's not for us to impose interpretations, but to help students see the differences that are there. I am interested in what are called the works of art and all their diversity, and Elliot is interested, as he said, in the kind of perceiving and kind of feeling and the kind of meaning you get from involving yourself in art media (Matthews & Uhrmacher, 2005; p. 219-220).

While Eisner (1998) advocated for art in education as art can have an experiential, transformative potential, Greene (1995), on the other hand, argues this may not be work of art.

She referred to art work (like painting, literature, theater, and film) as work done by professional
artists. Engaging with the art for Greene is a release of imagination. Greene (1995) believed that educating the imagination, emotions, taste, and sensibilities can ultimately empower the students to read, to name, and to rewrite their own lived worlds.

If we can enable more young persons to arouse themselves to make sense of what they see and hear, and to attend to works in their particularity, they may begin to experience art as a way of understanding. The experience and knowledge gained by this way of knowing opens new modalities for us in the lived world; it brings us in touch with our primordial landscapes, our original acts of perceiving (Greene, 1995; p. 149).

In this sense, Greene (1995) believed that we may begin to experience art as a way of understanding and make work of art meaningful in relation to our own lives. These explorations can initiate dialogues engaging individuals in articulating meanings from their particular vantage points.

As noted above, Greene makes a clear distinction between engaging with works of art and using art as medium of self-expression. Furthermore, the differences in perspectives of Eisner and Greene provide another way to thinking about arts-based research.

Jonathan: What are your thoughts about [Elliot’s] arts-based research?

Maxine: When [Elliot] says “arts-based,” I don’t know what he means by art except, it’s a theater piece, for example. I never could understand why it is called art, that is why I said art with a small a. I accept it like that. I don’t see that it is, in the last analysis, any better than any other qualitative research. It does capture qualities; it does capture nuances that quantitative research misses. But, I can’t see a real important difference between that and qualitative research in general. And then I have all those problems about what you mean by art. They do collages and things like that and I think it’s nice, but it’s not what I would think of as art. Then, of course, I’ve always been in a tight spot, because art won’t in fact, can’t be defined. I know that (Matthews & Uhrmacher, 2005; p. 225).
These differing perspectives raise questions for considerations by qualitative researchers in general and arts-based researchers in particular. What counts as a work of art? Who counts as an artist? Is engaging in art enough to qualify the creator as an artist and the creation as Art? Whose feelings and experiences are being evoked and reported through the art? Whose voices are we hearing? What is the purpose or the outcome of such a research?

Eisner (1998) perceived the arts-based researcher as the artist who reports through the use of arts the kind of perceptions, kind of feelings and meanings evoked from involving oneself in the medium of art. Greene (1995) posited that the purpose of engaging with the arts is not to impose interpretations, but to release imagination to help all of us to see, to feel, and to touch the reality from the perspectives of the other. The aesthetic sensibilities developed through such a knowing helps in receiving the other into one self and attending to the details as presented by them. Aesthetic education for Greene, then, is an encounter where a work of art becomes an object of individuals' experience that transforms the experience and makes them see things in their experiences and in the world in ways they may not have seen before.

In my thinking about arts-based research, I integrate the views of Eisner and Greene. As a researcher, I am the educational connoisseur who is appreciative of what my participants bring to the table, looking for nuances that include listening to emotional bodies (like gestures, facial expressions, tone of voice), use of physical bodies (the postures), and the cognitive bodies (the analytical thoughts). I am also the educational critic who strives to bring forth the participants' engagement with PTO activities by tuning into their evoked perceptions, feelings, and meanings. The aesthetic sensibilities developed through such a knowing helped me, in being open to the participants and understanding their experiences in their world of teaching and learning. Attending to their experiences evoked in me empathy and possibilities.
In summarizing the arts-based forms of data presentations used by narrative-based educational researchers, Barone (2005) includes the following: poetry (Sullivan, 2000), the novel (Dunlop, 1999) novella (Kilbourne, 1998), the life story (Barone, 2000), the short story (Ceglowski, 1997), the ethnodrama (Saldana & Walcott, 2001), autobiography and ‘self-narrative’ (Buttignol, 1997), and readers theater (Donmoyer & Donmoyer, 1995). In addition to these forms, arts-based educational researchers have also begun experimenting with non-linguistic forms of the arts for alternative modes of representing research data in AERA meetings, in journals, and in dissertations and theses.

Path Not Crossed: Challenges and Ambiguities in Arts-Based Educational Research [ABER]

Arts-based researchers are becoming aware that the current political move towards funding scientific educational research that employs randomized clinical trials is likely to influence the future of arts-based research. Barone (2005) pointed out that at this point, we can not know of how such a political movement may possibly influence the future of arts-based research; in the meantime, he called for arts-based researchers to reflect on the promises and potential limitations of arts-based educational research. Barone (2005) offered the following questions for consideration (Some of these questions in the section on limitations of the present study):

1. Issues of fact versus fiction in ABER texts
2. The possibilities of new sorts of audiences for educational research texts, including educational practitioners, policymakers, and the general public
3. Issues regarding the place of the political in educational research
4. The limits and potential of various kinds of representational modalities

5. Further elaboration of the purposes served by ABER and the epistemology that undergirds those purposes.

6. The tensions between the need for quality controls and the democratic impulse to share artistic expressions (Barone, 2005; p. 124)

Barone (2005) offered relevant considerations for this work.

**Case Study**

I view this research as a case study, which has multiple cases within the larger case. According to Stakes, case study is not a methodological choice, but a choice of the object to be studied (Stakes, 1994). Stakes (1994) stated that a study may be named as a case study when it draws attention to the question of what can be learned from a single case. The epistemological inquiry that is the driving question of my dissertation research is as follows: What happens when pre-service teachers participate in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed? This case was bounded within the experiences of student teachers' participating in PTO during one semester. One might also view each participant as an individual case. I developed these for purposes of individual analysis and the conducted cross-case analysis. The uniqueness, the specificity, and the contextual nature of this study created a rich learning environment for engaging in the inquiry and developing an in-depth, comprehensive, and systematic understanding of what happens when pre-service teachers participate in the PTO activities.

To tell this story from the perspective of the student teachers, I began by peeling the layers of the onion. At the core were the experiences and the interpretations of the participants. The second layer included the co-facilitators along with the student teachers, and the tangible and non-tangible qualities they brought into the seminar meetings. Examples of these qualities
include the following: Boalian Theater activities, tacit thoughts, feelings, field experiences, prior experiences with Boalian Theater, personality, cultural comfort, feelings of safety with the pedagogy and with the group members. The third layer included the cultural and academic traditions that we carry consciously and unconsciously. The discourses that guide each of us in our thinking about teaching and learning. In this layer, I also include the qualities like willingness, hope, reaching for the beyond which interacted with the set discourses and allowed for creation of a space where imagination could be nurtured. Change and possibilities could be perceived.

These layers have been separated here for the purposes of clarity in writing. On the research site these layers intersected with each other within each individual but were evident in the stories the participants told about themselves, their relationships with their students, their purposes for teaching, their negotiations with traditions, and ultimately the outcome and potentials they saw for PTO in teaching and teacher education. Each individual case was information-rich and gave depth and robustness to the inquiry.

The cases were created from the data and informed by the multiple sources of data. The properties, categories, and themes were member-checked with the participants and cross-checked among the multiple sources for triangulation until reaching data saturation. I briefly explain this process as an example. While explaining the category of “Feeling of Safety within the Seminar Meeting” I integrated data from the field notes, the transcript of student teachers’ group discussion, watching the video of a session, informally talking with the participants to understand what had happened, and finally asked specific questions in the interview to get a deeper understanding. Informed from all these sources, I wrote about this and shared it with the participants to see if I had got it right from their perspective. The rigor was enhanced through the analysis process.
The process of analysis was inductive and was based on participants’ emic perspectives. The individual cases thus constructed were followed by cross-case analysis. The purpose of the cross-case analysis was to bring together the voices from the independent cases and place them alongside each other to construct the bigger picture. The purpose of this research was not to build a grand theory or to make claims of generalizability, but to explore the question in this specific context, the findings of which can provide a basis for comparison with studies conducted in other contexts. Others can judge the relevance and resonance that these findings have for their particular situations.

Drawing from all these different approaches, this research can be termed as collaborative, arts-based, case study research.

Outcomes from the Pilot Studies

The present study is also guided by my experiences and findings from earlier two pilot studies. These two studies were planned in two different research sites, namely, in a college of education and in an after school program in a middle school. In designing my present study, I drew from the lessons I learned from these studies about using the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed as a research method and the potential of using it in teacher education. First, I briefly describe the time line of the studies followed by the context and the outcomes of the two studies and then I explain how the pilot studies informed the present study.

Time line

Study 1

November 2003 : Boalian theatre workshop with Dr. Betty Franklin in College of Education
January-March 2004 : Individual interviews with the workshop participants; Visit to the Elementary school where Dr. Franklin was using PTO with students.
April 2004 : Participation in the Annual Conference of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in Nebraska. I attended a 3-day workshop on Forum Theater facilitated by Augusto Boal. On-going data analysis.

May 2004 : Presentation of the emerging findings at the GSTEP conference.

**Study 2**

August–December 2004 : Search for a facilitator

January–May 2005 : 10 Sessions facilitated by ‘Robert Owens’ at the after school program with 13 middle school students, individual interviews, on going data analysis.

May–August 2005 : Interview transcriptions and data analysis continued.

August–December 2005 : Data analysis, working towards re-starting Theater Club at the after school program.

**Study 1**

My first pilot study was collaboratively planned and implemented with Dr. Penny Oldfather from November 2003 to May 2004. The purpose of this study was to explore the transformational potential of Boal's Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed for teacher education. The study was conducted in three phases. In Phase 1, Dr. Franklin, an elementary school teacher who uses Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed with K-5 students in an arts-based school in south Georgia, was invited as an expert to facilitate a two-hour workshop with teacher educators and graduate students from a college of education in a Research I University in the southeast United States. Eleven individuals participated in the study. The group was diverse in age, gender, experience, ethnicity, and expertise and at the same time everyone in the group shared a passion for teaching.

Dr. Franklin invited the participants to engage first in warm-up activities and later in creating images by molding their bodies. She selected current images of schooling, images of a
worst moment in school, images of a current United States, and images of love as topics for Image Theater. The workshop was documented using photographs. After the workshop, Dr. Oldfather and I collaboratively interviewed the participants using photographs for stimulated recall. I analyzed the data using the constant comparative method as described by Strauss and Corbin (1998) to understand the experiences of the participants with the pedagogy and their perspectives on the potential of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed for teacher education.

The main finding that emerged from this study was that participation in Boalian Theater had the potential to strengthen relationships. The participants reported that engaging in the activities helped them to become aware of their privileges, aware of the facial expressions of the others, and the ways in which others held their bodies in specific situations. This awareness helped many to see similarities between themselves and the other and evoked feelings of connection. These evoked feelings further helped in strengthening relationships.

Some participants reported that the Boalian activities helped them to reflect on their relationships with their students and they felt connected, as they were able to see their students’ ‘humanness’. This helped them to see their students more fully rather than based on some fixed labels. They reported as a result, feelings of compassion and empathy for their students.

In addition to learning about themselves and their relationships with their students, this experiential learning also helped the participants to grapple with the potential of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in teacher education. They saw its potential for building relationships with their students, for addressing issues related to social justice, and engaging students in fun movement-based activities.

In Phase 2 of the study, Dr. Penny Oldfather and I visited the school where Dr. Franklin worked and we observed her using Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed with K-5
students. Here, I learned about facilitating Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed with students and became aware of the positive responses of the students to the pedagogy.

In Phase 3, I attended the Tenth Annual Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed Conference in Omaha, NE where I participated in a three-day pre-conference workshop on Forum Theater, facilitated by Augusto Boal. Through my experiences at this workshop, I developed a conceptual and a procedural understanding of facilitating Forum Theater.

My participation in Forum Theater at the Pre-Conference workshop in Omaha, seeing Augusto Boal in action, and experiencing the pedagogy with other like-minded individuals helped me to further value the role of theater in education. I discovered that the arts, and in particular theater and drama, had the potential to engage students and teachers in collaborative projects for promoting higher order thinking and problem-solving. I brought this understanding to my planning for the second pilot study.

**Study 2**

Inspired by the potential my participants perceived in the first pilot study and my experiences with Boalian pedagogy at the Pre-Conference workshop, I was motivated to learn more about the pedagogy from the perspectives of middle school students. Therefore, with the help of Ms. Letty Fitch, Collaborator for Gifted Services at “New Era” Middle School, I planned my second pilot study for a group of students at New Era from August 2004–May 2005. It was contextualized in an after school program at New Era Middle, a Title 1 school. This study was created to support the school’s vision in their School Improvement Plan, specifically, of helping the school to meet their goal of developing intervention strategies for students who are identified as chronically unsuccessful.
Process

In the initial conceptualization of this study, I proposed to conduct a collaborative qualitative research study designed to understand the experiences of teachers and students in using theatre activities for supporting a climate of character at New Era Middle School. This study was designed in two phases. In Phase 1, I planned to organize and implement a study group for educators to examine and experiment with the use of theatre activities in education and in Phase 2, I planned to involve the students in the theatre activities in the after school program.

In Phase 1 (from August–December 2004), the study group was conceptualized to involve New Era teachers, and University faculty and graduate students who would come together to learn ways to facilitate theater activities. I expected that this would create a rich learning ground in which educators could inquire together and share ideas. Further, learning in a study group might create opportunities for the members to experiment with and rehearse theatre activities in a supportive environment. This group would meet at least once a month for approximately three hours. The members would gather resources, maintain journals or other archival materials and would be invited to participate in conversational interviews. Through these experiences, I anticipated the participants were likely to gain skills and knowledge necessary for using theatre activities in their particular settings. In addition, this group would provide support for the New Era teachers in their facilitation of the Drama Club.

In Phase 2 (January–May 2005), the facilitators and I would plan to continue implementation with the Drama Club once or twice a week for about 90 minutes. During this time, the students and the team of facilitators would work together to identify a problem that concerned them and might collaborate in problem-solving through improvisational theater activities using Forum Theater.
When I started the project, changes were made to the initial conceptualization of the study for a variety of reasons. The idea of the study group was dropped as I had difficulty finding teacher educators and teachers from New Era to participate in the group because of time constraints. Not having a study group to support the facilitation of the activities in the after school program created a new challenge in recruiting a facilitator. Many individuals, including some participants from the first pilot study were contacted for recruitment. Many refused because of time constraints, while some refused because they were unfamiliar with the pedagogy and had little or no experience of using it with children. The search for a facilitator ended with my asking Robert Owens, a graduate student pursuing his doctoral studies in education at a nearby university. An elementary school teacher prior to beginning his doctoral program at the university, he had experiences working with Freire’s problem-posing approach to education. Robert and I planned the Boalian activities together, and he would facilitate the activities with the students in the after school program, enabling me to be in a position for documentation in the research site.

In January-May 2005, Robert and I started a theater club at the after school program. The participants named this club Theater 13. Thirteen students from the sixth and seventh grades were selected to participate in the study with the advice of the Ms. Fitch, Collaborator for Gifted Services, and Ms. Knight, the School Counselor. The students came from diverse backgrounds and met for a period of 90 minutes once a week for ten weeks.

Each session began with warm-up activities, theater games, and images. Theater games were selected from Games for Actors and Non Actors (Boal, 2003). The students were invited to form images to examine their perceptions of school. The prompts were: ‘Create an image of a good day in school. Create an image of a bad day in school. Create an image of what you do at
_____ time in school (for example, at 9 a.m.). Create an image of what you do at ____________
place in school (For example, in the hallway). The images created by the students and the
discussion that followed thereafter showed us clearly that students perceived bullying as a major
concern in their school and were motivated to talk about this concern further using theater
activities. In the following three sessions, the students and Robert worked together to create a
short play bringing out the various situations in which bullying occurred. In the last session, the
students presented their play to a sixth grade class and invited them to participate in a discussion.

The data included fieldnotes from observations of the middle school students as they
participated in the Boalian sessions. These sessions were also videotaped and/or photographed.
Further, the photographs were used during interviews to elicit responses through stimulated
recall. The data were analyzed through constant comparison (Strauss & Corbin, 1998). The
findings of this study throw light on the perceived outcomes for the students who participated in
the ten sessions.

From our experiences, methodologically we learned that this pedagogy can be effective
with students when they have opportunities to play the same game several times. Additionally,
we learned that it helped the facilitator when the students were regular in attending the after
school program. More time and regularity in attendance would help the students to play the game
for fun and also by participating in a dialogue the students might engage in critical reflection. We
also learned that when working with middle grade students, effective problem-solving in Forum
Theater is likely to happen when the spect-actors also have familiarity with the pedagogy. For
example, in this study, one student intervened and demonstrated a possibility that amplified the
aggression. Thus, from our work with middle grade students we learned that familiarity with this
pedagogy facilitates the participation of the students and therefore it requires time.
At this point, I consciously move away from a typical format of a methodology chapter to include the findings of the pilot study. My purpose for including the findings here rather than in the findings chapter, is because, I would like to explain how the findings of this pilot study have informed the methodology of my dissertation research.

*Findings*

A theme that emerged from the findings is that Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed could be a helpful tool to understand the experiences of the students in their school. The students created images to express their good days and bad days in school. A good day in school was attributed to academics (for example, getting good grades, being able to complete home-work, focusing and staying awake in class); social (for example, spending time with friends, making new friends, having good relationships with their teacher); and discipline reasons (for example, staying out of trouble, not being held back in recess). A bad day in school caused the participants to feel unhappy, embarrassed, and unmotivated. This often created a dislike for school. A bad day in school was attributed to health (for example, having a headache, choking on food at lunch, falling asleep in class); socio-emotional (for example, being bullied, beaten up, cursed at, labeled, cut in line in the cafeteria); academic (for example, getting in trouble for not completing home-work, failing a test); and discipline reasons (for example, being sent to the office for getting in trouble).

Another theme that emerged was that the students expressed bullying to be their major concern. With the help of Robert, the students pursued their conversations about bullying in schools by using Forum Theater. The discussion and the participation in Forum Theater helped them to become aware of the triggers that started a fight (for example, boasting, calling names, being pushed, being gossiped about); and their feelings and actions when bullied (for example,
moving away while saying sorry, avoiding potential people or sites, running till caught). To address the issue of bullying in their school, the students created a play on bullying and presented it to a group of sixth grade students. After watching the play for the first time, the audience members were invited to participate in problem-solving by enacting their suggestion(s). In the Forum Theater, the spect-actors enacted their imagined alternative actions to address the issues of bullying in school. Their suggestions included apologizing, talking things over, avoiding a situation by taking a different route, and becoming more aggressive. In the role play it was noticed that the students portrayed their teacher as passive and often ignoring the bullying situation. In taking on the teacher role, they enacted an active, assertive teacher, who intervened in the bullying situation.

In the interviews, Carl and Sam articulated clearly how bullying was affecting the school climate. Carl said,

> Sometimes in school there are lots of bullies. People will try to bully you around. You don't want to come back to school because of the fights. This means that grades drop and students drop out of school.

Sam questioned the purpose of schooling and said,

> We are becoming intolerant and people are not learning what they should be learning. They should be learning about manners, care, and things like this. Children should learn what they need to learn and what they would like to learn.

Participation in the activities helped Desiree to understand that she probably had not changed anyone else's attitude except perhaps her own. Her feeling of transformation and empowerment came with the insight that she could make friends by talking to others and reaching out to others. She reported,
[Participation in Boalian Theater] helped me to solve my problems with other people. It helped me to make new friends. I learned to get along with people. [I learned to] get along with others by helping them and becoming their friend. When I understood how fights take place and learned that I can stop fights. I learned to say sorry and prevent a fight from taking place. I learned to apologize. First I did not have any friends; now I have some.

The Image and Forum Theater created a meaningful learning environment. The activities made more visible the joys and concerns of the students, and brought to the forefront their humanness. Dramatic situations gave learning a context and provided the students with a dilemma to care about which was directly connected with their lives. For effective problem-solving, the participants needed to understand the conflict within the context and understand the needs and feelings of those involved. This required imagination—an ability to put one's self in the shoes of the other. This form of empathic knowing most likely resulted in evoking feelings of care and concern, which in turn motivated the students to ask authentic questions and search for alternatives. In this way imagination helped in defining their humanity and in thinking of the possible and not just the actual (Greene, 1995).

The students were motivated to participate in the activities. They attributed pedagogical, personal and interpersonal reasons to their motivation. The pedagogical reasons related to the nature of the theater activities like engaging in physical movement, stretching one's way of thinking, and expressing one's tacit thoughts through images. At the personal level, students reported that they appreciated the lively environment and the active engagement. At the end of the school day, the Boalian activities provided opportunities for the students to act silly and be a little goofy, and they appreciated the freedom of movement. At the inter-personal level, the
students recognized the importance of perspective-taking, empathic knowing, and problem-solving and were able to make new friends.

*Epilogue*

The students' voices that were heard and felt throughout this research were shared with Ms. Fitch. The students' suggestion for greater teacher involvement in bullying prevention along with teachers requests for the same were pursued further by Ms. Fitch and other members of the School Improvement Planning committee. In the next academic year, the teachers began their training for bullying prevention through the *Bully Busting* program (Newman, Horne, & Bartolomucci, 2000).

*Learnings from the Pilot Studies*

The outcomes of the pilot studies helped me in developing a pedagogical and a methodological understanding of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed which guided the use of the pedagogy in the dissertation research.

*Pedagogical Learning*

Pedagogically, Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed, has the potential to motivate students and teachers to engage in collaborative projects to build humane environments. The students experienced motivation to participate in the activities as dramatic situations gave learning a context and presented them with a dilemma to care about that resonated with their lives. Further, they collaborated with their peers and teacher to problem-solve the situation. The connection of the activities to their real world probably helped in giving the project a human purpose.

Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed has the potential for building empathic relationships with others. For effective problem-solving, the students learn to understand the
conflict within the context and identify with the needs and feelings of those involved. This process requires what Greene (1995) calls ‘social imagination’—an ability to put one's self in the shoes of the other. Empathy could help them in creating feelings of connections between members and strengthening emotional ties between them. Seeing connections may foster the feelings of identity and belongingness to a group, enhancing group solidarity.

Furthermore, the PTO activities have the potential to promote student identities as knowers and problem-solvers. PTO activities invite the participants to engage in a reflective process, where they may reflect on self, others, their relationships, and consciously begin to interpret their actions. Reflecting on experiences and actions may help the participants to become aware that alternative responses are possible, and they are more likely to consider the alternative responses available to them before responding. This deliberation often gives the participants an opportunity to integrate their thoughts and feelings and respond consciously rather than respond from an automated conditioned response. Further, the reflection-in-action is likely to enhance mindfulness, critical-mindedness, and a deep knowing that one can take specific steps to create a humane environment. Deeply sensing and recognizing that one can take specific steps towards change can lead to feelings of agency and taking action, which in turn supports their identities as knowers and problem-solvers.

Another pedagogical benefit of using Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed is to engage the students in higher order thinking, specifically, analysis, synthesis and evaluation, according to Bloom's Taxonomy. The students at New Era demonstrated higher order thinking by engaging in creating images, writing scripts for their play, enacting their play as well as participating in decision-making, problem-solving, and discussing ethical considerations related to bullying.
Further PTO activities can help the participants to understand the world from multiple perspectives. The Image and Forum Theater offers a space where participants are invited to create images from their subjective perspective. These images are interpreted by others and the sharing, feeling, and listening to different perspectives help the members of the group to construct their understanding of the world after considering the multiple perspectives. Reading the world by integrating the multiple perspectives can help them in constructing a holistic understanding and in bringing alive the humanity of the other.

Finally, this pedagogy offers a possibility for the students to have fun as they participate in the activities. Engaging in physical movements, being silly, often led to moments of laughter making the environment a lively learning environment. Fun and laughter can further help in building relationships and motivating the students to engage in the activities.

Thus, pedagogically, Boalian Theater has the potential to engage students in a motivating, collaborative, fun-loving environment for promoting higher-order thinking, group solidarity, and engaging in holistic reading of their world by incorporating multiple perspectives.

Methodological Learning

In addition to pedagogical insights, I also developed methodological insights. I saw how Boalian Theater could be used as a method for data generation in evaluative research. Patton (2002) argues that evaluative research can contribute to problem-solving, real-world decision making, action research, and organizational or community development. This tradition of research is more likely to be seen as a type of applied or action research rather than basic or theoretical research (Powell, 2006).

The distinguishing feature of arts based research is that it uses aesthetic qualities to shed light on the educational situations we care about. Arts based research is not simply the application of a variety of loose methods: it is the result of artistically crafting the descriptive of the situation so that it can be seen from another angle (p. 12).

Drawing from a multiple intelligences stance, these researchers argue that the world can be read in varied ways and the informative value of research can be increased by broadening the range of perspectives available for constructing knowledge. Making art is a visceral activity that creates opportunities for communion among the participants. For Finley (2003) the feeling of communion is created from having the opportunities for self-reflection and self-expression, between and among creators and audiences. As seen in these studies, the participants used their personal experiences and imagination to create images to reflect and express their interpretations of their worlds. Edgar (2004) explains the process of image creation as primarily being sensory in nature. He asserts that sensory organs become the instruments to generate data of the image while the mind used the available sensory data and processed it, creating a personal language. Since the language was constructed from one's personal experiences, the images offered opportunities for creating personal meanings. Boal (2006) and Edgar (2004) argue that images are a mediator between the unconscious and the conscious levels of beings. In this case, the images become a vehicle for communicating significant human experiences and actively involve the participants in naming their experiences that evoke positive and negative feelings. Further, Boalian Theater as a research method allows the participants to contextualize important personal
experiences and problems within institutional settings. By offering their stories through art, they create windows where others can peek into the minds of the participants to understand their experiences in a specific context. Additionally, Boalian Theater most likely opens a liminal space and initiates a dialogic text where a diverse group of people can examine the personal conflicts. The creators of the still images voice their thoughts and feelings which help others to have insight into what is going on in their mind and this, when understood by others may promote feelings of connection and community. This point of understanding is likely to address the need for social change. Finley (2003) emphasizes that performing social change begins with artful ways of seeing and knowing ourselves, and the world we live in.

Another characteristic of evaluative research is to engage participants in initiating a change (Finley, 2003; Patton, 2002). Forum Theater helps to give further meaning to the concerns voiced by the participants in Image Theater by engaging them in problem-posing and problem-solving. The robust involvement of the audience was noticed in the pilot study with middle school students, where passive spectators turned into active spect-actors when they shouted, “STOP”, and came forth and enacted their attempts to prevent bullying in their school. Houston, Magill, McCollum, and Spratt (2001) assert the political value of the involvement of the audience in Forum Theater. They argue, “Forum Theater, because of the dynamic involvement of the audience, becomes a tool for transformation by sharing strategies to move from oppression to liberation” (p. 287). Similarly, Freire (1971), Kemmis and McTaggart (2000), and Patton (2002), argue that such problem-solving and learning-oriented processes help a group of people reflect and recover themselves by understanding what they are doing or understanding it in new ways.
Finley (2003) posits that knowing the children through their artful expressions can motivate concerned adults to embrace their empathetic emotions and to give their time and expertise as teachers. In the pilot study with middle grade students, the power of this pedagogy was brought to the forefront when the administrators honored the students’ voices of wanting more teacher intervention to prevent bullying in their school. Listening to and integrating the voices of the students in problem-solving, may have helped to add weight to the perspectives of those with less power and privilege to “give voice” to the disenfranchised. Although, I did not pursue my inquiry to understand the students’ perceptions of the administrators honoring the voices of the students, I agree with Finley (2003) that one of the goals of a critical performance pedagogy is to “encourage disenfranchised students toward newly formed life stories built on the notion of caring community that includes educators who, while part of the system, will use the system in its own transformation” (p. 690).

Finally, Boalian Theater engaged the participants in an inquiry to evaluate their learning environment. The participation yielded insights and findings that could change school practice while those who participated in the inquiry learned to think more systematically about what they were doing and their relationship to those with whom they worked. Bawden and Packham (1998) call this “systematic practice,” while Patton (1997) refers to this as “process use.” He describes the function of process use to developmental evaluation where the purpose is, “[an] ongoing learning, internal improvement, and program development rather than generating reports and summative judgments for external audiences or accountability” (Patton, 2002, p. 180). In this sense, the educators and disenfranchised students could join hands to build caring communities.

Thus, Boal’s Theater creates a space for the participants to engage in a participatory research that is with and by the people, rather than on the people, and it seeks “to breakdown the
distinction between researchers and researched—the subject/object relationship of traditional research instead creating a subject/subject relationship’ (Conrad, 2004, p. 7). One way in which this distinction between the researcher and the researched is blurred is by inviting the participants to be co-investigators (Oldfather et al., 1999). Finley (2003) argues that arts-based methods inherently allow participants to be co-researchers and artists of their own lives as we are all inquirers into our experiences and we collaborate with others to create better space to share our lives. Patton (2002) however, clarifies that though the process is facilitated by the researcher, it is controlled by the people in the program or community by undertaking formal, reflective processes for their own development and empowerment.

Guided by these pedagogical and methodological learnings, I designed the present research study. However, I would like to emphasize that the purpose of this research was not to prove an intervention-effect relationship but to learn about this pedagogy from the perspectives of the participants. We now return to the present study. In the next section I describe the context of the study followed by the field entry, methods, data analysis, time line, and format of the findings chapters.

The Context for the Present Study

*Choice of Setting: Rationale and Description*

In my preliminary thinking of a research site which would be best for this dissertation research, I was guided by my feeling of connections. I selected to work with pre-service teachers from the Early Childhood Certification Option (ECCO) program because I felt personally connected with the program and the students. I have worked with the ECCO program for my assistantship since 2002 and have come to understand and value the program. I also felt connected with the participants in the present study, as in Fall 2005 I had collaborated with them.
to prepare them for their student teaching exhibition. Exhibition of Readiness for Student Teaching is an evaluative procedure where students share their understanding of an area of inquiry; articulate their philosophy of teaching; and share their field experiences to demonstrate their readiness for student teaching. This exhibition is held a semester before the students enter the field for ten weeks of student teaching. During my interactions with them, I was impressed by their diverse background, their passions for teaching, and their idealism. In addition, the ECCO faculty concurred with my impressions and we saw the students as being information-rich cases (Patton, 2002).

A seminar format was planned with the collaboration of the ECCO faculty. The course instructor for this seminar was a member of the ECCO faculty and served as a University Facilitator for some of the students. She agreed to collaborate as a co-facilitator which helped in constructing shared goals. I believe a seminar format would open up a space to be flexible, student-centered that could engage students in problem-posing and problem-solving using theater. Using theater for addressing student led questions would be less likely to occur in a structured syllabus-oriented classroom which is heavily dependent on classroom discussions.

Other considerations in choice of the research setting had to do with having easy access to participants outside of the seminar meetings. Working in the middle school, I had realized the separation of the after school program from the day school created challenges to have informal conversations with the students outside of the after school program. The collaborator, Robert Owens and I, met with the students once a week for 90 minutes. During this time the students participated in the theater activities, and as a result, I was unable to pull them aside for informal conversations at this time for it meant taking them away from the theater activities. Similarly, I did not want to pull them out of their classroom during the day often as it meant taking them out
of their classroom activities. I was unable to meet with them in school and outside of school. This structural challenge limited my access to the participants. Therefore, in conceptualizing this study, I was conscious of selecting an adult population where my participants and I would have additional opportunities to meet for in-depth conversations.

Description of the Early Childhood Certification Option Program (ECCO)

Early Childhood Certification Option in the M.Ed. program is designed for students with baccalaureate degrees in areas other than early childhood education to become certified as teachers of children in pre-kindergarten to grade 5. In this program, the students typically take 12 required courses for the master's degree, complete a 10 or 15-week student teaching experience, and register for an induction course during their first year of teaching. The induction course is a special feature of ECCO as its main purpose is to support beginning teachers.

ECCO is structured on the four thematic threads: reflection, scholarship and research, collaboration, and appreciation of diversity. It emphasizes an integrated approach to reflective practice where the students are encouraged to examine how their prior experiences have influenced their views on teaching and learning. Further, during the course of the program, the students identify a specific area of focus based on need and their interest, and engage in a systematic inquiry process to develop expertise in their selected focus. The thread of collaboration reflects ECCO's deep belief that ideas of a group are greater than that of an individual. Therefore, collaboration and learning from each other is an integral part of a learning community. Finally, by reflecting on their own learner's autobiography, the students come to understand and appreciate diversity.

Each year, about 50-60 students apply for this program. No more than 20 students are accepted each year after being holistically assessed by the ECCO committee. The students are
diverse in age, ethnicity, nationality, academic background, and experiences. This diversity provides a rich culture for cross-pollination and enhances the depth the students bring to the learning community.

During their program, an important milestone for the students is their student teaching experience. For their student teaching, the students are placed in a classroom in one of the partnership schools, where the classroom teacher serves as their mentor. In the field, the students take responsibilities for different activities throughout the day. Specifically, the students plan and implement lessons, assess student learning, and participate in grade level, faculty, and parent meetings. In short, the students by being a teacher in a classroom learn to become one.

To be able to student teach, the students are required to meet specific program criteria: completing most of their course work, meeting the fieldwork hours of working with small groups and large groups of children by volunteering in schools, and demonstrating their readiness for student teaching to the ECCO committee in the Exhibition for Readiness of Student Teaching (a portfolio-based assessment). Depending on their readiness, the students are recommended for 10 weeks of student teaching or 5 weeks of internship before 10-weeks of student teaching.

The demographics of the ECCO group I worked with were fairly representative of the rest of the ECCO program. Invitations were given to the six students who were going to student teach. In addition, the invitation to join the group was sent to four ECCO graduates who were full time teachers in public school and one student who had completed her student teaching in the earlier semester but had not graduated from the program. The reason for including these ECCO members was to support the ECCO ideal of continuing collaboration and mentoring to the ECCO graduates. The invitation was accepted by Aura, the student who had completed her student
teaching in Fall 2005 and had not graduated at the time of the study. The group varied in ethnicity, nationality, and had diverse undergraduate majors.

**ECCO Coursework**

The various courses that the student teachers took during their program of study were a part of student teachers’ common experiences which informed their thinking about teaching and learning. The student teachers took courses in Early Childhood Education, Math, Science, Language and Literacy, Educational Psychology, Special Education, and Instructional Technology. A few examples of the courses the student teachers in this study took were as follows: Theory and Curriculum in Early Childhood Education, Multicultural Education in the United States, Foundations of Reading Instruction, Mathematics Methods for Early Childhood, Teacher Action Research, Trends and Issues in Early Childhood Education, Writing Pedagogy, and Survey in Special Education. Through these courses the student teachers began to develop an area of focus which they would continue to inquire and reflect in a collaborative learning community during their student teaching and in their first year of teaching. The meanings the students may give to the process may in turn help them to further see the value of these strands and probably the individuals may integrate the inquiry process into their life—as a way of being. In this sense coursework and the ECCO strands may intersect with each other for the students.

Elliot, in his handout prepared for his Exhibition of Readiness for Student Teaching, reflected on how his course work helped him to recognize and further develop his focus and a purpose for teaching. He wrote,

As I would confirm in ELAN 7040 (Language & Culture in the Classroom) or in EDEC 8180 (Research in Multicultural Teacher Education) defining multicultural is not easy. We need to see the uniqueness of each individual. Almost like having our own culture,
our own background, and we need to learn to respect and value what each one of us can contribute to the whole group. I can see now the importance of that first exercise in introspection we did in our EDEC 7020. If we want to learn to understand others and value them we need to understand first where we come from. Later, this exercise greatly helped me all through my masters and my interactions with children. I have learned to look at who I am, my strengths and my weaknesses. Now I can be more conscious of how my own personality, my own culture can influence the way I interact and work with the students. Through the different courses I have taken for my Masters I have looked for opportunities for developing work that would help me have a better understanding of how to make the family involvement of my students a reality. In general, I feel my coursework has helped me to develop a good ‘starting point’ for my future as a teacher focused on ‘Family Involvement.’

Elliot, 2005

The Course Instructor

Although the course instructor was not the focus of the study, she was an important member of the group and a co-facilitator. Therefore, it is important to provide some information about her background.

Dr. Martha Allexsaht-Snider has had many years of experience as a teacher in elementary school and as a teacher educator in a University. She has an interest in teaching bilingual education and children of immigrants, in building family-school partnerships, and in teacher education. Besides teaching in the United States, her interests in anthropology, families of children, and cross cultural perspectives have motivated her to seek teaching experiences in distant lands like Colombia and Thailand.
At the University, Martha taught both undergraduate and graduate students. In her work, she integrates teacher inquiry with ethnographic perspectives. She helps pre-service teachers to consider the needs of students from diverse cultures and to support their understanding and learning. Family-school partnership has been central to her teaching. Over the years, she has become interested in the processes, tensions and challenges faced in the identity development of pre-service teachers. She has consciously worked towards finding ways to facilitate reflective practices in the classroom for this purpose. I asked Martha about her connections with the arts,

Martha: I have little experience with the art and theater. I took a basic art class in Grade 8 and a dance class in college. I love seeing live theater and music. In a way, I grew up to be appreciative of the art rather than performing in front of an audience. I have used puppetry and role-playing in my teaching as these methods lend themselves in helping bilingual children to express themselves in meaningful ways. However, I have not integrated arts in teacher education in a meaningful way.

I experienced Boalian Theater in a conference in Poland where I saw it being used with youth. I did not pursue it further till I connected with you and saw your interest. [From our work together], I came to see the potential of Boalian Theater as a reflective tool rather than as a performative tool. This connected with my natural interest of finding ways to engage preservice teachers in critical inquiry.

Her visions for teacher education include, “fostering an open-minded inquiry stance for teachers and helping them to be confident life-long learners and critical inquirers about how to support diverse student learning.”

The students in this study in particular acknowledged the contributions Martha made in helping them to broaden their understanding of diversity and home-school partnerships.

Field Entry

In preparation for my research, Dr. Penny Oldfather and I contacted Dr. Betty Bisplinghoff to seek her permission in working with the ECCO students. Dr. Bisplinghoff has played an important role in conceptualizing and developing the ECCO program. In addition, I
sought the approval of my committee and informed them of the change in research site. I later started having detailed conversations with Dr. Allexsaht-Snider who had signed up as a course instructor for student teaching supervision. It was unanimously agreed that it would help in setting this study within the context of a seminar requirement, as it most likely would ensure student attendance. In the past, student teaching seminars were organized outside of school hours to share and discuss experiences in the field and answer student questions; the format and the content were selected by the instructor-in-charge. This flexibility provided us with the space to mold the seminar all the while keeping in mind the program and the research needs.

Dr. Allexsaht-Snider and I met with the students for an orientation meeting in December 2005 to give them an overview of student teaching and student teaching seminars. I gave the students an overview of Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed and an invitation letter that summarized the purposes, the possible roles, and the meeting duration (see Appendix A). Through this letter and in person, I invited the students to participate in the research study as collaborators.

Additionally, in this meeting the dates and times for future meetings were finalized. After negotiating the dates, it was decided that we would meet for two hours once every two weeks over the weekend. Some students preferred a Saturday while some preferred a Sunday afternoon. A consensus was sought by alternating between a Saturday and a Sunday. The dates selected were January 8, January 21, February 5, February 18, March 5, and March 26.

The course instructor, who also consented to be a co-facilitator, showed great interest in the study, and was extremely cooperative. During the data collection we met in her office for about an hour, a day or two prior to the seminar meeting. During this meeting we debriefed about the previous seminar and planned for the next one.
Methods

From my pilot studies, I was struck by the potential of Image Theater and Forum Theater to be used as arts-based methods that initiate conversations to promote empathy and care between and among creators and audiences. Furthermore, I concur with McLaren (1999) who challenges the traditional understanding of critical pedagogy by stating,

‘Revolutionary performance pedagogy must move beyond the dialogical tasks of reframing, refunctioning, and reposing questions and formulations of knowledge that characterize critical pedagogy in preference for action (p. 8). Instead, the call to revolution is ethical: “to make liberation and the abolition of human suffering the goal of the educative enterprise” (p. 5).

The purpose of data generation for this study is to go beyond building an abstract theory to engage the participants in a reflection-oriented pedagogy that fosters inquiry, a tolerance for ambiguity, a preference for what is open-minded, a desire for what is fluid rather than what is rigid, and the creation of a more humane world. Guided by McLaren's call for abolition of human suffering and Noddings' (1984) notion of ethics of care, the specific arts-based research methods I used were Boal's Image and Forum Theater.

Forms of Data

The multiple sources used for data generation are as follows: Observations (in the seminar meetings and in the student teacher's classroom), fieldnotes, transcribed interviews, transcribed group discussions, transcribed video tapes, stimulated recall using photographs, and student teachers' arts based work (embodied and on paper).
The Roles

My roles as a researcher involved planning two main parts: (1) that of a co-facilitator of Boalian methods; and (2) that of in-depth interviewer. In addition, I was engaged in reciprocal mentoring as we learned together about facilitating the pedagogy in the seminar meetings and in the classrooms; and as a counselor as I engaged with the student teachers when they shared their challenges. My role as a co-facilitator of Boal’s Image Theater and Forum Theater was to facilitate activities for engaging the participants in actively reflecting on their experiences in the field and assisting those participants who wished to use this pedagogy in their own classroom settings. The purpose of the co-facilitation was to develop a relationship with the participants by engaging in the activities with them. This co-facilitator/participant role helped me to build relationships with the participants, get a feel for the activities, and develop an insider perspective. The experiences, images, and artifacts the participants made along with my observations and experiences informed the questions for in-depth interviewing.

Roles of Martha

Martha played the role of a mentor for the student teachers and knew them from other experiences. For example, she was a university facilitator for some and had a prior connection with many of them many had enrolled in the course(s) she offered in the department. Additionally, being the university facilitator and being in the classrooms with the student teachers helped her to share her insights keeping in mind the classroom context of those specific student teachers. This contextual knowing helped the student teachers to value her suggestions and inputs.

Martha and I were co-facilitators and in our relationship too, I found her to be a mentor for me. In the planning meeting she brought in classroom perspectives by sharing student
teachers’ stories. This sharing helped us to think more deeply about our plans and helped me to know the student teachers in a different context. In the seminar meetings, played the role of a co-facilitator by explaining or expanding the instructions as needed. Often, her explanations helped student teachers to understand the question clearly. Her rephrasing helped me to become more aware of my choice of words in giving directions.

Roles of Co-Researchers

The roles of co-researchers and their involvement changed during the course of the study (Table 1). All the participants actively participated in the seminar sessions, bringing forth their experiences and needs and took ownership in shaping the content and the culture of the seminar meetings. Four participants, Eliot, Meredith, Lan, and Aura, agreed to be focal participants. In this role, they shared their experiences, raised questions, and offered their insights. Our conversations further helped us to gain a deeper understanding of the pedagogy through their eyes. Of these four co-researchers, Eliot and Meredith wanted to further this inquiry of the potential of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in teaching to their own classroom contexts. Here, they took on the role of co-facilitators in their settings and through their experiences we learned the value of the pedagogy with children in Pre-K and Grade 1. Another role emerged when Meredith agreed to be a co-presenter at the 12th Annual Conference of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed at Chapel Hill, North Carolina. Here, she engaged in planning and preparing for the presentation and then took on an important role in presenting the findings of the study. Finally, the four focal participants played the role of co-authors in constructing their own cases.
Table 1

Summary of Participation in the Research Process

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lan</th>
<th>Elliot</th>
<th>Meredith</th>
<th>Aura</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Co-planning</td>
<td>X</td>
<td>X</td>
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<td>X</td>
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<tr>
<td>Posing Questions</td>
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<td>in the interviews</td>
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<td>Mini Action Research</td>
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<td>in their Classroom</td>
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<tr>
<td>Co-Presenter at the</td>
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<td>Annual PTO Conference</td>
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Process of Data Generation

The data were generated from 12 hours of seminar meetings (6 sessions of 2-hours each), 4-6 hours of pre-seminar planning meetings with the course instructor, 12-15 hours of in-depth interviews (3 interviews per each focal participant), and 2 hours of in-depth interviews with the co-facilitator. To make myself familiar with the classroom settings that the student teachers worked in, I spent about 1-2 hours in the field with them. Additionally, when Elliot and Meredith indicated a desire to use Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in their classroom, I supported them by co-planning and co-facilitating the activities in their class. We planned three 30-minute sessions in each participant's class. Meredith and I closely worked in planning for the activities too. Finally, Meredith and I co-presented a paper at the 12th Annual Conference of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed at Chapel Hill, NC from May 18-21, 2006. Though I had not originally planned to collect data in the classrooms and at the conference, these events became informal sites for data generation as the participants made connections to it in the in-depth interviews. I kept a log of visits to keep track of dates, times, locations, visit numbers, and participants.

The six seminar meetings were planned on the weekend (alternating between Saturday and Sunday) for a period of two hours. The seminar meetings were organized from the beginning
of student teaching (January 2006) and ended at the completion of student teaching (March 2006). Each session was photographed and video taped. The seminar meetings took place in a classroom in the College of Education at the University. The desks and chairs in the classroom were moved towards the wall to create an empty center space. With classroom walls that for the most parts were white washed and barren, the environment was visually non-stimulating. The classroom was equipped with a big white board, an overhead projector, and a transparency machine which were not used. The video data was transcribed to note the conversations and body language expressed by the participants during the meeting.

The in-depth interviews were planned at the convenience of the participant and the researcher. Most often, we met at my home for interviewing, usually followed by a meal. Eating the meals together helped us to engage in deeper conversations and strengthen our relationship. On one occasion, the interview was planned after school in the participant's classroom.

The interviews were conversational style which allowed for the participant and me to engage in sharing our questions, comments, and experiences. The topics for the conversation were initiated by both the participants and the researcher and were contextualized in the experiences and observations during the seminar meetings. Further, the photographs taken and the artifacts created by the participants in the seminar meetings were used in the interviews for a stimulated recall. All the interviews were audio-taped and I transcribed them later. I found the process of transcribing extremely valuable in reflecting about what the participant had said.

The three interviews were spaced throughout the process of data collection. Early in the process, a baseline interview was held. This interview was the most structured of the three. The purpose of this interview was to get to know the participants and build rapport with them (see Appendix B for the Interview Guideline). A second interview was held at the end of the seminar
meetings and mainly revolved around talking about the experiences by examining the photographs and the artifacts (see Appendix C for a list of common questions generated). The third interview was held after the initial data analysis was done. The purpose of this interview was to do member checks and reach data saturation by asking questions that may not have been asked earlier.

*Developing Questions for the Interview: Informed from other Sources of Data*

With examples, I explain here ways in which the data from the different sources were used to develop questions during the interview. The reason for doing this was building in member-checking and creating space for the participant to elaborate her perspective.

*Observations and Field Notes*

The observations, the field notes, and the video documentation of the seminar meeting were used to add details and look for other nuances I may have missed during the meeting. Here is an example of thick description of the observation of Elliot engaged in a specific activity.

In Seminar Meeting #4, I had facilitated Colombian Hypnosis. Elliot, Tanisha, and Daisy were working in a triad and I noticed that Elliot's eyes suddenly sparkled, smiling ear to ear. Intrigued by what made him feel so happy, I observed the trio closely. It seemed as though Elliot was having fun trying something out, trying out a theory, and was feeling the joy seeing the impact his movements made on Daisy and Tanisha. He all of a sudden moved his hands in opposite directions and smiled when Daisy and Tanisha too moved in opposite directions. He now moved his hands closer to each other, and Daisy and Tanisha came near each other. He smiled again. There is some experimenting going on here. How is Elliot relating to this awareness?    Fieldnotes, February 18, 2007
**Interview**

Informed by my observations during the meeting, I brought in some of my awareness to respond to Elliot and pose questions for him in the interview.

Foram: (placed the photographs of student teachers playing Colombian Hypnosis in front of Elliot).

Elliot: I loved this activity, you can see much more clear—it gave me—I like to see that when Terrica and I were paired, you can really feel the power of when people are set with the rules and what is going on in the group, you can make use of these rules in a good way or in a naughty way.

Foram: When we were playing this game, I noticed you were moving your hands as though you were experimenting some theory. What was going on? What were you thinking or trying to do?

Elliot: For example, what Terrica was doing here. I remember that when we were doing this activity, I began to think of what would happen if I moved my hand in a different way or if I crossed the position.

Foram: SO it became a ground for experimentation.

Elliot: Yes, I realized all what I could do when certain rules are set and I have certain

**Data Analysis**

For some researchers the intuitive nature of the arts-based research analysis and the step-wise analytical procedures used in constant comparison may seem to be incompatible (see Appendix D). However though they may seem to be strange bed fellows, they can be used side by side. In this study the intuitive awareness informed my future steps in constant comparison analysis.

Analysis of data took place on an on-going basis from the time the seminar meetings began and continued well after the meetings and the interviews were completed. The on-going analysis involved use of the constant comparative method (Strauss & Corbin, 1998), and informed the study both methodologically and analytically.
The interview transcripts and the video transcripts formed the major body of the data. The transcripts were coded and the tentative properties and categories were identified. These reflected the main emerging themes in this study. The categories were analyzed further to identify ways in which they related to each other and to identify larger themes. The themes began to emerge once the categories were becoming saturated. At this time, I was beginning to see coherence in the findings of the study and was ready to consider the implications of the results. In this sense, an inductive process of data analysis was followed. The emerging themes, categories, and properties were shared with my dissertation committee. The discussion with them helped in sorting the data further.

The data analysis was done by hand. I first read and re-read each transcript line-by-line, identifying as I went along the categories and properties it would represent. I made note of the category on the left hand side margin, marking clearly the property the category described. After the analysis of a transcript was completed, I cut segments of the transcripts according to properties and categories and pasted the properties on a 5x8 index card. On the bottom right corner, I labeled each index card with the name of the participant, interview date, and line number as identification data. On the bottom left corner, I labeled the appropriate categories and properties. When a unit of meaning related to more than one category and property, I photocopied the segment and cross referenced it.

When the transcripts were cut and labeled on the index cards, they were sorted by category and property. The index cards contained the participants' words and helped me to analyze and organize my data and play with my data as I arranged and re-arranged the categories and properties to seek deeper understandings. Once the categories and properties were arranged, I created concept maps for each participant on poster papers. Additionally, wherever possible, I
pasted thumb size photo prints to provide a visual image to the specific event the participants were describing and interpreting in the interviews. I glued poster papers together in a way to create one single sheet of paper that brought together the themes, categories, and properties for that participant.

This system was time-consuming, but was extremely valuable for my own thinking. When it was time to write the findings I was able to refer to appropriate quotations and find their location in the data. This saved time as I did not have to re-type the quotes and I could copy and paste directly from the file document. Further, extensively connecting with the data in this way helped me to gain a deeper insight and create a feeling of connection with my participants.

Finally, once the cases were written, I shared them with the co-researchers. The co-researchers read the cases and provided feedback and clarification. In addition, I met with them, shared the highlights of what I had found in the study, and asked them “to tell me if I had understood them and represented their meaning accurately.” Then I asked them to share any thoughts or feelings they had about being involved in the project. I invited the students to write a letter to me to elaborate their feelings about the study or about the findings we had discussed. At the very end, I shared my time line for graduation and invited them to attend my dissertation defense and participate in the presentation.

**Time Line**

The study involved four phases. It is important to note that the phases were not neatly separated and often over-lapped.
Phase 1: Initial Data Collection

This included co-facilitating the Boalian Theater in the seminar meetings, interviewing the participants, spending time with the student teachers in their classroom, and co-facilitating the Boalian activities with two co-researchers in their classrooms.

Phase 2: Preliminary Data Analysis

This consisted of the initial category generation and continuation of field work.

Phase 3: Continued Data Collection

This was comprised of mainly sharing the categories and properties identified in Phase 2 and asking focused questions for elaborations and data saturation.

Phase 4: Final Analysis

This consisted of seeking relationships between categories and properties, examining implications, writing the cases and conclusions, sharing the cases with the participants, and finalizing the writing.

Format of the Report of the Findings

The findings are reported in a series of three chapters. The first chapter is a curtain-raiser where I set the stage by using vignettes to describe the activities in the six sessions. In the next chapter, I tell the story of the four focal co-researchers concluding with cross case analysis. In the final chapter, I write the conclusions and significance of this study.
CHAPTER 4
FINDINGS: THE CURTAIN RAISER

In this chapter, I raise the curtain to create the flavor of the various Boalian activities the student teachers participated in during the six seminar meetings. The written vignettes are constructed to introduce the activity, the directions for facilitation, and the student teachers' responses to the activity. Each seminar meeting began with a time for connections followed by Boalian activities and a brief conversation about their experiences with the activity (see Appendix E for the agenda of each seminar meeting). This chapter is organized in a similar way. It begins with time for connections followed by vignettes from the Boalian activities: Image Theater, Forum Theater, and other arts-based activities, respectively. Finally, the chapter ends with stepping back and listening to the voices of the student teachers as they discuss how their experiences with Boalian Theater have influenced their current teaching. However before unfolding the seminar meetings, I discuss the Perspectives of the Joker and Steps Taken for Building Safe Learning Environment.

Perspectives of the Joker

Boal (2003) refers to the facilitator as a Joker. Prior to Jokering the activities in this research study, I had participated in a few PTO workshops. Here, I had observed ways in which the Joker facilitated the various Boalian Theater activities. However, this was the first time I was playing the Joker. Therefore, I was learning to Joker with the help of my participants. The process of learning for me can be best described as developmental; I grew better at facilitating through the seminar meetings. In this section, I describe the messiness I encountered in the
different aspects of facilitation. The messiness and the challenges arose from having limited experience with the pedagogy, creating inclusive learning environment, my limitations with providing clear directions, working with a group where not all were currently student teaching, working with student teachers’ initial discomfort with the pedagogy, and opening myself to see, hear, and feel with the student teachers.

**Learning Experiences with the Pedagogy**

I encountered challenges in selecting the PTO activities. The book, *Games for Actors and Non Actors* (Boal, 2003) served as a resource material as it explained the rules of the game. I wondered if it was enough to know the rules to select games for this research. Through this wondering, I began to recognize that for me this recipe book was not enough and in addition to the rules of playing the games, I was searching for some experiential and narrative insights of people who had played these games. With this insight, I selected games by connecting with my experiences with some of the games, by listening to the experiences of others, and by taking some risks in playing new games that seemed engaging. In addition, tuning with the participants while they played the games further helped me in selection and facilitation of the activities. For example, from my observations, I noticed that most of the participants felt comfortable with creating images to express their tacit ideas. Taking this awareness into planning, we continued our work with Image Theater.

**Planning with the Student Teachers**

The student teachers collaborated in planning the sessions by sharing specific topics they wanted to explore further. Additionally, seeing them interact with the pedagogy, listening to them closely, and feeling with them further helped me to support their explorations. In this sense,
the planning and selection of the activities were grounded in the experiences of the student teachers both in the field and in the seminar meetings.

*Creating an Inclusive Learning Environment*

Another challenge I encountered during this process was in creating inclusive environment for all including Aura, who had completed her student teaching in the previous semester. I often wondered what connections Aura would make to the various prompts, as she was not student teaching and did not work in a classroom. I found myself consciously considering and listening to Aura’s connections and ways of sense making. On asking her about this in the interview, she helped me to understand that her goal was to build a teaching philosophy for herself using PTO activities. She explained that by participating in various activities she was able to think about her philosophy. This clarification helped me to know Aura’s thoughts and purposes, which in turn also guided my work with her. I became increasingly aware with the complexities of forming groups.

*Learning to Give Clear Directions*

I was challenged while instructing the group. How I could explain the rules of the games so that the student teachers were able to clearly understand what they were required to do? The abstractness of the activities, my limitations with language and awareness of their student teaching context, and the student teachers’ limited understanding with the pedagogy created ambiguity. Often times, Martha reworded the question I was posing for the students to help them understand what we were asking them to do. Over time, we started getting better as I learned to be more articulate and the student teachers’ understanding of the pedagogy grew making the activities less abstract for them. I came to take a developmental view of my own processes in this work. This awareness raised questions about issues of familiarity with the pedagogy.
Working with Students’ Discomfort with the Pedagogy

In the beginning, I noticed some of the student teachers were uncomfortable with the pedagogy. However, over the semester the student teachers grew in their comfort levels. The inherent nature of the activities led itself to a playful, fun, and relaxed atmosphere. Did these aspects of the activities help all the student teachers to feel more comfortable with the pedagogy? I do not know. The growing comfort with the pedagogy was demonstrated in how the student teachers held their bodies. They seemed less tense, constricted, and engaged with their bodies more fully and more freely. I wondered if this had anything to do with prior experience with using their bodies to express thoughts. Was the comfort with the pedagogy related with individual's ease of working with metaphors and abstract thoughts? What role did culture play in their feelings of comfort and safety? What role did personality play in their work with this pedagogy? What life situations did students bring into this work and how did those influence their responses?

I refer to my field notes to cite an example of the complexity of Jokering while working with the student discomfort.

I had asked the student teachers to create an image of their vision of their classroom from a teacher's perspective. After the students created their images, I went around tapping each one on their shoulder asking them to share what was going on in their mind at that time. I went around in a circle starting with Cathy. Each participant shared his/her thoughts and feelings. I tapped Daisy on her shoulder. She said that she was the teacher sitting on the floor. I intuitively felt a need to probe. Was it because I wanted her to share more than describing her position, I do not know? Following my
intuitiveness, I probed, inviting her to share what she was thinking and feeling at that point. She felt uncomfortable and left the room crying.

What made Daisy feel vulnerable? What was going on in her mind and heart? Was I being insensitive? Did I probe at a time when she was not ready? Were tears a release to the emotions she was holding within her and was unable to express? I don't really know. The experience was evocative for me and probably for her and the others too. I was touched by her humanness and her genuineness. (Field notes: March 5, 2006).

What made some student teachers particularly comfortable with the pedagogy? Lan, Meredith, Aura, and Elliot had had experiences working with PTO in the past. What roles did their prior experiences play in their feelings of comfort with the pedagogy? (Field notes: March 7, 2006).

Jokering: A Role as an Artist-Action-Researcher

A teacher action-researcher often uses critical inquiry to better their practice while the artist nurtures spontaneity, a sense of playfulness, and creativity. In this sense, one of my roles in facilitating the Boalian Theater was similar to an artist-action-researcher. Like an action researcher, I was interested in improving my facilitation of the Boalian activities. I systematically collected data through observations, field notes, photographs, and video recording of the sessions. At the end of each session, I transcribed and analyzed the data reflecting on the multiple sources and carefully listening and feeling with my participants to understand their experiences from their perspectives. In addition, I also paid attention to the challenges I observed and experienced as a facilitator and what I could do differently the next time. I took those ideas back into next seminar meeting, tried them out, and observed the outcomes. In addition to reflecting on my actions, I also continued to be present to the participants and myself during the
seminar meetings. This reflection-in-action helped me to become aware of the participants' needs, feelings, and thoughts and this awareness guided me in my decision-making in the moment. For example, deciding how long to continue an activity, what probing questions to ask, what other processes to incorporate to support the student teachers in their exploration. Through this systematic process of observation, analysis, reflection, and change in practice, I grew better in my facilitation and experienced transformation and empowerment.

Furthermore, I found that some features of the process supported my own sense of transformation and empowerment. For example, systematically collecting data, analyzing, and reflecting on the multiple sources of data led me to forming new insights, promoting confidence in my actions, and bringing about changes in my practice. I also came to see that the discomfort experienced during the process was a key feature in creating awareness and bringing about a change. It often shook up the status quo, led to new concepts, and raised further questions. Finally, working with the co-facilitator and the participants promoted my growth and development as an action researcher.

I incorporate the word 'artist' into my role as an action researcher for a reason. The process for me was artful. Like an artist, I approached my practice with a curious mind ready to experiment with new activities, to take risks, and to be guided by creativity, intuition, and logical thoughts. Like an artist, the process began with an idea, with some processes being defined and followed from the book *Games for Actors and Non Actors* (Boal, 2003), and some improvisations which were spontaneous, reflective, and interpretive guided by the rhythm of the group. In this sense, there was art-making and inter twining of thinking and feeling as ways of knowing.
In sum, the process of Jokering was not a simplistic here-to-there process but was full of messiness and complexities. It was through the working with the messiness and understanding the complexities that led to deeper understandings of PTO, the participants, and my role as the Joker.

**Steps Taken for Building a Safe Learning Environment in the Seminar Meetings**

Martha and I took conscious steps towards building a safe learning environment, as we believed that establishing safety would enhance trust and openness among members of the group. We set norms in the beginning of the semester and began each meeting with some time for connections. Both these activities were known to the student teachers as they had used similar activities in some of their previous courses.

The student teachers had used a protocol for setting norms in their ECCO launching class (EDEC 7020) with Dr. Betty Bisplinghoff. This protocol is developed by National School Reform Faculty for establishing class norms. Continuing with a practice the student teachers were comfortable with and had found it valuable, Martha and I also facilitated a group conversation on setting norms. However, we did not use the protocol that Dr. Betty Bisplinghoff had used. I describe the process we used in detail. In Seminar Meeting #1, we started our process of establishing norms first by asking the student teachers to brainstorm the norms they would like to be established here. After that, we asked the group if they had any clarification questions about any specific norm that was listed on the board. Finally, with the help of the student teachers we collapsed the norms that seemed similar into one category. In the final list, examples of the norms the student teachers created were as follows: Honoring time, being respectful, and taking initiative.
In addition to setting the norms that would guide our behavior during the seminar meetings, we started each meeting with a time for connections, a time that was intentionally used to build a safe and a connected learning community. Once again, the student teachers were familiar with this practice, as they had used a protocol ‘Connections’ which was developed by the National School Reform Faculty in their EDEC 7020. Also, they had participated in a similar activity in EDEC 8120, with Dr. Penny Oldfather. Dr. Oldfather used Temperature Reading for building connections where the students and she shared what was on their mind and heart by rating their ‘temperature’ on a scale of 1 to 10.

Thus, setting of norms and participating in connection time as ways of building safe learning environments was something the student teachers were already familiar with and understood the purpose and the value of it in deeper ways than just ‘mere’ activities to be done. With this understanding, I now describe the each of the activities and the responses of the student teachers.

Time for Connections

As the student teachers came trickling in to the seminar meetings they naturally moved towards their friends and informally began checking in with each other about their past two weeks. Some talked with Martha to address concerns and/or plan for the coming weeks. Martha moved from one student to the other, briefly stopping to talk about how things were going in the field.

Once all the students came in, Martha and I opened up time for connections, in which everyone was invited to share a significant moment from the past two weeks. Our purpose was to create a safe environment that would allow the members of this learning community to participate with minimal or no fear and facilitate free self-expression and participation in the rest
of the day's activities. On average, we spent about 15-20 minutes for connections in each seminar meeting, during which the members had the opportunity to share what was on their mind and in their heart. They shared their experiences as student teachers in the field, trying out a Boalian activity with the students in their classroom, implementing a suggestion from their peers in the seminar meetings, or posing questions about the activities we engaged in during the previous seminar meeting.

The student teachers, Martha, and I sat in a circle (Figure 1). We all took turns sharing and listening. The members were attentive and carefully listened to what each person shared. The student teachers often shared joys and frustrations. The joys were celebrated by the group as they smiled, nodded, maintained eye contact, or cheered. The pain was felt in silence with a nod of understanding and empathy for the other.

![Figure 1: Time for Connections](image)

The topics the student teachers touched upon during the connection time fell into three categories: expressing fears and challenges, expressing joys and successes, and raising doubts and concerns.

*Expressing Fears and Challenges*

The perception of time moving too fast was reported by many of the student teachers, especially in the first six weeks of student teaching. For example, Cathy shared her fear during one connection time:
I have just realized that next week we will be starting our Week 5 and soon it will be time for us to have the kids to ourselves. Time flies by so quickly and there is so much to do before that. It is scary. (Seminar Meeting #3)

Cathy’s feeling was shared by others who also felt pressed for time, as they perceived they had so much to learn and do each day. Writing lesson plans for the following week, organizing materials for the next day, writing reflections, and learning the class routines often left them feeling overwhelmed. Elliot reported that sharing his fears about and challenges in student teaching and listening to those of the others helped him realize that he was not alone and to feel less anxious.

Tanisha expressed the challenge she faced when using role play with one of her pre k students. She reported:

I used theater with my [pre k] student. She has difficulty following directions and so I told her we will do a role play where she will give me directions and I will follow. When we started, she said something but I could not understand her because she has some speech issues. So I needed her to repeat and she got mad at me for that. She kind of gave up on me. (Seminar Meeting #5)

Many student teachers reported experiences similar to that of Tanisha’s. Some expressed hurt, anger, and frustration when things in their lesson did not go as they had hoped.

Expressing Joy and Success

All of the student teachers reported their success in working through difficult moments in the field and shared their growing confidence in their teaching ability. One such report was shared by Lan. In the previous meeting, Lan had told the group about the challenges she had faced when teaching a lesson from Second Step Curriculum with her fourth graders. Using
Forum Theater, the group had generated multiple ways of problem-solving after examining her situation with a critical eye. After considering all the possibilities offered to her, Lan decided to implement one alternative. As a follow-up in the next meeting she reported:

I found the suggestions very helpful. I asked specific students to role play during the Second Step. I asked them as we were walking back from lunch. I prepared them. I can teach these kids. I think things are getting better, better since we last met. (Seminar Meeting #3)

All the student teachers shared with the group their moments of celebration. These feelings of joy and success greatly contributed to their feelings of increased confidence and accomplishment.

In addition, three student teachers Elliot, Tanisha, and Meredith, reported their experiences using Boal's Theater activities in their classrooms. During connection time, they reported their experiences with this. The students in Elliot's class were reading *Hands Are Not for Hitting* by Martine Agassi. Elliot wanted to extend the meaning of this book by engaging students first in thinking about and then in creating images of ways in which they use their hands at home.

The students in his class had a positive experience and he was excited by the insights he gained about them, their hobbies, and the member(s) of the family who participated in the activity. In the meeting he said:

I really liked using PTO activities in my pre-k classroom. Foram and I had planned earlier and we talked about how we could connect a book the students were reading with becoming aware of all the other things they do with their hands at home. We saw some interesting details. I saw the kids were completely into it. (Seminar Meeting #4)
Meredith also shared her experiences using the games from Boalian Theater with her first graders. She reported:

I have to admit that I was curious but a bit apprehensive of doing these activities with the children, but the session went wonderfully and the children absolutely loved it. The next day they were already asking when we could do the games again and suggesting different variations of the games. (Seminar Meeting #3)

All the student teachers gave accounts in which they felt happy when their students were engaged and motivated by the activities.

_Raising Doubts and Concerns_

The time for connection was often used to raise doubts and concerns about the processes that we were using in the seminar meetings. Meredith, in an earlier seminar meeting, spoke honestly about her frustrations with the pedagogy, especially creating short playlets for Forum Theater. She said:

I was wondering about the role playing activity we did last time. People were giving many suggestions and the suggestions were wonderful. But my problem was that in the role play, we could not get in everything that was going on in the situation. Therefore, suggestions though appropriate, I don't know how it would work in my situation.

(Seminar Meeting # 4)

Meredith's question reflects her attempt to make knowledge valid by taking into account her specific position in her given context. Feminist researchers often talk about positionality influencing the construction of knowledge. Later in the seminar meeting, we addressed Meredith's question and began to consider what changes in the Boalian Theater format would help use it meaningfully. The group decided that providing more specific information on the
classroom context would help the group make appropriate recommendations. This change in the
instructions facilitated their involvement in the Forum Theater. In this way, Meredith's question
facilitated collaborative learning and promoted group ownership.

By engaging in listening and sharing personal accounts of the joys, successes, fears, and
challenges they faced in the field, the members reported developing a group identity and a
feeling of solidarity that facilitated their interactions in the Boalian activities.

Boalian Activities: Vignettes

The Boalian activities Martha and I facilitated in the seminar meetings fell into three
categories: Games, Image Theater, and Forum Theater.

Games

I took the lead in explaining the rules of the game and Martha helped in demonstrating
the game to the student teachers. After an explanation and a demonstration, we all engaged in
playing the game and then stopped to debrief. The games were selected from Games for Actors
and Non-Actors by Augusto Boal (2003). The four games we played during the seminar
meetings were Walks, Statue Game, A Round of Rhythm and Movement, and Colombian
Hypnosis.

Walks

The first game we played in Seminar Meeting #2 was Walks. Walking often is a
mechanized movement, and though we have our own individual gait, walking often alters
according to place and the roles we play. Becoming aware of our walking can be a way in which
one can get in touch with one's inner thoughts and feelings and those of others.

I facilitated this game by asking the group to come to the center of the room and inviting
them to walk around in circles, lines, or in a pattern they desired but in a way that would not
cause them to bump into someone else and hurt them. I typically called out a prompt, waited for about 70-100 seconds, and then called out the next. The specific prompts I used were as follows: walk like yourself, walk when in a hurry, walk in a garden, walk like a teacher in your school, walk as a principal in your school, walk as a child you adore in your present classroom, walk like a child you have difficulty connecting with in your present classroom, and walk like a teacher you would like to be.

The student teachers stood in the center of the room in an oval, feeling slightly self-conscious and shy. There were spurts of nervous laughter as they followed the initial prompts and became aware of their habitual way of walking. As we moved ahead, the nervous laughter and restricted and tentative movements began to be replaced by more grounded and expanded movements, further releasing their ability to imagine the other. For example, Cathy, who initially walked with her hands at her side, began to roll on the carpet just like a child she was trying to understand.

A considerable change in the gait and the way they held their body was evident when I asked the group to walk like a principal. Many of the student teachers straightened their posture, held their neck high, tightened their jaw, and held their hands behind their back (see Figure 2). Some used their index finger to point as they walked around. In contrast, the postures were more open when they walked like a teacher. They smiled and relaxed their shoulders. Through their walks, the student teachers expressed their perception of how administrative positions may influence the way people hold their bodies.
While walking like a child they felt connected with, some skipped or walked with a big smile on their face, maintaining eye contact with others (Figure 3). With their bodies the student teachers painted the personality of a child they adore as a happy, bubbly, enthusiastic, and energetic.

In stark contrast, they enacted a child they had difficulty connecting with by pushing, rolling on the floor, throwing their hands up in the air and showing wild movements, and walking with their head down. Thus, with their bodies, the student teachers expressed the various behaviors of the children with whom they found it difficult to connect.

At the end of the activity, we took a few minutes to debrief and share what we had learned. The student teachers became aware of some of their metacognitive thoughts. Cathy, who had rolled on the floor in response to the prompt “walk like a child you have difficulty connecting with,” recognized the energy that children need to engage in actions like rolling, pushing, and being rambunctious all through the day. She said:
When you are walking like a teacher, I realized I wanted to see the positive traits in the children. I realized how much energy a child needs to have to do all the things that he does. This helped me to see that child from another perspective.

Similarly, Meredith felt the energy in the children and recognized the need to create opportunities for children to stretch and move during the school day. She articulated:

I want to look around and see and understand. I became aware of how others carry themselves. I became aware of the physical needs and need for movement for children in younger grades. They just have so much of energy and often all they do through the day is sit at a desk.

The activity of ‘walking like a teacher you would like to be’ helped Lan think about what kind of a teacher she would like to be. She observed, “I want to be an optimistic teacher that relates with every child.” Walking as a teacher and a principal helped Aura to understand how her walk changed with gaining power. She related, “I became aware of how attitude and positions influence one’s walking.” Tanisha got in touch with her physical body through the various walking activities. She confessed that she had never given much thought to walking before. She said, “I became aware of how much of walking we take for granted.”

Through the walking activity the participants uncovered some of the things they took for granted or things that may have become mechanical to them in their world, creating a deeper understanding of themselves, others, and the influence of power in their relationships.

Statue Game

Another game we played in Seminar Meeting #2 was the Statue Game, also known as Complete the Image. Images evoke memories, imaginations, and emotions in the observer who looks at them.
I demonstrated the game with the help of Martha. I asked Martha to shake hands with me and freeze. I then turned to the group and asked them what came to their minds when they saw this image. What possible meanings could this image carry? Once the group began to label the image, I then asked them to insert themselves into the image to express their meaning of the image rather than verbally saying it. The participants created their image in the center, while the rest of the group walked around in a circle reading the image from different positions in silence. At times, we stopped to label the images.

After our walks, the group was warmed up and ready to play the game. The student teachers walked around in a circle to read the image in the center, and took turns putting themselves in the image to create new meanings and interpretations that conveyed their ideas, or feelings. Each time a participant entered an image, the meaning of the image changed. With the help of photographs, I provide some examples of the images the student teachers made and the labels the group gave, as they perceived the image.

The student teachers labeled the image created in Figure 4 as 'image of encouragement,' ‘image of support,’ ‘image of invitation,’ and ‘image of caring.’

Figure 4: Statue Activity

The image created in Figure 5 was labeled by the observers as ‘in conversation,’ ‘sharing a secret,’ and ‘can't hear.’
Figure 5: Statue Activity

The image created in Figure 6 was labeled as by the observers as “you can learn—you are smart,” “I am sorry,” and “It is going to be O.K.”

Figure 6: Statue Activity

The student teachers enjoyed this activity. The silence in the room was often mixed with ripples of laughter from the group as they read the images and heard the labels. In addition to having fun, the group also saw value in this game. Many felt that this helped them to get multiple perspectives. Tanisha connected this activity with a curriculum standard of gaining appreciation and empathy for others. She felt an activity like this, when used with students in the classroom, can help meet this specific standard. Martha saw the value of this activity for interpreting and expressing children’s feelings.

A Round of Rhythm and Movement

In Seminar Meeting #4 we played this game for the purpose of understanding the “inner” rhythms and closely listening to what we see and hear. I facilitated this activity by inviting the student teachers to form a circle. I then explained the activity: a leader in the group will start an
action and a sound to go along with it. After all of us have listened to the movement and sound, we will repeat the movement and sound as a group. Then the next person will become a leader and while repeating the earlier movement and sound will add her movement and sound. The group will then follow the second leader. We will continue playing this game till everyone has had a chance to become a leader.

Once everyone understood the rules of the game, we started playing it. All the members of the group smiled and laughed throughout. Some thought of funny sounds and movements and acted silly, which only added to the enjoyment. The internal rhythm of this group is captured clearly in the photographs in Figure 7.

![Figure 7: A Round of Rhythm and Movement](image)

Afterwards the student teachers shared their responses to the game. All of them enjoyed the game and had a lot of fun playing it. Tanisha found it hard to follow the rhythm. Aura had a similar awareness; she found some of the movements were not a part of her habitual movements. As a result, she took time to adapt. Daisy, on the other hand, said she found this activity easy as she often used similar actions to get the attention of the students in her class.

*Colombian Hypnosis*

We played this game in Seminar Meeting #4 to enhance our tactile sensitivity by feeling what we touch with our physical bodies.
I facilitated this game by first asking the student teachers to find a partner. Then, with the help of Aura, I demonstrated and explained the rules of the game. In this game, one partner, the leader, holds his/her palm forward about one foot away from the face of the other partner. The leader then moves his/her hand in a series of movements. The other partner tries to follow the hand so that the same distance between the face and the hand is maintained. After some time, the roles are switched. After playing in a dyad, we played the game in groups of three.

Figure 8a: Colombian Hypnosis - Working in Dyads

Figure 8b: Colombian Hypnosis - Working in Triads

As seen in Figures 8a and 8b, the student teachers played this game with enthusiasm. The leaders moved their hands slowly while the partners tried their best to maintain the one foot distance between their face and the hand. This often created new challenges so that the followers had to contort their bodies, bend low, and stretch.

At the end of the game, Daisy commented that bending and stretching helped her to become aware of her physical capacity and specifically the muscles she minimally used. Meredith appreciated the opportunity to experiment with creative movements through this
activity, noting, “I was trying to get creative with my movements. I realized that I could move my hands back and forth to create a specific movement for Cathy.”

Elliot also gained insights when he started experimenting with movements. “Yes, definitely challenge and even using your muscles in a certain way. For example, what Tanisha was doing here, I remember that when we were doing this activity, I began to think of what would happen if I moved my hand in a different way or if I crossed the position.”

On the other hand, Aura, realized the power of non-verbal communication. She saw clearly how students and teachers communicate with their bodies and can help in reading one’s world.

In sum, the student teachers reported becoming more aware of the other, their relationships, the teacher they would like to be, and their potential and limitations by participating in the Boalian games. In addition, the games helped open their minds to see the multiple constructions of the world. For example: After creating individual images of the classroom from a teacher’s perspective, we were able to see the classroom of student teachers through their eyes. Tanisha through her image brought alive the pressures the standard driven curriculum had created for the teachers, Elliot shared the need to find a balance between his visions and meeting the standards, Lan wanted to reach out to all students in her class. Thus, through their images the student teachers interpreted and created their vision of the classroom. These images were embedded in their personal experiences and the uniqueness in each image helped us to understand life of a teacher in a classroom from multiple perspectives.

*Image Theater*

Martha and I facilitated Image Theater activities with the student teachers in Seminar Meetings #5 and #6. Our purpose for introducing Image Theater was to engage the student
teachers in expressing their deeply held beliefs and perceptions about themselves, their relationships with their students, and their purposes in teaching by molding their bodies as if they were clay. The student teachers created images individually and in groups of two or three. The prompts for the images were the following: “Images of your classroom today,” “Images of the issues you have grappled with during student teaching,” “Images of your perceived strength as a future teacher,” “Image of a future teacher,” and “Images of Lan’s journey during student teaching.”

Creating Images of Your Classroom Today

In Seminar meeting #5, after introducing the purposes of Image Theater, Martha and I invited the student teachers to create images of their classroom today based on their perceptions. When the images were created, it became apparent that the prompt was interpreted from two perspectives. Some student teachers created images based on their students’ perspectives while others created an image from a teacher perspective. We integrated both the interpretations by adding another round of images. In the first round, if the student teachers had created an image from the students’ perspective, then in the second round they were invited to consider their classroom from a teacher’s perspective and vice versa. Working with these two prompts helped us to look at the classroom from multiple stakeholder perspectives, which helped all of us gain a deeper understanding.

Elliot told us that his students work on the floor for most of the day. Therefore, from the students’ perspective he created an image of reading a book while laying on the floor. He labeled his image, “I have work to do” (Figure 9a).
From a teacher's perspective, Elliot described the challenge of trying to find a sense of grounding in all the things he did during the day. He felt grounded when he was guided by a sense of connection but felt off balance when he was unable to make those connections. Through his image he expressed his challenge and his desire to be grounded and connected (see Figure 9b). Specifically, he said:

I can't find balance in this part of the classroom. What I am doing here, I am really happy. But not here, so I want to find the balance for this foot too. I want to feel connected as I feel here with this part.
Tanisha perceived her classroom as a place where the teacher and the students were running and racing against time as they tried to meet the standards and requirements (Figure 10).

![Figure 10: “A Runner”](image)

The student teachers were actively engaged in making the images, sharing their perceptions of themselves and the students in their classroom with others in a word-few environments. At the end of the activity many student teachers appreciated the similarities and differences they perceived in the images of themselves and others. For example, Lan later shared with me that even though she had not thought about the challenge of finding a balance in her classroom, Elliot's image helped her to get connected and become aware of that part of herself that was struggling to find a balance. In this way, she was able to feel connected with Elliot and to grasp more fully her experiences in the field.

*Creating Images of Issues Grappled with During Student Teaching*

In our final seminar meeting, the student teachers wanted to use images to reflect on their perceived growth and development. In this spirit, Martha and I asked the student teachers to create group images reflecting the issues they had grappled with during the ten weeks of student teaching and specifically to reflect on their views on a particular issue and how their thinking has changed during their student teaching.
The student teachers were grouped as follows: Tanisha, Daisy, and Martha; Cathy and Meredith; and Elliot, Lan, and Aura. The student teachers immediately got to work. Some of the student teachers had already shared with me that over time they had gained confidence and competence in using images to express their thoughts. This was very evident as they skillfully molded themselves and others to express their growth and development through the image. For example, in Elliot, Lan, and Aura’s group, after deciding who would go first (Figure 11-a), Elliot skillfully began to mold Aura and Lan by mirroring what he wanted them to do, without giving any verbal directions (Figure 11-b). Lan and Aura attempted to put themselves in Elliot’s shoes and experience the feeling of tension he was trying to express through the pushing and pulling action. In the final step, Elliot put himself in the image and completed the image (Figure 11-c).

![Figure 11: Working in a Group](image)

After creating their images, the student teachers gave labels to them. Elliot expressed the challenge of dealing with anxiety and ambiguity by labeling his image, “Difficult days and easy moments give you the real thing.” Tanisha labeled her image “Acts of support,” as she felt supported by Daisy, who also worked in the same school (Figure 12). Cathy labeled her image “Unpredictable,” as she often found it hard to predict her students and their actions (Figure 13).
Lan, who felt challenged by the need to find a balance between her feelings of excitement and fear, labeled her image, ‘Balance scale’ (Figure 14).

Creating images of perceived strength as a future teacher. After we created images of the challenges, Martha and I now specifically invited each group to reflect on their perceived strengths as future teachers and then to create a common image that would represent the shared strength of their group. On understanding the prompt, the student teachers first shared their thoughts with each other in their small groups and then collaborated to create an image that would integrate their strengths. After a short conversation and a little bit of practice, they were ready to share their images with the others in the group.

Lan, Aura, and Elliot labeled their image ‘Evolution’ to reflect their view of student teaching as a time for evolving and learning. For this group, the journey was characterized by the
crawling infant, the wobbly walk of a toddler, and the confident run of a child. However, they perceived that their journey was not over and they still had a long road ahead (Figure 15).

![Figure 15: “Evolution”](image)

Tanisha and Daisy labeled their image ‘Collaboration’ (Figure 16). They have worked together in school and through this image they brought out their spirit of collaboration. Tanisha explained, “Before joining this program we had a similar background, and then we both taught pre-K and we ended up in the same school and the same hall. We stopped in each other's class, and bounced our ideas off each other.”

![Figure 16: “Collaboration”](image)

Meredith and Cathy labeled their image ‘multicultural globe’ (Figure 17). Cathy and Meredith started the circle and then Meredith carefully ushered all the members of the group, one by one, into the circle. This coming together and holding of hands helped the student teachers to
feel connected with each other and reinforced the diversity even within our small group. Cathy noted, “It is our experiences, international experiences, teaching, and learning in diverse settings that we see as our strength in building multicultural classrooms. So this is the image of all the children holding their hands around the globe.”

![Image 17: ‘Multicultural Globe’](image)

*Creating images of a future teacher.* The last Image activity we did on the final day of the seminar meeting was to create images of the teachers we would like to be. Our purpose in introducing this prompt was to provide an opportunity for the student teachers to reflect on their purposes for teaching. The student teachers thought about this prompt for a few minutes and then started creating their images. Meredith labeled her image “Bridge” as she saw her purpose as building a community and establishing trust with her students. Cathy called hers “Juggler” because she saw teaching as an act of juggling multiple responsibilities (Figure 18). Lan saw herself as a “Deep Thinker” because her experiences in the field had forced her to think of ways in which she could involve parents in supporting children’s education. Elliot created an image of “Wanting to Reach beyond the Shelf” because he wanted to go beyond the academic standards and help children make connections with their family and community. Daisy labeled her image “Balance Scale” (Figure 19) and explained her reasons to the rest of the group:

> Before I went back to school, I stayed at home for a few years and now that I have this student teaching experience, I have realized how much I love teaching, and how intensely
involved it can be. This was a whole other level for me and I am wondering where to find a balance in my life and work.

![Figure 18: “Juggler”](image1)

![Figure 19: “Balance Scale”](image2)

Creating images of Lan’s journey during student teaching. In Seminar Meeting # 5 we shared our understanding of Boalian Theater and the ways in which it was helping us. At the very end of this discussion, Lan gave a new purpose to our discussion by sharing her inability to understand why some students in her class were not willing to participate in learning math. With exasperation she said, “I feel like when I am teaching them math, it is almost like I am begging them.”

I intuitively recognized that Lan was grappling with many different feelings. To provide Lan with an opportunity to release some of her pent-up feelings and for others to understand what she was experiencing, I asked Lan if she would like to work with her feelings using images, to which she readily agreed. I asked her to invite the other members from the group and to sculpt their bodies to express her feelings. She first called in Elliot, followed by Meredith, Cathy, Martha, and Tanisha. Lan physically molded the bodies of her colleagues to express gestures while mirroring the facial expressions she wanted (Figure 20).
Lan labeled her image, “The Mind of a Student Teacher.” Through the images she eloquently expressed her journey from being an excited to a depressed student teacher who ultimately took charge of herself and her feelings and began to think of what she could do. Lan explained the image as follows:

So here I am (pointing to Elliot) feeling all happy, then I am faced with all these discipline problems (pointing to Meredith's image), and then I got very angry (Cathy's image). And then there are these two boys in math class whom I asked to leave my class (Martha's image), and I feel like depressed and feel what shall I do (Tanisha's image). And very finally I feel as though I need to get myself back and try for some other strategies and get my emotions back.

Through her images, Lan invited us to reach a deeper understanding of how the various challenges in the field influenced her feelings and actions. Some of the other student teachers also expressed similar feelings. Aura voiced appreciation for the opportunity to get to know Lan in a deeper way by understanding her feelings.

In summary, many student teachers reported that Image Theater provided opportunities to reflect on their experiences and understand how their interpretations of those experiences
influenced their feelings and thoughts about themselves, their relationships with their students, and their purposes for teaching.

*Forum Theater*

In Seminar Meetings #2 and #3 we worked with the dilemmas some of the student teachers presented to us using structures from Forum Theater. The two dilemmas were named “Teaching Second Step” and “Give Me Clay.”

*Dilemma 1: “Teaching Second Step.”*

In Seminar Meeting #2, Lan shared her experiences in teaching Second Step. Second Step is a classroom-based social skills program for children that aims to reinforce skills in empathy, impulse control, problem solving, and anger management. When Lan implemented the lesson, she was faced with some student resistance. She did not know how to deal with this situation and posed this question for us to consider.

To prepare for the Forum Theater, Lan asked Tanisha and Cathy to work with her. They conferred for a short time, during which Lan shared her story and they worked together on preparing the role play to bring out the essence of the situation and the challenges faced from Lan's perspective. Lan played the role of the teacher, and Cathy and Tanisha played students named Rosy and Brian respectively. After about 15 minutes they were ready to present the situation. We watched the two-part role play with a critical eye to get a deeper understanding of the context. The script of this role play is as follows:

*Part 1: Finding a partner*

Ms. Lan: Find your own pair to work on this task.

Brian: Ms. Lan, I do not have a partner.

Rosy: (comes up to Lan) Ms. Lan, I do not have a partner.
Ms. Lan: The two of you can pair up.

Brian: (Moves away.)

Rosy: (Looks away.)

Ms. Lan: What happened? Don't the two of you want to team up?

Brian and Rosy: (Both move away.) We do not want to pair together.

Ms. Lan: (says in a sweet, cajoling tone) You guys are friends, you need to work together. They are not convinced and they continue to resist being paired together.

After seeing this role play once, I turned to the audience members, asked them to consider the feelings of the different characters and think about what they would do in a similar situation, and then invited them to enact their intervention by stepping into the role play after saying STOP. I reminded them that our purpose was not to reach one right answer but to generate multiple possibilities. Lan, Cathy, and Tanisha started the role play again. The first one to shout STOP was Daisy. She came forward, took Lan's place, and said,

Daisy: We are going to have partners to do the activities. I am going to make partners by pulling the popsicle sticks. Cathy, you are with Brian and Tanisha, you are with John.

Brian: I do not want to partner with her.

Daisy: (taken aback with Tanisha's response, she laughs nervously and stands there fidgeting with her hands).

At this point, Martha intervened.

Martha: STOP. (Daisy stepped out and Martha took the place of Lan and continued)

Martha: Sometimes it is hard to figure out who you want to work with. If you do not want to work with this partner, I will be glad to work with you.

Rosy: I will work with her. (Pointing to another student).
(The group laughed listening to Cathy's spontaneous response.)
The third person to offer an alternative was Lan. Stepping out of the situation and considering what was going on helped her to think of how else she could have handled the situation.

Lan: STOP

Lan: Okay guys, let's work with partners. You may work with the person sitting next to you. We are not going to move.

At this point, I asked if there were any other possibilities. Since we had exhausted our ideas for the time being, we moved to work with part 2 of the role play.

*Part 2: Respecting elders*

In this situation two students had read a story from the Second Step Curriculum.

Ms. Lan: Okay, Brian, what do you think? Should the boy in this story have shouted at his mother? Do you think that is appropriate?

Brian: That is okay. Me and my mom shout at each other all the time.

Ms. Lan: After that do you feel bad about it?

Brian: ( Shrugs his shoulders.)

Ms. Lan: (in an attempt to invite an acceptable perspective, she turns to another student). What about you, Cathy?

Rosy: It is okay. I shout at my mum.

After seeing this role play once, I repeated the directions I had given earlier and invited the spect-actors to participate by enacting their ideas. Lan, Cathy, and Tanisha started the role play again. The first one to shout STOP was Meredith.

Meredith: So you think it is okay to yell at your mother?

Rosy: Yes.

Meredith: What about your grandmother? Do you yell at her?

Rosy: Yes.
Meredith: Is there anyone in your family you respect? You do not yell to. Can you picture yourself as a mother you love so much, would you want your child to yell at you?

Brian: I don't care, really.

Meredith: (laughs out loud, returns back to her seat) You guys are mean (laughs again).

After Meredith returned to her seat, Aura stepped in.

Aura: What is something that hurts you?
(Rosy and Brian look at each other.)

Aura: Are material things more important to you than people's feelings? What do you think about it? What do you care about? If you had a choice what would you do?

Brian: (Shrugs his shoulders and mumbles.) I don't know.
(Rosy turns away from Aura.)

Aura: (In a soft persuasive voice.) What would you do?

Brian: I would play with my Play station.

Aura: Okay, so material things again . . . now think for tomorrow and try to write something that you care about.

A third possibility was generated when Lan stepped in.

Lan: Okay, now let's listen to some other students' responses. Meredith what about you--do you think it is okay for the child to shout at his mother?

Meredith: No. my parents don't like me to. If I do, I have to go to my room.

A fourth possibility was generated when Martha stepped in.

Martha: We just saw a role play about the mother and the child arguing. What do you think was going on there? How do you think the boy was feeling? How do you think the mother was feeling?

Brian: I think the boy is mad . . .

Martha: What is going on? What was the boy trying to say to his mother?

Brian: (mumbles)
Martha: If you were the mother, what could you have done?

Brian: Sit there and listen to the child.

Martha: What do you think the mother could have said to the boy to help communicate better and not let that yelling happen?

Rosy: I cannot listen if this yelling occurs.

This role playing led to an authentic discussion on examining the context and critically thinking about what was going on. The student teachers brought up issues related to teacher authority, teaching strategies, and the challenges of teaching a value-based program. A part of the group discussion was as follows:

Aura: Do you think the children are challenging the teacher?

Tanisha: Yes.

Martha: Sometimes it is more complicated than that. When challenging is going on there is a relationship issue, too.

Tanisha: You have to establish the authority with the students. You need to tell them that if your class teacher is going to set these limits, you are going to do the same.

Cathy: You need to set your boundary from the very beginning. First, if you want to be nice, and keep saying it is okay then the students will continue doing it. Therefore, having consequences is important.

Meredith: Have you seen your teacher do a lesson like that?

Lan: Yes, I saw her only once. Discipline issues are important. I have seen it once but she did not have any activities. I went on to include more activities and thought that way I will make it more interesting. She just showed the picture and read through.

Foram: Sometimes the challenge of value education is in not to engage in preaching.

Martha: It is just tricky with the values program that is doing good, and some are preachy and it puts you in a difficult position as a teacher. Therefore, we need to look at the lesson and see how they can be made meaningful to fourth graders. Sometimes we preach more to younger ages and expect
them to respond. But by the time they come into fourth grade they are thinking more by themselves.

Through role playing and debriefing the student teachers reported a feeling of coming together to support each other and considering multiple ways in which they could approach challenging situations. Lan took the suggestions seriously and looked forward to using some of them with the students in her classroom.

The second dilemma that we worked with in Seminar Meeting #3 was called “Give Me Clay.”

_Dilemma 2: “Give Me Clay.”_

Meredith shared with us the frustration she felt when a child in her guided reading group had been challenging her authority. Meredith asked Cathy if she could help her enact the situation. Cathy readily agreed and they stepped out in the hallway to prepare for the role play. After a short while they came in and started the role play.

Meredith took the role of the teacher and Cathy played Jamaiah, a first grader in Meredith’s class. The purpose of this guided reading lesson was to help students understand procedural reading. During guided reading time, Meredith had planned a lesson where she divided the class into three small groups. In each group, they would first read a book describing how to make clay creatures and later, using clay, they would follow the procedures in the book to create their own creature.

Meredith had no difficulty facilitating in the first small group, but in the second group, she felt challenged and later frustrated when Jamaiah was more interested in playing with clay than in reading and learning about following procedures. The script of the role play is as follows:

Ms. Meredith:   Ok children, we are going to read the book *Clay Creatures.*

Jamaiah:   I want to play with clay . . . I want to play with clay.
Ms. Meredith: (Ignoring Jamaiah). We are going to read the book first and then we are going to play with clay.

Jamaiah: I want to play with clay . . . I want to play with clay.

Ms. Meredith: (Continues to ignore Jamaiah). Everyone look at the book first. What do you think this book may be about? Who can read me the title?

Jamaiah: (flips through the book)

Ms. Meredith: Jamaiah, can you look at the cover and tell me what is on the cover? What kind of a book is this . . . what do you see on this page? (this goes on for some time.)

Ms. Meredith: Jamaiah, can you turn to page 2 and tell me what is on page 2?

Jamaiah: I want to play with clay . . . I want to play with clay.

Ms. Meredith: All right, you can play with clay after we have finished reading the book. You need to follow along with me. If you do not follow along with me you will not be able to play with clay. What are those notes doing in your book? Let me take those notes away.

Jamaiah: Can I have one?

Ms. Meredith: Okay, you can have one. All right, let's turn to page 4. Can anyone tell me what you see on page 4? Materials, that is right. We are going to use those materials to make our clay creatures later. Now finish reading your book and after that we are going to make our own clay creatures. (after some time)

Ms. Meredith: Okay guys, now what clay creature would you want to make? Does anyone know?

Jamaiah: I want to play with clay.

Ms. Meredith: Wait, Jamaiah. All right, great Ashley, you want to make a snake—here is your piece of paper. Jamaiah, what are you going to make? Now turn to page 2. On top you will write–My clay creature is. write down the materials.

Meredith: Well, that is how pretty much the entire interaction went . . . he was nagging all the time and then became quiet once he got the clay.
Figure 21: “Give Me Clay”

After seeing the role play once from Meredith’s perspective, I invited Meredith to consider playing the role of Jamaiah to help her and all of us understand the student’s perspective. Meredith and Cathy switched characters and started the role play again. As the play went on, Meredith began to get into the skin of the student bringing forth clearly his true desire to play with clay. I then invited the spect-actors to intervene and enact their alternatives (Figure 21).

Elliot was the first to call out STOP. In his possibility, Elliot tried to increase the child’s interest in the book by focusing on the topic of the book.

(Jamaiah has already been asking for the clay for quite some time now.)

Elliot: We have talked about clay. Does everyone understand what clay is and what we can do with clay? Yes, we are going to make clay creatures. Do you know what clay creatures are? (Catches Jamaiah’s hand—giving him attention and setting an expectation). The book is going to tell us how to make clay creatures, Jamaiah, do you understand? Have you read the book already?
Jamaiah: Yes.
(Elliot looks surprised). (The group reads the book aloud together).

Elliot: Jamaiah, what are you going to make?

Jamaiah: I want to make a snake, can I make a snake? Can I make the snake now?.

Elliot: Yes, you may. (and then takes his hands forward to clench Jamaiah's throat indicating his frustration with the child).
(All burst out laughing)

Elliot's act of frustration struck a chord in Meredith's heart, as she felt understood. She said, “You have understood my pain.” Martha was the next to step in. She used reasoning as an act of intervention.

Martha: Jamaiah, I know all of us are very excited to play with clay. But we need to wait. Sometimes waiting can be frustrating. I get frustrated, too. But you know this book is very interesting. Find a picture that is very interesting and everyone is going to do that. We will figure out how to do this together. I know you can do this and thank you for helping me.

Jamaiah: (followed directions).

At this point, Aura raised her hand and said, “I have another idea” Aura's intervention helped the child to see himself as having an important social role in the class.

Aura: Jamaiah, what we are going to do now is we are going to read about how to make clay creatures. You have to read very carefully so that everyone can understand. You can read slow and I am going to model. Okay, what do you see on page 1?

Meredith: Why should I explain to him?

Aura: May be you would like to explain to me (the teacher). I am going to ask you, Jamaiah, to read Step 1 and 2 and then Cathy can explain Step 3 and 4.

I suggested the next alternative. In my intervention, I recommended weaving together the child's interest with the teacher's goals.

Foram: What we are going to do today is make clay creatures as we read about how to make them. Everyone open to page 1. What is the title of this page?
In sum, the student teachers reported that Forum Theater created a lively environment where they came together to understand the situation within a specific context and to collaborate with others to generate multiple ways of responding.

**Scale of Confidence**

In Seminar Meeting #5, we created a human continuum to examine the group members’ level of confidence at the beginning of student teaching and towards the end of student teaching. Martha’s and my purpose in introducing this activity was to provide an opportunity for the student teachers to reflect on their growth in competency and level of confidence during their student teaching.

I drew an imaginary continuum with one end being 1 (low confidence) and the other end being 10 (high confidence). I then invited the student teachers to place themselves on this scale from 1 to 10 to express their level of confidence at the beginning of student teaching and to share their reasons for selecting that number. After that, we repeated the same process to understand where they were towards the end of student teaching (Figure 22).

It came as a surprise for many to see where others had placed themselves and where they stood in relation to others. On seeing that she had placed herself on the higher end of the scale at the beginning of student teaching, Meredith commented that she never felt super confident but had not realized that she felt more confident than others did. By the end of student teaching, the
spread on the continuum had become narrower, with almost everyone moving towards the upper end of the scale indicating that each of them had seen a growth in themselves.

Issues related to language fluency, accent, acceptance from students and their parents, and lack of familiarity with expectations of the role of a student teacher were some of the reasons they reported for having low confidence. On the other hand, getting firsthand experience, receiving feedback from the university facilitator and mentor teacher, gaining fluency in English, attending the student teaching seminars, and having a feeling of accomplishment were some of the reasons reported for the increase in the level of confidence towards the end of student teaching.

*Other Activities*

In Seminar Meetings #4 and #6 we used construction paper to explore the challenges faced in the classroom and employed drawing to visualize the future classroom the student teachers would like to build in their first year of teaching.

The student teachers gathered around a table that was prepared for these activities. The materials were laid out on the table and they chose their materials. In Seminar Meeting #4, some of the student teachers talked as they continued to work on their art projects. In Seminar Meeting #6, the students worked more in silence. Once they had completed their artifact, we went around
in a circle and each student teacher briefly talked about the artifact. In both instances they were deeply engaged in the activity (Figure 23).

Figure 23: Creating an Artifact

In Seminar meeting # 4 the student teachers created many different kinds of artifacts to respond to the prompt “challenges faced in the classroom.” Elliot labeled his artifact a ‘Balancing Beam,’” representing the challenges he faced balancing administrative needs and listening to his intuitive voice (Figure 24).

Figure 24: “Balancing Beam”  Figure 25: “Rainbow”

Daisy talked about how her understanding of the complexities of teaching was expanding (Figure 25):

It first began at home with teaching my own children where I saw a small part of the rainbow. Then I taught preschool and I consider that my foundation. I saw more of the rainbow there. There was also a rainbow on the wall. I had a lot of freedom and I got to
do what I wanted. I learned a lot there and, therefore, when I think of teaching I think of
the rainbow on my pre k classroom wall. But now things are just getting bigger and
bigger.

In envisioning the classroom activity, Lan painted an abstract picture to express diversity
in her classroom (Figure 26). Elliot, Daisy, and Meredith created a blueprint of what their future
classroom would look like. Tanisha and Cathy wrote their vision, which Cathy called a ‘stream of
consciousness’. Tanisha wrote:

This is an image of a classroom where children are talking, smiling. There are students
working together in small groups and students working individually. The classroom has
lots of color. Children sit in the center under the loft reading books of their choice. The
teacher walks around the room and talks with the students as they are working. She asks
them about the books that they are reading, the manipulatives they are using to count.
The walls of the classroom have pictures of the students with their families. Students
have a place to display their work.
Stepping Back: Listening to Student Teachers’ Voices

A few months after the seminar meetings, in one of their induction meetings, the student teachers participated in a chalk talk to understand how their experiences with Boalian Theater were influencing their current work. Their comments were as follows:

Cathy: I try to place myself in my students’ shoes and understand where they are coming from.

Tanisha: I think more about what my students are feeling.

Meredith: I want to talk more in my classroom about what my students are feeling and how to healthily express their emotions.

Daisy: It helped me to be a considerate and open-minded teacher.

Meredith: It helps me to problem-solve rather than getting stuck in frustrating situations.

Cathy: We should continue to help each other to generate more alternatives.

Elliot: I step back and look for other ways.

Meredith: I try to think critically and approach problems/issues I have from others’ perspectives. I need PTO activities to inform my planning more.

Aura: TO makes you aware of the power relations and understanding that you can be the oppressed or the oppressor. Sometimes, teachers don't realize the power they have on a child! Even though many times we, the teachers, feel that we are a powerless group.

Lan: I am using this to write my student teaching experiences. Specifically, I am studying myself about how I developed my teaching practice in the United States and Theater of the Oppressed is the framework that has influenced me.

Summary

In this chapter, I raised the curtain to provide a flavor of the Boalian activities the student teachers participated in during their six seminar meetings. Furthermore, by incorporating the voices of the student teachers throughout this chapter I painted broad strokes that allow the
reader to peek into the inner world of the thoughts, feelings, and actions of the student teachers during their student teaching experiences.

The games, Image Theater, Forum Theater, and other arts-based activities not only created a fertile culture for reflection on issues that concerned the student teachers the most, but also helped in creating a lively learning environment. Through their art work and discussions, the student teachers brought forward their challenges, hopes, and successes. They filled the learning environment with a plethora of emotions including joy, anger, frustration, sadness, confusion, and passion.

Boalian Theater helped to create a culture in which student teachers engaged in perspective-taking, empathic knowing, problem-solving, and searching for possibilities. Moreover, participation in Boalian Theater helped the student teachers open their minds and hearts to acknowledge the multiple constructions of their world as they inquired about themselves, their relationships with their students, and their purposes for teaching.
CHAPTER 5

FINDINGS

Cases: Stories of the Cast

In this chapter, I turn to the voices of Lan, Elliot, Meredith, and Aura to hear, see, and feel what they have learned about themselves, their relationships with their students, their purposes for teaching, and the meanings they found in their involvement with Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed. My purpose was to learn more about the meanings the student teachers gave to their artistic expressions and their experiences in the seminar meetings, and to discover with them the potential of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed for teaching and teacher education. The photographs of their artistic representations and my field observations were used as starting points to ask questions in the in-depth interviews. The data generated by the interviews along with stimulated recall using photographs, transcripts from video, and observations formed the basis for the individual cases.

Lan

‘With all those people thinking together, I realized that there must be a way.’

Lan’s motivation to be a co-researcher was twofold. She reported being interested in the topic and she saw participation in the research as a way of preparing herself to do her own upcoming dissertation research.

Lan’s story was notable in her shift in epistemologies, her increased competence, working through the cultural differences she experienced, and her openness to being willing to making alternatives available for herself and her students. Lan was an avid learner who constantly and
consciously collaborated with her peers, giving meaning to her experiences and understanding those of others. In addition, she was sensitive to the students in her class and she consciously searched for information that helped her to understand them and their lives outside of school.

*Introduction to Lan*

Lan is an international student from Beijing, China for most of her life. After completing her undergraduate degree in English at a Chinese university in 2001, she worked for a year teaching high school students conversational English. She came to the United States in 2002 to pursue her Master's degree in Reading Education as well as pursuing her certification in ECCO; later she pursued her doctoral studies in the same department. After completing her Ph.D., she plans to return to her country and work as a faculty member in a university. When asked to describe herself, Lan says, “I am enthusiastic, positive, hard-working, and like to challenge myself.”

Lan did her student teaching with Ms. Tulip in her fourth grade classroom at “Sunshine Elementary.” Ms. Tulip was also an Early Childhood Certification Option Program (ECCO) graduate and was therefore familiar with the program requirements and with the needs of the ECCO student teachers. Lan perceived her as a good mentor and they shared a meaningful and satisfying mentor-mentee relationship. There were 20 students in Lan's classroom from diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds.

*Lan’s Epistemological Shift towards Constructivism*

In her interviews, Lan clearly articulated a transformation in her ways of thinking about teaching and learning. Her experiences growing up in China had given her one way of thinking, while her experiences in the United States had helped her to see teacher authority, views on
knowledge, and processes of knowledge construction differently. Lan spoke about the transformation in her thinking.

Lan: I have to say teachers [in China] were very strict. We had specific ways of sitting and standing. If we had questions, we had to raise our hands in a particular way—while the students here scream, ‘I know,’ we could not do that in China. This can be too restrictive. Students have to put things in a particular way. We did not have centers. Everything is where the teacher talks and talks.

Foram: It felt restrictive.

Lan: Yes, not all the opinions are valued. You cannot challenge the teacher. You cannot say that you have a different point of view.

Foram: It seems like in general in China the teacher has the authority.

Lan: Yes, it is kind of easy to be a teacher in China as it is a respectable position. But today, I see the teacher authority differently. I was a teacher in China in the past, and there I saw the teacher as someone who passed knowledge. I now see myself as a bridge to my students, their personal lives, their home experiences, and their family support. I really think the teacher is a bridge.

Lan described how her views on knowledge had changed from accepting the teacher's words as final truths to viewing knowledge as an act of construction in which no single interpretation can be considered as the final truth. She stated, ‘I have come to see that there can be multiple interpretations. One thing I like about American schools is that students are not always given a correct answer. Like in reading and writing workshops you are given a lot of opportunities to discuss and understand the multiple perspectives.”

Lan spoke eloquently of her shift from considering teaching as an act of passing on knowledge and students as recipients of knowledge to understanding students as actively engaged in the process of knowledge construction and learning from their experiences. She elaborated:
Everyone feels Asian students are great, but I have changed my opinion completely. The students in Asia are more receivers of knowledge. The teaching is not much practical. Here we learn to do things through life-related activities. We do research. I don't think there is any higher-order thinking encouraged in schools in China. I think one comes to know from their experiences and the situations they are in. It is like situated learning. For example, if the students are situated in a multicultural environment, if the teacher is multicultural, and if the friends are multicultural then they are learning to be multicultural. I don't think their learning about multiculturalism would be very effective if their teacher was very narrow-minded and they spent a two-week unit on talking about multiculturalism.

In response to a question about what experiences had influenced her current thinking about knowledge, knowing, and teacher authority, she identified as influences her coursework and readings at the university; her classroom observations with Reading First (a state-run program to develop and implement research-based reading programs for students in grades K-3); her experiences with student teaching; her participation in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed; and her ongoing conversations with her mentors, Ms. Tulip and the university facilitator.

Based on these experiences, Lan reported that she came to believe that knowledge is an act of collaborative construction among students and between students and teachers. Since knowing emerges from one's experiences, we need to respect our own experiences and be willing to share it with others to help them understand the experiences in our lives that inform our knowing. Furthermore, deeper understanding is created when one listen to the perspectives of the others. The sharing and listening is enhanced in a safe and respectful environment. Such an
environment is likely to be created when everyone in the classroom shares and respects the views of the others even though they may or may not agree with each other or the teacher. In the future, Lan reported, she would make every effort to build collaborative learning environments and help students to make connections with their experiences. She believed that helping students to make connections between what they learn in school with who they are, would help them to be engaged in their learning.

Tracing back her educational history, Lan observed, “At first, I used to feel nervous about student teaching. I used to feel my language would be a barrier. But I am beginning to see that all my experiences and observations have been helpful. I have a sense of positive fulfillment.” Looking back at her cultural and educational history helped Lan to identify the strengths she brought to her work. Thus, Lan reported her shift in thinking about teaching and learning from a teacher-directed to a more student-directed orientation.

*Relationships with Students: Increased Confidence in Communication*

When she began student teaching, Lan reported, Ms. Tulip created opportunities for Lan and the students to get to know each other and for the students to learn more about Lan’s culture. One way in which Ms. Tulip encouraged Lan to bring her culture into the classroom was by asking her to introduce the students to Chinese characters. On the classroom walls, Lan put up posters with the Chinese characters and started some Chinese language lessons in the mornings. In addition, she taught them about important places in China and shared stories from Chinese folklore.

During the day, Lan found teachable moments to bring her culture into the classroom. For example, “In a social studies lesson, we were talking about cobblers. I told them that in China, you can see cobblers on the streets and even today they fix your shoes very, very inexpensively.”
She found these interactions valuable as they helped her to situate herself with her students, to help the students see her expertise in a particular context, and later to talk about her difficulties thinking and talking in a second language, English.

By participating in various Boalian activities, Lan made visible for herself and all of us the various challenges she faced in her student teaching. She reported that she started her student teaching with low confidence, but her confidence level increased as she gained more experience and as she consciously worked through her challenges. She attributed her low confidence mainly to perceiving herself as not being fluent in English and this influenced her relationship with her students. She noted:

In the beginning I was not that confident. My English was not so good. The students did not understand my pronunciations. I could not read their names and I used to use wrong tense. So, in the first few weeks, I used to feel really bad about myself. I wondered what kind of a teacher I was. Students used to ask me how to spell words and I did not know how to spell them. I feel the students looked down upon me because they may have thought how I could have been their teacher. But then things changed.

When asked how things had changed, Lan replied:

I talked to the students about English being my second language and how much more I would know in Chinese. When teaching lessons I would take the help of Ms. Tulip. She would help me with the language and tell me which words would make more sense for these students. Things got better as my English vocabulary improved and I came to see that the students were very understanding. They understood.

Lan met the challenges by talking with the students about English being her second language, by accepting support from her mentors, and by using the seminar meetings as a place
for sharing her challenges and seeking support from her peers. She took the suggestions given by the group seriously, considering each of them and later trying some of the strategies in her teaching. Experiencing positive outcomes increased her confidence further and helped her to relate better to her students. She said:

I felt much better with teaching Second Step Curriculum because the Forum Theater helped me. Right after the Boalian Theater, when I worked with Second Step, I stopped calling the students randomly to do the role play. After lunch before they would go to the classroom, I would pick them up and talk with them. Tell them, “Will you be my helper today.” I tell them what the theme is. This preparation seemed to help my students. I tried out this suggestion from the role play we did here in the seminar. It worked and now I have integrated it into my thinking about planning for Second Step.

Through these experiences Lan came to understand that there could be many ways of approaching a situation and if one did not work, she could try something else.

Another challenge Lan reported in the interview was that many times she looked at her students through Chinese cultural eyes, so she often ended up comparing students in her classroom with students in China. Such comparisons were often unfavorable for the students in her classroom. Initially, Lan often compared the students in her fourth grade class with their counterparts in China. She expressed her frustration at her students’ difficulty in learning math even with resources like the Smart Board, which was used to make learning more interesting. Explaining this further, she reported:

Chinese students in Grade 4 know so much of math and also some difficult math. Now the math there is not interesting as here. Like here we have Smart Board and so many other tools. So sometimes I feel that here students have such great tools and they should
just get it. Why don't they get it? I feel that in China students have nothing and yet they just get it—here there are so many tools to help students learn but they still don't get it. I feel the teachers here work so hard but the students don't put in enough effort in their studies.

Engaging in such comparisons created feelings of anger, frustration, and disappointment and consequently influenced her actions in the classroom. She eloquently talked about these various feelings as she created images of her journey as a student teacher in Seminar Meeting #5. She labeled her image “The Mind of a Student Teacher.”

Over time, Lan began to recognize how her cultural perspectives were affecting her thoughts, feelings, and actions in her classroom. She started to take control of her emotional volatility. She made this internal conflict resolution process more public by creating an image of a balance scale in Seminar Meeting #6 to explain her way of dealing with her extreme emotions during her student teaching. She came to understand that her feelings may have colored her perceptions of reality. Through her positive outlook on life along with the help of her mentors, she learned to develop real sensitivity for her students by working with her feelings and developing a lens that was more grounded in the lives of her students.

This new lens helped her to feel connected with the students and to see them more fully and came to recognize the complexities of teaching. Teaching became more real for her. Lan recalled, “I began to talk to my mentor about how disappointed I was, and then she just started reinforcing me, making me aware of the students, their families, and the other stuff happening in their lives. I came to see that the challenges and the difficulties in teaching make teaching really teaching.” Lan had a successful relationship with her mentor teacher as she was able to share her disappointments and the mentor teacher in turn was able to support and guide her.
Initially Lan had perceived her students as disrespecting her and challenging her authority; however, towards the end of student teaching she was able to see this less as a power struggle and more as differences in worldviews that were rooted in different socio-cultural contexts. These experiences helped her to see the complexities in teaching and she began to examine her purposes for teaching.

Towards the end of this period, she began to see herself as a “deep thinker,” and started asking questions about herself and her role as a teacher. These questions further helped in articulating a teaching philosophy. Explaining her emerging philosophy, she explained, “I am thinking because my question is how to make the parents fully involved in children’s education to support their education? How can I teach students to think? Teacher is a bridge and therefore I have to constantly think, how to bridge.”

_Lan’s Goals in Teaching: Promoting Student Achievement_

Lan believed that her firsthand experiences in the field, along with her coursework, helped her to see more clearly her purposes for teaching. She used the metaphors of a ‘bridge’ and a ‘deep thinker’ to explain her role and purposes for teaching. Lan believed that her purpose for teaching was to connect home and school to promote student achievement; she saw herself as the bridge that joined the different pieces of students’ lives outside with their lives within the classroom.

Articulating these different pieces, Lan said, “I am the ‘bridge’ between the students and school, family and school, students’ homework, students’ family situations, and students’ background. I am connecting students with their family and community and connecting families with the school.” From her experiences, Lan learned that to be a bridge she could not be a separate self judging her students. Instead, only as a connected self could she consciously engage in
understanding and accepting all her students from their perspectives. Explaining how her
connected stance would inform the bridge, she observed:

    In the classroom we teach every student. Some are good and some are behind. But you
cannot judge students as this student has a perfect score so he is a good student and that
student forgot to do his or her homework, so he is . . . I cannot judge the students from
this. I am a bridge and therefore, I need to understand students' cultural background, their
home background.

    In addition to forming opinions about her students from a connected stance, Lan also
recognized the importance of a being a bridge in planning her lessons, where she would need to
consider student's lives outside the classroom in relation to what they learn in the classroom. She
stated, “Before I say something or teach something, I need to think about their family situation,
their parents, their likes and dislikes, their culture. So in my teaching I need to make all these
considerations.”

    Furthermore, in our interviews we explored topics such as what the bridge was made of,
who formed the bridge, and what experiences influenced the formation of the bridge. Lan
believed her bridge was made up of her core dispositions and the wisdom she gained from her
various experiences. She expressed:

    The bridge is made of love, care, understanding, tolerance, and patience. Sometimes you
have to be hard on yourself as not all the children will be happy with you all the time.

    But you need to understand and also have control. The bridge is made up of all this.

Lan took ownership in constructing her own bridge; however, she acknowledged that this bridge
was not built in isolation, but was influenced by many factors. These factors included:
The courses I took, the observations that I have made, my student teaching experiences—everything that happened here in America helped me to form the bridge. For example, all the courses in our program were very helpful. I now look at the ethnic and cultural backgrounds of the students. I took many courses and I learned about Funds of Knowledge, Situated Learning—so from my readings I began to see the importance of experience-based learning and considering the socio-cultural context of the students. I was definitely not like this when I came from China in 2002 and at that time I did not think of teaching in that complicated way.

One other purpose she saw for herself was building multicultural classrooms where she created a learning environment in which diversity was celebrated and respected. Describing her vision of such a future classroom, she explained:

I want my students to grow up to be open-minded, to be able to look at points of view from different parts of the world, accept difference, and accept each other. Like everyone could have different behaviors, different likes and dislikes, but they can still accept the differences. In my future classroom, I will let the students know that it is okay to be different. People can have different answers to a question and that is okay. I will create a classroom with a multicultural classroom culture, where it evolves in my different subjects and not just spend a whole week talking about multicultural education.

Thus, by participating in various Boalian activities, Lan brought to the group thoughts and feelings about her experiences in the classroom. She clearly highlighted the challenges of teaching in a culture that was different from hers. Lan accepted each challenge as a fertile ground for learning and, with the help of her mentors, developed a lens that would help her to be more inclusive of the diversity in her classroom.


Meanings Lan Found in Her Involvement with PTO

The meanings Lan found from participating in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed can be broadly organized into four themes: perceiving identities, engaging in reflective thinking, engaging in meaningful learning, and perceiving the learning environment.

Sense of Roles/Identities within PTO

By participating in the Boalian activities, Lan perceived herself as a creator, a contributor, a connected knower, a collaborator, a member of a community, a teacher, and an agent for change.

Lan as a creator. Lan understood that by creating images with her body and on paper and by participating in role-plays she could see herself as someone who creates representations that express thoughts, feelings, and actions from her cultural perspective. Therefore, by “doing” you “become” and are able to share with others your presence. She said:

You engage by doing it. You have a different perspective as you are from a different culture. Teaching there is different. You have different thinking. In the seminars, I felt as though I had an opportunity to participate and bring alive my culture and at the same time learn new ways of teaching from my colleagues.

Lan as a contributor. Coming from a different cultural background, Lan was unsure of herself and often preferred to listen rather than to openly share her views. On the other hand, in the seminar meetings she perceived that she contributed more than in her other classes. Using her body helped her to understand that non-verbal language complemented one's verbal language, which in turn made each response seem unique. Realizing this opened up a space for her where she felt she could contribute without the fear of repeating what a peer had shared. She reasoned:
This is different from my other classrooms, because when I am sitting there just
discussing—and when my other classmates are discussing—I listen to it and think, Oh,
probably I am wrong as teaching here is different or I may be more quiet because
sometimes I feel, All right, they have already said what I wanted to say. But by using my
body, I felt as though everyone had a chance to express, to do it. Each response seemed
unique and therefore I felt that I could contribute more.

*Lan’s learnings from others.* Lan reported noticing similarities and differences between
herself and the others when they participated in the various activities. Noticing the details in their
representations and considered how she could add details to her own thinking. She observed:

When I created images and then saw other people form their images, I would look at
similarities and I would feel—yes! That is something that I wanted to do, too. Or feel yes—
that is exactly like my classroom. This helped me to become aware. Sometimes, we don’t
realize. For example, yesterday when Elliot created the balancing image, it really helped
me to realize that I have also tried to balance many things in the last two weeks. So it
influences the way you think. Sometimes you think in one way and then through
interactions you think more. I also began to look at details some of the others considered
in their representations and began to think of how I could add this in my own thinking.

In addition to becoming aware and adding to her own thinking, Lan reported using empathy as a
way to understand the others and their experiences:

I understood the feelings of others. For example, Elliot—like I could really understand his
situation and his difficulties and the things he needed to take care of, the multiple tasks he
needs to do, when I saw his image of “finding a balance.”
Lan as a collaborator. Lan reported that the empathy motivated her first to see the similarities between herself and her peers and later, guided by this feeling of connection, she initiated deeper collaborative conversations with her peers for the purpose of learning together. Explaining this further, she reported:

When I saw Elliot's image, I felt as though I shared the same feelings. I did not feel as though I could do much better—my feelings were like, oh yeah, I totally understand because I also have experienced those moments in my teaching. I think then we talked more and we furthered our conversation to understand what you did and then think of what I did, what I did to figure things out or to balance well. So this sharing of opportunity then became a learning opportunity.

Lan as a member of the seminar group. Lan expressed that she felt like a part of the group and was able to develop relationships with the others. Participating in activities that invited student teachers to share their personal stories and their visions probably created a culture in which Lan could see the similarities of experience and thought between herself and the other group members. This awareness helped her to see herself as a part of the group and a member of this community:

I feel I developed relationships with the participants. Not all of us were from the same cohort. However I had a strengthened feeling of the community because of the participation in various activities and realizing that we were similar—because we shared similar experiences.

Lan as a teacher. Lan noted that working with the Boalian Theater helped her to develop a deeper understanding of the role of the teacher. This helped her to develop a holistic
understanding and bridge the gap between her views of similarities and differences between the role of the teacher in China and in the United States:

These sessions helped me to reflect on the role of the teacher. This was a big part. Teaching in my memory which comes from the elementary school in China is not that diverse. So this was very important for me. Talking with all of you helped me develop a holistic perspective.

_Lan as being empowered for change in her praxis._ Another identity that emerged for Lan was having agency. Her work and collaboration with the others in the seminar meetings helped her not only to reflect on her context but also to take back some ideas and use them in her class to would have brought about a change in her praxis. Seeing possibilities helped her to realize that there are alternatives, and this awareness helped her to build a sense of agency and perceive herself as being empowered as a learner to take the ideas from the seminar meetings into her classroom. Lan noted:

Forum Theater helped me to express my ideas and get suggestions from my peers. For example, when my peers said STOP and came up front, I felt that others had ideas that I had not thought of. It was of great help. I felt that if I did something differently, I could bring about a change.

Lan reported that teaching was not a habit of doing but an act of responding, and therefore, learning other ways of responding helped her to be more mindful in her teaching.

From her experiences working with Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed, Lan realized the potential of this tool as opening spaces to create and contribute her thoughts by bringing into the classroom her cultural perspectives. Furthermore, she believed that it offered her to engage in collaborative conversations after seeing the similarities in her experiences, feelings, and thoughts
with those of others. Identifying with the others helped her to feel a part of this community and problem-solving with others helped her to recognize that there are possibilities which fostered a feeling of agency in her.

*Lan’s Engagement in Reflective Thinking: Considering Alternatives*

Lan reported that participating in Boalian Theater gave her the opportunity to engage in critical reflection. In general, she found that having a space in the seminar meetings to reflect helped her to think about what was going on and what implications this had for her teaching. In the absence of such structure, she reported minimal engagement in reflective practice. She shared:

> Participation in Boalian Theater gave me a moment to think, to reflect, and to act. Sometimes when I think of a situation in the field, I think of this is what happened, but I never really get back to think about it or think about what I should do, or how it informs my teaching and me.

Articulating further how Boalian Theater activities helped her to reflect on her actions and consciously take specific steps towards bridging the gap between herself and the student, she said:

> We were doing an activity on how students walk. Right after that activity, I began to wonder and think about why I have such a hard time connecting with this particular student. I started talking, spending more time with this student, and then I was glad when the student with whom I had the most hard time connecting with, came to me the other day.
Lan found that Forum Theater structures also helped her to facilitate reflective thinking as they gave her the opportunity to express her own thoughts, feelings, and actions and at the same time consider those of her students. She reported:

Some of the activities helped me to become aware of the classroom, how the students perceive the classroom. If I know how they think then this can help me to help the children. Forum Theater has helped me to recognize that there are ways and I have to search for them. It also gave me an opportunity to act out and think what the child may be thinking at that moment and also think about why he or she may be thinking that way.

In addition to reflecting on past experiences, Lan reported that participating in Forum Theater helped her to reflect on the actions she could take in the future. The different perspectives helped her to move forward and informed her practice.

_Lan’s Engagement in Relevant Learning: Connecting Seminar Meeting with the Field_

Lan reported that the she saw a close connection between the field and the seminar meetings at the university. In the meetings we addressed the issues that student teachers were experiencing in the field. Most often, although the experience was that of one person, the rest of the group could identify with the situation. Seeing this connection between self and others helped Lan to learn from the experiences of the other members in the group. In addition, on seeing the multiple possibilities the group generated to work through the challenges of teaching Second Step, she also came to understand that there are alternatives and was more willing to transfer her learning from the seminar to the field. Emphasizing the meaning she saw in her learning, she noted:
The sessions at the university were not isolated experiences but could be related to experiences in the classroom. I was able to take back my learning into the classroom and was able to apply and learn further. It was experience-reflect-learn-reflect. This made the entire seminar meetings meaningful. I liked what we did because it touched me directly. For example, the first time when I role-played with Cathy and Tanisha my experiences with Second Step, I took back the possibilities and included it in my Second Step. It worked very well. Seeing this helped me to recognize that there are possibilities.

_Lan’s Perceptions of the Seminar Environment: Connected, Inviting, and Safe_

Lan used the following adjectives to describe the learning environment: informative, playful, rich in knowledge as we learned a lot from each other, feeling of safety, collaboration, and feeling of coming together. Specifically, she perceived the learning environment to be safe, collaborative, fun, and an open learning climate.

_Experiencing safety_. Lan reported feeling safe and experiencing solidarity with the group. She identified several reasons for her feelings, including sharing similar experiences, working together, and knowing the group members.

Lan stated that seeing and feeling that she was not alone in working with challenging situations in the field gave her a sense of comfort and created a safety net in the group. The others seemed to mirror her feelings, and seeing these similarities helped Lan to feel safe:

I could see that I was not struggling alone. You see other people struggling too. You see yourself improving and see that others are improving, too. It is hard to talk to a teacher in the school because she probably student taught 10 years ago and has forgotten all about it. She cannot really offer much because she would say that this is fine and I also faced that. But here [in these sessions], the feeling was safe. The sessions created safe spaces
because the others also had similar experiences, similar challenges, and similar feelings.

And then you learn from each other's experiences.

In addition, the similarity of experiences also helped Lan to feel connected with her peers. Seeing that her peers accepted her without judging her helped her to feel more safe, and this in turn motivated her further to trust, share, learn, and grow with the group. She said:

I think one reason for feeling safe was because a lot of the people in the group knew each other well. I feel I developed relationships with the participants. Not all of us were from the same cohort. However, I had a strengthened feeling of community because of participation in various activities and realizing we were similar. I felt as though I had someone to share my feelings and thoughts. This was a safe place as people did not think I was a bad teacher.

**Experiencing collaboration with the course instructor.** Lan reported that she perceived collaboration among the student teachers and between the course instructor and the student teachers. All members of the group worked towards problem-solving in specific situations and contributed their ideas from their perspectives. She saw Martha as a peer, as a person who supported her, and as an instructor who gave suggestions. A specific example was observed in Forum Theater where Lan collaborated with her peers and Martha to get a deeper insight into teaching Second Step.

**Having fun.** Lan reported that the activities led the group members to become silly and playful. As a result, they often ended up laughing, making the entire experience an enjoyable one. A specific observation I made was in Seminar Meeting #6, where Lan, while working with Aura and Elliot to create an image of strength, became silly and playful, experimenting and
laughing over the movements as in their group they attempted to crawl like a baby, walk like a
toddler, and run like a child to express their journey as a student teacher.

*Experiencing an open learning climate.* Lan reported feeling that everyone in the group
had freedom to respond from their own subjective position. Multiple perspectives were valued
and encouraged where people used their “smart minds” to help others move forward. She saw the
power of this pedagogy in creating hope and bringing people together to think of possibilities.
Explaining this further, she said:

The approach and the activities kind of gave everyone an opportunity to just participate
and know that there is no right and wrong. You respond from your tradition, background,
and knowledge. With all those people thinking together, I realized that there must be a
way.

In sum, Lan perceived the learning environment to be connected, inviting, and safe.

*Lan’s Perceptions of the Value of PTO in Teaching and Teacher Education:*

*For Reflections and Collaboration*

Lan saw the value of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed for pre-service teachers and
as a school-wide professional development for in-service teachers. She thought that student
teachers could benefit greatly from participating in the seminar using Pedagogy and Theater of
the Oppressed during and after their student teaching to address the issues they grappled with
and to recognize their purposes for teaching. She explained:

I hope a lot of classroom teachers have the opportunity to participate in some of the
activities we did. It would give them a moment to think, to reflect, and to share with their
peers. This can be school-wide and I think everyone can be enriched from such
conversations.
Lan’s Summary

- Lan experienced an epistemological shift, she now came to see knowledge as an act of collaborative construction.

- Lan shared her feelings and challenges she faced in student teaching, specifically with establishing teacher authority. In addition to talking with the students about English being her second language and accepting the help of her mentors, she also relied on support from her peers. Specifically, she noted the possibilities the group created in the Boalian activities and gave herself the space to try a possibility in her classroom.

- Lan started her field experience feeling low in confidence but ended her experience feeling competent and confident. She attributed her low confidence to being a non-native English speaker and attributed her increase in confidence to working through her challenges with the help of her mentors, students in her classroom, and peers in the seminar meetings.

- Lan became aware of the complexities of teaching and her experiences in the field led her to understand her purposes for teaching more fully. She reported, “I now see myself as a bridge to my students, their personal lives, their home experiences, and their family support. I really think the teacher is a bridge.” Lan recognizes that this is not an easy role and would require her to engage in deep thinking.

- Lan’s involvement with the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in the seminar meetings helped her to be a creator (by “doing,” you “become”); contributor (using the body created opportunities to contribute verbally and nonverbally); connected knower (using empathy to understand the other); collaborator (initiating conversations after seeing the similarities between self and the other); member of the seminar group (sharing similarities, participating
in collaborative activities); teacher (developing a deeper understanding of teaching); and feeling a sense of agency (looking at possibilities to strengthen her praxis).

- Lan discovered the reflective potential of the pedagogy and appreciated having the time to actively and critically reflect on her experiences and actions in the field and the close link between the seminars and the field made her learning relevant.

- Lan perceived the learning environment as safe (similarities in experiences, feelings of solidarity); collaborative (working with peers and Martha); fun-filled (being silly and playful); and providing an open learning climate (accepting diverse viewpoints).

- From her experiences, Lan found that PTO can be valuable with in-service and pre-service teachers for creating dialogues between teachers, as well as reflecting and collaborating to consider alternative perspectives.

- A theme that emerges over and over again in Lan’s story is that of seeing similarities between herself and the others’ experiences and collaborating with peers to find alternatives that could help in reaching out to students in her classroom.

   Elliot

   “The experiences of others were what we were seeing and by putting ourselves in somebody else’s shoes, we were learning from their experiences.”

   Elliot’s motivation to be a co-researcher was twofold. First, he was interested in using Boalian Theater in his classroom to strengthen relationships between parents and their children and among families in the classroom. Second, he wanted to understand his own personal development and discover new ways of learning to communicate in different settings.

   Elliot’s case was remarkable in his metaphorical explorations and his intense desire to ‘go beyond.’ He is a natural collaborator who collaborated with his peers in the seminar meetings and focused on understanding himself and others. Elliot brought in his teacher identity to make sense
of Boalian Theater and also took back his understandings into his classroom to create a new non-verbal learning experience for his students. He has a remarkable commitment and an ability to connect with his students and their parents.

Introduction to Elliot

Elliot was born and raised in Valdemoro, Spain, where he completed his schooling and undergraduate degree in Economics. After graduation he worked as a purchasing manager for six years. He came to the United States in 1998. Here he worked in a local Even Start Family Literacy Program for three years, where his main responsibility was to coordinate community resources for families attending the program. In recognition of his work with the Latino community, he was given an award by the County School District in 2005.

In 2003, Elliot started pursuing his Master's degree. At the time of student teaching, Elliot was a first-year, full-time pre-K teacher at “Sunshine Elementary.” He student taught in his own classroom. This put him in a slightly different position from the other student teachers as he did not have a mentor teacher, but was mentored by his university facilitator during student teaching. After completing his Master's, Elliot plans to teach in the public schools. When asked to describe himself, Elliot says:

I am somebody who likes to spend time with family and friends. A little insecure and shy. Although people that know me think I am not. This is only because I make a big effort to open up and be a part of the group. I consider myself as somebody that likes challenges and likes to work creating something using my hands.

Elliot had 20 students in his pre-K class from diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds. Elliot had been teaching this class since the beginning of the academic year and as a result he had established classroom routines and relationships with his students and their
parents by the time student teaching began in January. This was reflected in the challenges he brought forth in the seminar meetings. His concerns were more directly related to teaching: balancing administrative needs with his understanding of what the students in his class needed to grow and learn, and dealing with a diffused feeling of anxiety about the ambiguities of teaching.

Elliot’s Epistemological Perspectives: An Intuitive Knower

Elliot believed that one comes to know from one’s own experiences. He believed that individuals construct knowledge by interpreting their experiences and that these experiences can also help in understanding others. On asking how he found his answers, he responded:

I move by instinct. It is more intuitive. I find my own truth by knowing my feelings, how my actions makes the others feel, how my environment feels. For example, if I am doing an activity with my students then I look at what is working well for them and if it is not then I try to think why it is not. So in this way I am figuring out what will work and in the process I am constructing my own answer.

Elliot’s Relationships with Students: Building Connections with Students and their Parents

Elliot believed in forming relationships with his students and their parents. He focused more on understanding his students’ backgrounds, needs, and interests and in considering how he could connect these with what his students are learning in the classroom. Explaining this connection further he said,

I learn about how I can approach students, for not every student can be approached in the same way. What I can do with the kids, what are their interests, what they bring into the classroom from outside, and how to connect their experiences with my experiences—my own learnings and what I can bring to the classroom. So I learn from them about what
their lives are out here. My students bring up new challenges each day. It is like that is part of my learning as a part of being a teacher and understanding those challenges—understanding what kind of personalities can be approached in what ways. Like with a rowdy kid or a funny kid you learn to do this. Or one is more interested in art and the other is more interested in math, and then through that you learn how far you can go with certain materials.

He saw his role as that of a facilitator who creates opportunities for his students after considering their interests. Explaining this role and the ways in which it informs his planning, he notes:

I see myself as a facilitator. I often go out of the classroom thinking, What can I bring in tomorrow? What do I need to bring with me that will help connect so-and-so with what he or she has told me today? I think that is the biggest responsibility of the teacher, where you are learning from the students and at the same time you are opening those doors. With younger ones, I may be modeling how to search for things and at times you may need to be teacher-directed and provide some guidance.

Elliot also believes that effective learning can take place when students feel connected with each other and with him. He consciously helps the students to build relationships and he perceives the students' responsibility as that of being interested, motivated, willing to share what they bring with them, and able to integrate that with what they learn in class.

On asking Elliot what life circumstances led him to construct his worldview about teaching, he talked about his educational history, explaining how the political changes in his country led to educational reforms. He said:

I feel that my schooling is—elementary was all right, middle was very good, and high school was great. I lived in an era in Spain when we were moving from dictatorship to
democracy. In that era lot of people were very much into pro-freedom of expression, freedom of new ways to go and that is why I am telling you elementary—when I was in third grade we changed from dictatorship to democracy. So in third grade to eighth grade was really the transitioning time in Spain and so I can really see what we have been doing—I can really see why my third grade was so hard. I had one teacher who was totally in charge and it was hard for me to conform to her expectations. On the other hand, when I was in the high school, I feel my teachers were more open and let us decide what part of the material we are going to learn first and why. So in high school, I began to feel like as though this was school. You go to school without pressure of feeling what are they going to ask—what will be in the surprise tests. I started to think of the teaching philosophy from my high school. I was made to think of where we are coming from, we were made to think of why—that was the interesting part of learning. Often, I felt I resonated with those days and connected again when I was doing my Masters.

From all his experiences Elliot came to value student-teacher relationships in which the teachers created learning environments that incorporated the needs and desires of the students, rather than expecting students to conform to the teacher. He carried his experiences into his own classroom, where he consciously created learning environments that were student-centered and encouraged students to find their own answers after making connections with their family, community, and society.

Elliot perceived the students in his classroom as coming from supportive environments, but in general he believed that in comparison to the way he grew up, today's society is losing the value of community. He explained:
I see in my school students are coming in with a lot of support but when I see what is going on in the county school district, I feel that society in general is losing the value of community. When I was in my hometown I found that kids had more connections and kids would be learning with more interest. It was something that was not only happening in school but something that was also coming from home. You can tell when you start to motivate a kid, you begin with what is there in his/her community and that way learning can become inviting. I think the kids who come to school today in this county are a little lost because both parents are working, nobody is taking care of them, or they are watching so much of TV and not experiencing something of the outside. I would love to have parents mentoring so that kids would be more involved.

Elliot's assumptions about home-school-community disconnection and the lack of parental involvement in children's lives guided his relationships with his students and their parents. He consciously worked towards building trusting relationships with his students and establishing family-like learning environments. Articulating his reasons for building such an environment in his classroom, he said:

I want to be more like a part of the family than the person who is here to teach you. I have never felt comfortable telling them I am not your mum or dad; therefore, do not come to me with those things. I am in that position of mum and dad as they spend so many hours with me. I think this relationship is important, in the absence of this teaching would be like plastic. If teaching is only transferring of information then it can be done with tape recorders. Therefore, warm relationship to me is very important.
Thus, Elliot connected with his students as a teacher, a parent, and a friend. These positions further helped Elliot to define himself and his relationships with his students in situations that required him to set classroom limits. He said:

Because of our relationships in the classroom, the strictness that we create with following certain classroom rules doesn’t have to be coming out of the idea that you are a strict teacher but because you are a parent. I have that strictness with my own kids at home.

Furthermore, Elliot believed that to build effective relationships with the students in the class, it was important to also build meaningful relationships with the parents. He explained his strategies further:

I build relationships with the parents of the students in the same way as I would build relationships with my friends. I talk to the parents about what I see in the kids. This can be challenging as you want to build relations but also you want to be sincere in what you see with the kids. I like the idea of having family engagement people in the school as this helps in having more opportunities to interact with the parents.

Elliot believed that he could reach out to the child most effectively when the parents also saw him as the child’s parent, an ally rather than an enemy. Therefore, in his work he tried to establish warm and friendly relationships with the parents, as he believed that this would help in building trusting relationships.

Elliot’s Goals in Teaching: His Philosophical Stance in Building Home-School Connections

Elliot saw his primary purpose in teaching as helping students to reach their potential by building relationships with other members of the learning community and with their family and community. He perceives himself a person who provides the guidance of how to investigate in
He used the metaphor of a ‘going beyond the bookshelf' to explain his role and purposes for teaching.

Elliot, who valued taking challenges in his personal life, brought this element of his personality into his classroom. He said:

I feel like I don't want to stay with what is available, I want to go to the end of this bookshelf. What is coming from you that will help us enrich. You know it is like you will never know what you are going to do, because you will not know what you are going to find. But I do feel that you need to go beyond. If you just stay with what you have in the first shelf, it may be comfortable, but you need to go beyond, as you may not know what you are going to find. I get my students to see more, to experience more, and then use their responses as a way to plan for next steps.

On being asked what these bookcases were made of, Elliot responded:

The community. Part of it is what the students do in the classroom and then the other part is what is in the community. For example, students visit the fire station or the vet clinic. All these are a part of that bookshelf. And then you bring those experiences to the class, connect with it what you have already done, and make it bigger.

Elliot believed that every member of his class, including himself, constructed his/her own personal bookcase. Each bookcase was embedded in one's socio-cultural history and this created a framework for understanding one's experiences. With newer and different experiences, the frame could expand and layer. The history in each bookcase is never erased and is available when the person consciously searches for it. He explained further:

I think we all construct these bookcases. These cases have a lot of history and may decide that this bookcase with polka dots look good and then in the 80s one may think that one
needs to put on a lot of clothing around it and make it look beautiful. The bookcase is really the same one that we are building, constructing, and modifying. The interesting part is that you can scratch the important parts of the bookcases and see the way they were before.

Elliot appreciated and welcomed diversity. He believed that by understanding differences we become more open-minded and more willing to think outside of the box. Furthermore, he believed that to create diverse classrooms, first the teacher needs to understand and appreciate the diversity the students bring in each day. When asked, “What would happen if some of the bookcases were made of different materials?” he responded metaphorically:

That is even better. Then you will have differentiations and you will be able to see what the bookcases offer. It is part of having an open vision. Sometimes it is hard and sometimes it may feel uncomfortable—but it is all right. You want to use the bookcases. If you want to learn you need to be open to look for those bookcases. I think any teacher or a person who is in the position to teach needs to be open to reaching out to many bookcases. If you as a teacher are cutting down on bookcases, then how can you offer that option to your students? That is the hard part of being a teacher because you need to be able to think that this may not be good for you, but how about others? You are going to be the one who is kind of going to facilitate others to access what is there in the community. You have to open a little bit, because if you cannot be open then there is a lot you are cutting out.

Thus, by using the metaphor of “going beyond the bookshelf” Elliot articulated his purpose for teaching as helping his student explore the unknown, making connections with their community, and opening their hearts and minds to acknowledge and celebrate diversity.
Elliot reported that he found multiple meanings through his involvement in the activities at the seminar meetings. However, the most meaningful experience for him was that of introspection leading to a therapeutic effect. Specifically, he reported creating a deeper understanding of his personality and its influence on his thoughts, feelings, and actions. Thinking about what his personality is, and what possibly can be, had a therapeutic effect on him.

Elliot had started student teaching low on confidence and insecure about the student teaching experience. Student teaching in his own classroom, feeling he was teaching with little guidance from other colleagues at school, and not having a mentor teacher to ask for support during student teaching increased his anxieties. Elliot noted:

By the end of student teaching, I felt as though I am not doing that bad, I am like the other people. In general I am like a low confidence person. I have the vision of myself of walking in the field with long grass and underneath having egg cartons. So I have to measure every step. I have to be careful and see if there are any egg cartons underneath my feet. That is a part of my personality and I don't think I can really change it but I do feel that by the end of student teaching I felt as though I was part of this group, and everybody has a little bit of their doubts.

Later Elliot spoke of his gradual anxiety reduction.

Elliot: Rather than finding a solution, I learned to accept myself as who I am and then working my way through.

Foram: It seems like not getting trapped in your anxiety but having awareness about your anxiety, accepting it, and then thinking about what you can do.

Elliot: Yes. It is seeing what are my possibilities or what do I see myself as having possibilities.
In addition to experiencing a therapeutic effect, Elliot also experienced the following roles/identities with PTO.

**Elliot’s Sense of Roles/Identity within PTO**

By participating in the Boalian activities, Elliot recognized that he could share his tacit thoughts with others by using art. Furthermore, listening to the artistic voices of the others, he was able to put himself in their shoes which helped him to foster connections. Finally, recognizing the options helped him to feel a sense of agency.

**Elliot as a creator.** Elliot often brought his teaching identity to interpret and develop his work. An example of this can be noted when Elliot came to see that there can be different forms of expression, art being one of them. This helped him to engage in creative thinking. Further, he discovered that artistic expression can help his students to share with the world their tacit understandings and can guide them in their future work. Elliot explained what this identity as a creator meant for him:

I really feel that how in these activities you can use your hands and body to visualize and materialize the ideas you have in mind. You can take this awareness into your classroom and plan your future steps. Further putting yourself in situation to understand how others feel also helps to be a creative thinker.

**Elliot as an empathic friend.** Elliot reported that by engaging in theater activities he became more aware of the joys and the challenges of others and he was able to understand the situation from the perspective of the other. He observed:

We learned not only from our experiences but also from the experiences of the others. I was able to put myself in the shoes of the other person. At school, I was able to put myself in the shoes of the students and their parents. I am able to identify more and think
why they do or say certain things. Rather than judging and asking, What are you doing? I am now able to look at it from their perspective and understand what they are doing.

As a result, he found that he could expand his experiential base by vicariously understanding the experiences of others. He shared, “Wow—there is so much there than what I have seen in my little surrounding.” Elliot explained his understanding of empathy, noting:

Empathy for me is—in a selfish way what I came out with [from] the situation—what did I learn and how I can use it in my own context. I am still keeping the compassion for the other person in the situation but I am also learning from the situation.

*Elliot as a member of the seminar group.* Elliot explained that the group's activities had a personal dimension for him.

I felt the group was friendly, warm, secure, supported by others, a feeling of solidarity. The group was like a family, having certain confidence. In the group I felt comfortable, had a sense of belongingness. The group was responsive to each other. For example, we shared our ideas, visions, and challenges in the activities and were able to reach out to the others, feel with them, and think of alternatives with them.

*Feeling more powerful, sensing agency.* The participation in various activities led Elliot to recognize the power of learning from the experiences of others and to see the possibility of applying that learning to his specific situation:

I think all of us were powerful—power was the feeling we had when we were leaving at the end of the day where most often I felt as though I was leaving feeling with more power. I was feeling as though I was leaving with more options, more ideas. I feel the power of touching each other, talking with each other, being present to each other. I think that was power.
Elliot’s growing comfort with uncertainty. Elliot expressed feeling comfortable with ambiguities of teaching. When asked what happened after he recognized these feelings, Elliot replied:

It helped me to feel comfortable with uncertainty. To know that uncertainty is not bad and it is normal. That reassured me what I was doing. Using PTO in my classroom helped me to see what I am doing is worthwhile.

Elliot’s Reflections: Making Mind-Body Connections

Elliot is a reflective practitioner who found it natural to engage in reflective thinking throughout the various Boalian activities. He gave multiple examples of times when he engaged in critical reflection. Specifically, his participation in some activities helped him to become aware of the various assumptions he held about teaching and learning and connecting with his body helped him to become aware of his feelings. In the following discussion he describes how Colombian Hypnosis helped him to reflect on and understand the use of power in his classroom.

Foram: Can you give an example of a moment when you experienced reflective thinking?

Elliot: The Colombian Hypnosis–the idea of having two people moving my hands and physical idea of moving someone–and for some people it can be easy to follow and for some it can be such a hard thing. This made me understand what I do in my classroom where, for example, for some children it may be easy to follow oral directions and for some children it may be a hard thing.

Foram: How did this reflection help you in your classroom?

Elliot: I see more personalities and see how such activities could help them to open up more and more and express themselves. It has helped in that way but I think in the next year, I will introduce it in a way so that it can help me in my planning. That way I will be able to reflect in action more clearly.
In addition, Elliot felt that he engaged in critical thinking during many of the Boalian activities that promoted reflective thinking. He explained:

When we created the scenarios, it helped me to see ways to possible scenarios in my own situations and in that sense it helped me out more to engage in critical thinking. It was learning to work with assumptions–this is something that I would always like to be reminded. I come to recognize my own assumptions. We have been engaging in higher order thinking all the time. Especially when you leave the seminar and you go back into your classroom, you are applying all of that and once you have applied in your classroom it kind of opens up the doors for more applications.

When asked if he could provide an example, he replied:

How do I transfer this to my kids, I still struggle with that. I think it will come with experience. I try to hold back and allow them to open with their own experiences, allowing them to breathe.

Another benefit Elliot reported from the activities was feeling connected with his body. He explained, ‘Connecting with the body, connecting with the physical–that is the part I found useful. It allowed me to understand what was distressing, what was bugging. That is what I found hopeful.’ When asked for an example of a time he felt connected, he responded:

When we in the Image Theater we created an image of our classroom from a teacher perspective and I created the image of a balancing act. I liked this activity a lot as it helped me to understand a feeling that I had had for an entire week. This awareness helped me to clarify the feeling of discomfort and ambiguity.

Elliot identified personal benefits from the knowledge he gained through reflection, which in turn influenced his practice.
Elliot’s Engagement in Relevant Learning:

Getting in touch with his Tacit Thoughts

Elliot reported his experiences in the Seminar Meetings to be relevant because it helped him to become aware of his tacit thoughts and to discover ways in which PTO can be used with students in his classroom. Elliot found that by engaging in the various activities, he became more aware of his thoughts and later was able to use the awareness in a purposeful manner. Giving an example from an activity in Seminar Meeting #6 in which the student teachers first imagined and then drew their vision of their classroom, Elliot, who is intuitive and often works with his instinct, felt greatly benefited from thinking through his image of a future classroom for example. He said:

It made me feel like, Oh wow! I never before had thought about, really, putting in all your thoughts to think about how you want to do this. So doing this exercise helps to and especially when I see all these again, I really feel that it helps to visualize the ideas you have in mind. When you put things on paper, you become more clear about what you are doing. So I think this is helpful in going a step further—now what you have in mind and after that you put it on paper, you can then take it to your classroom and start moving your furniture around.

In response to the researcher’s observation that “It helped you to put things into perspective;” he added:

Yes, and also the other activities helped me to be prepared that if such a situation comes up in real life then I will be able to make a connection with what we have done here and find a way out.
Elliot saw the meaning and value in learning other ways of communicating like using gestures with and understanding himself and others. He noted:

It helped me to see that you can express—the idea of doing symbolism with hands or gestures, and other activities—and seeing other people's signs and gestures. It helped me to see that you are not all alone and there are more people in the same situation.

To my comment that “it was like an affirmation,” Elliot responded:

Yes. It is like having an affirmation and it helps to transfer the feelings into some understanding. It allowed me to understand what was distressing, what was bugging. It helped me in a way to connect the idea of sign language and using that in my classroom. Connecting with the body, connecting with the physical—and that is the part that I found very useful. Another thing that I feel with the learning and the way we did our seminar is that we learned not only from our own experiences but also from the experiences of others. The experiences of others were what we were seeing and by putting ourselves in somebody else's shoes, we were learning from their experiences.

Elliot’s Pedagogical Insights about Using PTO with Students:

Promoting Non-verbal Expressions

Elliot also gave meaning to his learning by taking this pedagogy into his classroom and using it with his students. Elliot, who values different forms of expressions, wanted to provide the students with an opportunity to express themselves nonverbally. The children in his class learn sign language and Elliot viewed PTO activities as providing another avenue for the children to participate in a nonverbal form of communication. He noted:

It motivated me to understand what I can do with my kids in a different way, like they can show things not only by talking but also through actions. I expect that this learning is
something that will stay with me. Occasionally I need to go back to the book and remind
myself that there is also this way to communicate and not forget about it.
Thus, Elliot gave meaning to his learning by finding ways to relate it to his life and the lives of
his students.

Elliot’s Views on Seminar Environment:

Interpersonally and Intrapersonally Safe to Explore

When asked what adjectives he would use to describe the seminar environment in the
seminar meetings, Elliot responded, ‘Different, fun, unique, eye opening, and the idea of opening
or bringing forth what is inside of you.” Specifically, he focused the seminar environment to be
safe, collaborative, and fun.

Experiencing safety. Elliot found the seminar environment to be safe and identified
several reasons for this feeling. Specifically, he noted that beginning with non-threatening
activities, knowing the group members, and being able to communicate honestly helped him to
experience safety in the group:

The first day we started with reflective activities that were non-threatening. It helped me
to understand what TO will be and knowing that there will be a personal touch. The
activities had a personal touch and it helped to open people up and get some deeper
understanding.

Knowing what to expect helped Elliot to feel safe. Another reason Elliot articulated was related
to knowing the group members. “I knew all the members of the group from my other classes and
this helped me to feel comfortable in the group. I was able to communicate honestly and openly.”
In addition to feeling safe with others, Elliot also felt safe with himself to explore his inner feelings. His way of thinking about his anxiety helped Elliot to see the seminar meetings as having a therapeutic effect. He explained:

This was therapeutic because after the seminar when you go out and start thinking what you could have done with other people—then I come in touch with my anxiety and that affects the sense you have for yourself—what you are when you are seen with others. It is almost like going to a psychologist and you come out saying, Oh yeah! In that sense the seminar did the same thing. It helped me out in the classroom. I was able to accept my anxieties by internalizing it, analyzing it, and taking it back with some solution.

_Elliot’s Perception of the Value of PTO in Teaching and Teacher Education:_

_For Creating Awareness of Self and Others_

During his student teaching, Elliot used some of the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed activities in his pre-k class. Specifically, he used Colombian Hypnosis and also asked his students to create images of activities they liked to do at home using their hands. Sharing his insights from these experiences, he reported:

I was really impressed with how the kids and I could see differences in the kids and also about how they were doing this. For the shy kids the gestures were also more shy than the open kids. I think in a way it allowed them to open more.

He gave the following example:

For ‘Paula,’ who otherwise doesn’t share too much, there she was sharing and being in the center. So I like the ideas of seeing that this was an activity that opens up possibilities for kids who are shy and also for those who are open. I liked using their hands and representing their world. For pre-k the importance of physical actions is to help them to
communicate. At this age their language is limited and giving the students the
opportunity to communicate with actions opens a lot of doors.

On asking how he would like to expand this further, he engaged in the following dialogue with
me:

Elliot: With children definitely—I want to use it with parents, too, but with parents I have my doubts about how it will work. When I put myself in the situation—the first session was like about thinking what is this all about. Doing it with parents you need to build up a lot between the parents where they can begin to feel comfortable with each other before you can even start using it.

Foram: You said in your class parents come during PACT time. I wonder what it would be like if you started using these activities during PACT time where the child and the parents are working together. It may help in initiating a bond between parent and child You could do warm-up activities for trust building, mirroring, imaginative thinking, etc. I am just bird walking here.

Elliot: Yes. I can see this. If the confidence is created between adult and child would be great. My parents will create a bonding with each other. It may be a good project to start next year.

Elliot also saw the value of using Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in teacher education. He reported that it may be used for bringing the perceived reality of teaching into the university classroom and for promoting critical thinking, empathic feelings, and creative exploration among student teachers.

Elliot described some of the challenges that could be faced while working with Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed. He reported possible barriers from both a cultural and a personal perspective:

In some cultures people are more open, in some cultures this may be challenging as it involves touch and therefore they can be very self-conscious. You need to train yourself to be open to do these kinds of activities. I think there is a lot of potential but it needs
time as you may need to repeat the activities a couple of times and as you may
consciously need to look into the activity and be willing to find the meaning.

From a personal perspective, he felt that it is important for the group to feel safe. It needs to be a
feeling from within and it is not enough for the teacher to say we are in a safe environment.
Everyone needs to put in the effort to feel safe.

Elliot’s Summary

• Elliot, a connected knower, created opportunities for his students after considering their
interests. From his experiences growing up in Spain at the time when it became a democratic
nation, Elliot came to value freedom of thought and expression. Carrying these experiences
into his own classroom, he consciously created seminar environments that were student-
centered and encouraged students to find their own answers after making connections with
their family, community, and society.

• One of the assumptions Elliot holds is that in general, there is a disconnection between
home-school-community and an increasing number of students coming into school have little
parental involvement. This assumption has guided his relationships with his students and
their parents. He consciously works towards building trusting relationships with his students
and their parents.

• Elliot relates to the students from multiple positions—parent, teacher, and friend. While
setting limits with the children, these different positional connections help him to perceive
himself not as an “authoritarian teacher” but as a parent who is concerned for the child.

• Elliot believes his primary purpose in teaching is helping students to reach their potential by
building relationships with other members of the learning community, their families, and
their communities and by opening their hearts and minds to accept diversity. He uses the metaphor of teaching beyond the shelf to explain his teaching philosophy.

- By participating in Boalian activities, Elliot shared his feelings and the challenges he faced in student teaching, specifically the challenge of finding a balance between meeting the curriculum standards and addressing the needs and interests of his students.

- Elliot's experiences with Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed helped him to create a deeper understanding of his personality and develop insights about the ways in which his anxiety influenced his thoughts, feelings, and actions. This awareness further helped him to think about alternatives available to him. In this sense, Elliot experienced a therapeutic effect.

- His involvement with the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in the seminar meetings helped her to see herself as a creator (by recognizing art as a form of expression), an empathic friend (understanding the joys and challenges of the others) a collaborator (collaborating with her peers to generate possibilities), a member of the seminar group (feeling supported, feeling solidarity), and having agency (feeling the power of seeing alternative possibilities).

- Elliot discovered the reflective potential of the pedagogy and appreciated the time to actively and critically reflect on his thoughts, feelings, and actions.

- Elliot reported that his engagement in the seminar meetings led to meaningful learning, as there was a close link not only between the seminars and the field but also between the seminars and his personal life.

- He perceived the seminar environment to be safe (building a non-threatening environment), collaborative (working with Martha helped him to feel connected with her), fun-filled
(creating opportunities to be silly and playful), and open (having the freedom to express and expand).

- Elliot facilitated PTO activities, such as Colombian Hypnosis and role plays, with students in his pre-K class. He reported that he became more aware of the students' lives at home; more specifically, he became aware of the different activities they did at home.

- From his experiences, Elliot found that PTO could be of value with students and their parents for building a community. It can be used with students in teacher education for bringing in the realities of the elementary school classroom into the university classroom and examining the situations as a means of promoting critical thinking, empathic feelings, and creative explorations.

- A theme that was repeated over and over again in Elliot's story is that of recognizing that his questions were much like those of the rest of the group. Seeing similarities between himself and the rest of the group helped him to accept himself and his situation and revealed new ways of working with his anxieties.

Meredith

"I put my heart into relationships because that is what I am about."

Meredith's motivation to be a co-researcher was to attend the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed Conference, as well as learn more about the use of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed inside and outside the classroom setting.

Meredith's story was notable in her commitment to building personal relationships with her students and knowing them holistically. Boalian work provided her with another way to know her students. She came to recognize the ongoing developmental process of a teacher and was an on-going learner. She brought this part of herself in the research where she
enthusiastically participated in the activities and in her efforts to know more about the pedagogy she facilitated some activities with the students in her class and agreed to be a co-presenter at the Annual Conference of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed.

**Introduction to Meredith**

Meredith was born and raised in Atlanta, Georgia, where she completed her schooling and undergraduate degree in political science in May 2002. Meredith has been on a swim team since she was six years old and now coaches young boys and girls at the university recreation pool. After graduation she worked in several jobs in the service industry, enjoying life for the first time outside of the pool. After time as a hostess, coffee shop employee, and retail salesperson in the clothing industry, Meredith took a trip in March of 2003 to Costa Rica to investigate environmental work, something she had always been interested in but had never pursued.

In a small rain forest reserve in Canon, Costa Rica, Meredith realized her dream of becoming a teacher. The environmental work was fascinating yet lonely, and Meredith spent several afternoons volunteering in the local elementary school attempting to teach English. A few months later she started pursuing her Master's degree. After completing her Master's, Meredith plans to be a teacher in Athens, Georgia. When asked to describe herself, Meredith says, “I am an outgoing yet introverted young woman trying to experience as much of life as possible, and have some fun along the way.”

For her student teaching experience, Meredith was working with “Ms. Rose” in her first grade classroom at “Sunflower Elementary.” Ms. Rose was an experienced teacher who had been teaching in public school for over 20 years. Meredith perceived her as a good mentor and they
shared a satisfying mentor-mentee relationship. There were 19 students in Meredith's classroom from diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds.

_Meredith’s Epistemological Perspectives: Orientation to Relationships_

Meredith believed that much of her knowing comes from her relationships and her understandings of who the people are in their world. Typically, she looks for a personal connection in life and works towards building meaningful relationships with people with whom she interacts. Elaborating on her understanding of building personal connections with her students, she said, “I want to have a personal relationship with every child.” She explained:

I want to think of where this child comes from, what does this child like to do, and what things in the classroom engage the child. I want to build a relationship with my students that is genuine and not superficial.

Meredith, a connected knower, developed this relational way of knowing from her experiences growing up among caring adults at home and in school, and through the courses taken in the ECCO program.

I have had a lot of thoughtful and caring adults in my life. My mom was very involved in school, she came with us to Girl Scouts, and she took us swimming. She got us involved in swimming and other sports. I have had many adult role models and grew up in a big family of aunts. So I grew up in a comfortable, loving community. I did swimming till I was 22 and in that time I had so many different coaches. Some coaches actually wanted to sit down and have a conversation with me. While some others were different, there was something different in these individual coaches and the way they approached a relationship with me. So I have been cared for not only by my parents but my extended
family and other adults and friends. I am just a very relationship-oriented person and I need a personal connection.

Meredith takes her experiences of growing up in caring relationships to her classroom, with the goal of building strong, personal relationships with her students.

In response to a question about how her educational history has influenced her beliefs about building relationships and communities, Meredith articulated the interplay between her sensitive nature and her relationships with her classmates:

Well, I think back on my own schooling and the fact that I was very shy and I never thought that people really liked me and this was all the way through schooling. Just . . . I'm a very sensitive person; we have had this discussion before. I would always come home and we would be talking about friends in school and I just don't have any friends, it is just, I'm just so sensitive. And I think of others a lot, how to satisfy, please, and accommodate other people. For a lot of my life I've been you know the people pleaser kind of person making sure that everyone else is o.k. and happy and if that happens maybe I'll be o.k. I think some of it has to do with being a middle child, being between like an older sister and a younger brother and trying like to keep the peace. Because those two fight all the time.

Meredith elaborated on her role as the peacemaker:

Yeah, I'm the peacemaker, let's just be friends and get along. Sometimes I can be a troublemaker too. In family it is different, you hurt each other but you always make up because you live together, but in school you hurt each other and you don't always make up. Yeah. And I think I just took that so personally in elementary, middle, and in the high
school. The harm you know that kids can do to one another. They are so. I don't want to say mean, I think they just don't know.

Meredith's educational experiences were in authoritative environments where the students answered the teacher's questions. She reported:

My school was like most people my age—just very sit in your desk and raise your hand if you know the answer and if you don't know, and get called on to answer, then oh my gosh, you might just die of embarrassment.

In addition to her educational experiences in school, Meredith reported that the courses taken in the ECCO program also influenced her worldview:

The entire ECCO program has been very strong on building connections. I am specifically thinking about engaging students and families. Right from the start, it was important and emphasized in our program. From all the readings and the course interactions, I felt as though this was a career for me, but teaching is to help others. I think this is what deeply all of us want to do.

Her courses and readings represented a worldview that deeply resonated with Meredith. Talking about her critical perspectives, she reported:

In my grad school, as I studied education and educational theories, I felt as though my reading and teaching about it and my experiences—those factors combined and made me feel a lot more confident about my readings. I feel a lot of that has to do with finding critical pedagogy and critical literacy and finding kind of the whole connected with my head and heart—and I felt I could take it into my life and bring to other people. With critical pedagogy, and the first time I read Paulo Freire, I felt that I can understand all that I read.
Finally, explaining the importance of student-teacher relationship based on connections in her life, Meredith said:

Student teaching relationship is big with me. And basing learning on that and not on, ‘Get your math books and let’s do page number blah, blah.’ So I guess getting to know them and making a connection between them and the world and me.

Thus, Meredith's experiences growing up, her personality, and her experiences in the ECCO program--along with what she intuitively knew--helped her to construct a worldview in which power relations between students and teachers rested on the connections she made with her students.

*Meredith’s Relationships with Students: A Holistic Perspective*

Meredith often expressed in the interviews that she visualized a student-teacher relationship that helped her to know her students more holistically. Exploring her vision of the student-teacher relationship, she said:

I think of it more in a familial sense. I want to know my students more than, Oh, this is Sally and Sally makes an“A” on every spelling test. Sally's parents do this and that. I would like looping because I'd like to get to stay with the same group of kids long enough to know them, build a relationship where I know their interests and their abilities, where we can just have fun and letting children be.

Meredith who rarely shared a personal relationship with her teachers as a child, as a teacher desired to create a student-teacher relationship where she knew the students in a deeper way. Explaining her relationships with her teachers when she was growing up:

I just always felt like my teachers looked at me and were like, Oh, she makes good grades, she'll go on to be a doctor or she will go on and be this and I mean ever since
middle school I used to say, Oh, I don't want to do anything, because I did not have a vision for myself compared to what others had for me.

Putting her ideals to work in her day-to-day classroom realities created challenges for Meredith. She grappled with issues related to teacher authority and working with her first graders who had difficulty getting along with each other. As she saw disruptive and disrespectful behaviors in children, she became more aware of the realities of the classroom. In Seminar Meeting #4, Meredith used a construction paper activity to eloquently describe her challenges with her idealism and her emotional responses to the events. She described:

[You] had asked us to construct an artifact to share an issue we were grappling with. My initial image was of a girl holding a red color heart. She was black in color which represented that cloudiness, uncertainty about student teaching and the red heart was strong and filled with all these ideals. One of my ideals was that I wanted to share and I wanted to approach student teaching with my heart, with my feelings and not with an agenda to accomplish my lesson plans. So I felt I came in with a very strong heart.

After six weeks of student teaching, when we were making this artifact in the seminar meeting, I felt a little different from when I had begun. So in this second image, I made a girl that was a smaller version of the same girl who is red and she is holding a heart that is blue. Her heart is blue because the reality of being in the classroom with 19 other children and another teacher whose class this is. I wouldn't say crushed necessarily, but definitely feels challenged.

When I asked, “What made your heart blue? What made the girl red?” Meredith responded:

About four kids in the entire class are disrupting class time, disrupting learning, and sometime disrupting the fun time. And that is the saddest thing of all for me. They are not
trying to be mean and I cannot get through to them that their behavior is not appropriate.

It is saddening because I cannot be a psychologist and be a teacher at the same time in the settings that I find myself right now. So my blue heart was blue because of things like that. But I was the red girl as so many positive things were going on. I had learned so much from all the kids, I was having such a good time, and I had got to a point where I really wanted to teach by myself soon. I was excited teaching them about Mexico, but I was afraid it was going to be yelling to the face of several students two weeks long and I wasn't excited about that.

I asked Meredith to describe her feelings of sadness. Meredith replied:

Blue heart weighs heavier than red. I have a sour feeling in my heart. My shoulders are rolled over. In the beginning my chest was high, my shoulders back, I was feeling happy and sunny. Now I feel heavier. My heart is tainted.

Meredith's vision was to build a connected classroom community; at the same time, her experiences during student teaching helped her to understand that she may not enter into a class that is already connected. Therefore, Meredith saw that connected learning environments are not created by chance, but are intentionally built. She now consciously worked to build a connected learning environment by reaching out to her students.

I try to come into class each day with a reddish heart. But I think on days when I have to get into a child's face at 8:30 in the morning because he/she was pulling somebody's hair on the rug or whatever, I wished that I had a little bag of tricks just to know how to combat that instead of having to yell or how to make that day o.k. for that child instead of having them go home feeling, this was another day that I got yelled at and moved my clip. I don't feel that I am getting through to those three kids, trying to sit and say, Why
you think I had to do this? and Look at me while I talk. It is at that time that I feel I had ways to make connections with those students. I need them to know and help them realize that I'm not just there to discipline them.

In this sense, Meredith attempted to make sense of her experiences and find a balance for the polarity that she experienced. When asked to reflect on what she felt at the end of student teaching, she responded by extending her heart metaphor.

I was just thinking about it while we were talking that if I had to choose a color now, I would say, it would be like red and blue together, more purplish. I like the idea of the red and blue being the same heart, as it is as if you are going through different phases, and none of the phases are permanent.

Meredith recognized that the development of a teacher was an ongoing process and none of the phases were permanent.

During her student teaching Meredith was attentive to issues of student-teacher relationships and consciously considered ways in which she could build a classroom community. She continued this exploration in her thinking about the purposes for teaching.

*Meredith’s Goals in Teaching: Constructing, Becoming, Connecting*

Meredith perceived herself as the bridge between her own and her students’ cultures. She believed that her purpose for teaching emerged from her beliefs about teaching and learning, her personality, her educational experiences, her experiences during student teaching, her relationship with her students and mentor teacher, and her views on education. Specifically, her beliefs about teaching included the following: building a relational community; connecting with the world, the students, and self. She believed in the value of using the arts, music, and drama in
her class to help her students build a community of learners. Explaining that teaching is a way of reaching out to her students, Meredith stated:

> Until I student taught and I spent time with Horizon Summer Camp, I still kind of partly believed that teaching was all about me or probably more about me than the children. But then when you are with these kids every day, I find myself asking at the end of each day that how can I inspire them and help them find the potential they have within them.

Another factor that she perceived influenced her purpose for teaching is her oversensitive nature and a relational self that added to her need to build a learning environment that is connected to and respectful of self and others. Additionally, from taking perspectives, Meredith came to understand that her feelings may not be the reality; accepting this truth helped her to connect with her students and her mentor teacher.

Finally, Meredith's purpose for teaching was also influenced by her views of the current education system. Scripting behavior, teaching to ‘cover’ materials for the test, and allowing minimal freedom for children to be children were some of the challenges Meredith felt the current education system created. Elaborating on her views, she said:

> Beyond kindergarten, I am amazed how much we are trying to force our students to be like little adults, like robots. The way the school system is trying to inspire students is so anti-inspirational. We are teaching to assess and third graders know it. They know that this is all about passing the test. If this is the way it should be, then I think we should create military schools where these third, fourth, and fifth graders are in their own place and not seeing the sun. They are not having any fun relationships with their teachers. I have a lot of issues with the government and the people involved in making the educational decisions.
All of these factors influenced Meredith's perception of being a bridge between herself, the students, and the world. She explained her metaphor in the following interchange:

Meredith: I want to see myself as a bridge between what culture I have, what culture I have experienced, and what culture my students have experienced. I see my classroom as a bridge between home, individual culture, school culture, and communities.

Foram: In our past conversations, we have been talking about the metaphor of heart, while in your image of a future teacher you have created a bridge. How do these two images relate for you?

Meredith: I see the heart above the bridge.

Foram: Are the heart and the bridge separate?

Meredith: The heart and the bridge are not separate. I think my two metaphors are connecting in many different ways. Not just students and teachers but also school and home and community. The heart is there because I put my heart into relationships because that is what I am about. It is very hard for me not to feel deeply connected with the children in my room. I am building my bridges in this school with my children. I am building positive and supportive relationships.

Foram: What is the bridge made of?

Meredith: The wood pieces are compassionate and beautiful. Those are wood pieces in the forest and we are building together and becoming the all we are today. It is all about constructing, becoming, and connecting.

Thus, Meredith explained her purpose for teaching as constructing, becoming, and connecting and believed that building meaningful relationships and connections with her students and their families were a means to achieving her goals.

*Meanings Meredith Found in Her Involvement with PTO*

Meredith perceived that her involvement with PTO helped her to develop a sense identity within PTO. Specifically, she felt the power of expressing her thoughts, sharing her dilemmas, and feeling connected with a child after being able to put herself in the child's shoes.
Meredith’s Sense of Roles/Identity within PTO

_Meredith as a creator._ Meredith appreciated the space to look within herself to, think about her emerging ideas, and use physical and hands-on activities to communicate with others. When asked to give an example of a time when she felt like a creator, Meredith replied as follows:

For example, in this picture, Cathy and I have made a bridge. I remember my comment that I wanted to see myself as a bridge between what culture I have, what culture I have experienced, and what culture my students are going to bring. Making this image helped me to become clearer about my thoughts about the classroom I would like to build. I see my classroom as a bridge between home, individual culture, school culture, and communities.

From creating images like these, Meredith became aware that she found it helpful to share with others what she truly thought on a particular topic. She perceived the value and power of expressing and owning her thoughts:

It is such a simple question to ask—like create a pose to express your vision as a teacher, but when do we do that in teacher education courses? I have been fortunate to have wonderful teachers, but so much of our time goes in theory or what is going on inside someone else’s classroom instead of taking on the ideas you have for yourself.

She continued:

The vague ideas, the unnamed ideas and bringing those out and then making a pose—it is like owning your thoughts and I think it is the power of thoughts and making it in action and taking it beyond—all of this is just making you able to be what you want to be. I enjoyed making the hands-on things as well as embodied images.
Through this conversation, I find Meredith raising an important question for teacher educators to consider: How can educators help students find a balance between understanding research-based knowledge with what they already intuitively know about good teaching practices?

*Meredith as a contributor.* Meredith continually helped to promote the group’s understanding by posing questions and offering her dilemmas for us to consider and work with. In Seminar Meetings #2 and 3, Meredith shared with the group the challenges she had faced teaching a particular lesson. She took the initiative to invite us to participate in a Web CT conversation on ways to create playlets for Forum Theater without oversimplifying them. The group responded to her question on Web CT and as a group we agreed to give more contextual information.

*Meredith as taking the role of her students.* Meredith reported that she was able to feel the empathy for the child and be the child after she took on his role. In this space, she was able to see the world through his eyes, which in turn helped her to develop a deeper understanding of him and his behavior. This feeling of connection dissolved the anger Meredith had felt towards him and herself:

I had so much of anger towards the child, towards myself, and towards the experience that playing the role of the child released a lot of it. The anger resulted from my not doing a better job and not understanding the situation. So to be the child, it took away all the bad feeling and I now understand that I have a tool for understanding future instances like this. I was so forceful and so adamant when I was the child.
When asked what it was like for her to be the child, Meredith replied,

I could feel this energy building inside me and I can see how this energy could have built up in the child as he continued asking for wanting to play with clay. In his shoes, I might have gone home and said, Mom, I don't like this teacher. I felt I was the child.

Meredith interpreted her experiences from the perspective of the child, and in doing so the distance between herself and the child decreased and the reality of the child emerged for her.

*Meredith as a collaborator.* Meredith collaborated with her peers. In a supportive environment and through conversations with others, Meredith began to explore what she would like to do in situations that constrain her and become more aware of her thoughts and feelings. In this way she continued to construct her understanding of teaching and learning.

Explaining what it meant for her to collaborate with her peers, Meredith said:

I think it was helpful because my mentor teacher and I did speak a lot but a lot of it was based on the children right there in the classroom and my interactions with them. I did not get much of a stand back reflection from another perspective type of conversation frequently. So it was nice to be in this kind of an arena being with colleagues going through the same thing. So that was really helpful to talk about and collaborate to understand each other and the experiences.

When asked how she was helped by having conversations with people who shared similar experiences, Meredith observed:

Having such conversations helped me to gain more insight. It made me think a lot about my position in the classroom and what I was doing. I would come to the classroom next week and think about things beyond what I am going to teach academically. I began to think about how my message was being given to my students, was I standing over them,
was I standing at their level, how was I interacting with you. This questioning part of me
was not on all the time as often I was overwhelmed by just having the kids in my class.
The seminar conversations helped me to think about what I wanted to do and not just do
things that my mentor teacher did.

Meredith in the seminar community. Meredith reported that she felt like a member of the
seminar group and felt supported by her colleagues. She believed this support helped to further
build her confidence in teaching and accept the challenges in the field. With the help of her
peers, Meredith was able to accept student teaching as a powerful space for learning rather than a
space for performing. She explained:

It definitely strengthened my relationships with each member of that group. In that
strengthening, I found support which has really helped me a lot through student teaching
and will help me throughout my teaching. It made Cathy and me closer; we were friends
but this brought us even closer where we feel the support of each other. This was also a
very good group to share things with because oftentimes we said similar things in
different ways and it just seemed to resound more powerfully. I felt that in the classroom,
it was very easy to get discouraged with the way things were going but to have my
friends say that they were going through the same things would make me feel that I was
o.k. and I was not messing up. In this sense, student teaching became a ground for
learning. It became very powerful when this space was shared with others and it
strengthened my relationship with each member of the group.
She continued:

For example, when we played the Rhythmic Movement game. When you laugh together, your defenses are low and as a result you can become a group. This became an important part of getting a community established.

*Meredith feeling her agency.* At the beginning of student teaching, Meredith saw teaching more as something for herself, as completing a requirement. By the end she was able to see teaching more as reaching out to her students to help them feel connected with their world. Her feelings of sadness that developed after seeing her some of her students unable to get along with others and finding herself as playing the disciplinarian helped her to think what she would like to do differently. She perceived herself as having agency to create classrooms that were student-centered. She explained:

The realization that I made the blue heart going into my two weeks was a little saddening to me. So I think that it really did from then on in my class make me think about being able to address relationships and made me think about not just about making it all about what I had to learn.

Meredith offered the following example to explain how she shared her agency with her students:

The Forum Theater on “give me clay” is helping me even now as I prepare to be a kindergarten teacher. I really need to think about the presentations of materials and things like that. They are young, they are five, and school is still exciting and fun for them and they are not going to understand that we have to read the book first and then . . . so really thinking about the presentation of the materials. It is like being aware and not wanting to hold all the fun in my hand.
When clarified, “What you are explaining is that in your planning you would consider the interests of your students and their voices?” Meredith replied:

Yes. It would be a wonderful way to connect to their knowledge, their interests, and their experiences. That is huge. I want to create classrooms where students come to know that this is about them and it is created around them, and it is not just about me.

Meredith shared her teacher authority with her students.

Meredith reported another example of agency in recognizing the power of using one's body to express one's thoughts. She perceived that in the seminar meetings, we started by asking questions and then engaged in co-constructing knowledge. Finding answers to their questions created intellectual agency and epistemological empowerment (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994) in her and the others. She said,

After all the six seminar meetings, one could really see how much we have transformed in our ability to make sculptures and connect what we want to say with our bodies. That was very powerful. I have really liked the combination of bringing together creativity, drama, and thinking all into one. I have always been a dramatic kind of a person—in the sense that I like to move my body to make funny movements but this has really helped me to see how you can use your body to express your thoughts and feelings. It was very powerful.

*Meredith’s Engagement in Reflective Thinking: Working with Issues of Power*

Meredith reported engaging in critical reflection through participation in various Boalian activities. As a critical stance, she was eager to understand the differential power relations
between students and teacher and she used this perspective to reflect on her student teaching experiences. Meredith shared:

Critical thinking is what I am doing while I am teaching and in these activities. This flows with my theory—I was worried that I would be a critical pedagogist in theory and not in practice but it was good to have this on the side because it is tied into everything that I had thought about before. Thinking about relationships in the classroom is not just academic teaching. I found this helpful.

When if she could give an example of a time when she engaged in thinking about issues of power, Meredith responded:

Yes. Like when we did Forum Theater and the images. The suggestions that were offered were pretty helpful. Before I could not take the child's perspective at all. I now try and place myself in the child's shoes. You made one comment like think about if you were sitting there and knew there were some fun things to do, what would you like to do? This just hit me hard, that yes, I was the same way as the kid. Maybe I would not have expressed it vocally and would not have kept saying it but would have had a similar internal conflict. I walked away feeling so much better because I felt that I could understand the child and reflect on the situation. I realized as a child all he wanted to do was have fun and I could have done other things to engage him with clay and reading.

Another example that Meredith gave of a time when she engaged in reflective thinking was when she talked about understanding the power struggle in student-teacher relationship. Playing the game and following the hand put Meredith in situations she did not want to be in at all. Feeling that she was forced to comply annoyed her. Later, articulating her experiences with Colombian Hypnosis, she said:
This was so fun but also annoying. I had not thought about this initially as another way to take the perspective of the child. I had not thought about that initially because my critical thinking was not in full force at that time. This game helped me to reflect on student-teacher power relations and recognize that if the children perceived their role as following their teacher, then through the years the child could become powerless in changing themselves and their world.

A third example of how participation in Boalian Theater facilitated critical reflections became evident when Meredith expressed the importance of movement-based activities in classrooms for enhancing student motivation. Using bodily movements helps students make connections with what they are learning in class and may appeal to the multiple intelligences students have (Gardner, 1991), which in turn may make learning invitational and fun-filled for many students, enhancing student motivation. She explained:

I understand how you can use your body for so many different things like emotional, vocabulary, kinesthetic, and interpersonal aspects. We all talk about that teachers teach the way they are taught and if I teach the way I was taught then it is not going to be fun for me or the kids. I recognize how important body movement is for the kids if we want to keep the students motivated in our classrooms. Not just for my teaching but their physical comfort levels, they need some movements to keep their interest in the class.

Meredith’s Engagement in Relevant Learning:

Making Student Teaching an Authentic Experience

Meredith was able to make a direct connection with the experiences in the field, insights in the seminar, and then take this relevant understanding back into the field to improve her practice.
Foram: In our last conversation, you had talked about how using Boalian Theater in seminar meetings had helped you to look at student teaching. You had said, “It kind of brought out the reality of student teaching not just as something that needs to be done to get a degree but it made the entire experience very authentic.” Can you explain what you mean by this statement?

Meredith: Yes. I could feel that my practice was getting better because we used to come here and reflect on experiences. It became an element where I began to view student teaching as, OK, I am learning; OK, try and slow down and don't pack in so much of academic stuff. Just live the experience for the experience. I wished the seminars could have been for longer. In some ways I think the seminar brought out the significance.

Foram: So what you are reminding me of “knowing” an experience where knowing the experience requires introspection, interpretation, reflection, and also becoming aware of our emotional responses to what we are experiencing.

Meredith: Yes, exactly. I would come home and tell “Allen” about it—who is a good listener and he understands but it is different to have this within the context we were of teachers and student teachers. It is different to have similar and different opinions. Most of the time I felt I was well received and supported. Not that my family pass up on what I say, but sometimes it may be seen as—oh, that happens. It is an experience. While here in the seminar group I felt that we could really talk and do so much more. It was in a way personal and professional growth. There was just so much going on, I often felt that I wish there was a day in the field and a day to reflect because there is so much that goes on in the field.

Meredith’s Views on the Seminar environment:

Creative, Motivating, Alive

When asked what adjectives she would use to describe the seminar environment, Meredith said, “Introspective, reflective, engaging, motivating for my thinking and practice, safe, creative, imaginative, alive, supportive, and collaborative.”

Feeling safe. For most part Meredith reported feeling safe in the group and attributed her feelings to knowing the group members. However, early in the semester Meredith did not feel safe as she came to understand the purpose of Forum Theater, she was less defensive, and felt safer. She elaborated:
Initially, when I had offered a dilemma, it felt hard to see people say that you can do this and you can do that. But in the later session as we talked it out I realized that people were not saying that your problem is simple and I can solve it. They were offering alternatives and creating possibilities for themselves and others.

*Meredith’s experiencing collaborating with the course instructor.* Meredith expressed that she appreciated her collaboration with Martha. She saw Martha as supportive in the facilitation of the Boalian activities and in sharing her insights, which the Meredith found very valuable. She shared her experiences collaborating with Martha in the following exchange:

Meredith: She at times assisted you to make things clear for us. It was good to have her there because she also came into our classrooms as a university facilitator. She had a foundational understanding of my stories and experiences. So it was good have her in there. I very much value all that she had to offer. There were times when she would say things and I would say—yeah, totally. You are so right on! She is great at making connections, making a summary, and making us or helping us make sense of things.

Foram: So having her as a university facilitator and in the seminar meetings helped you to make connections with her.

Meredith: Yes. I think it helped even more to see her as an ally. Cathy and I were initially apprehensive of the entire student teaching process. Having her—her role as a critic of our teaching, but then I realized she was very supportive and she had great advice.

*Having fun.* Meredith explained that the pedagogy provided opportunities for her to engage in being silly and having fun. She felt that participating in fun together helped her to feel more connected with the others in the group. Referring to a specific occasion, she recalled:

I loved the activity of making rhythmic movements. Once you get and are able to act goofy in front of people and you act silly, and that is okay. Your defenses are low and you are ready to take risks and learn together.
Experiencing free and creative expression. Meredith found that by engaging in creative and imaginative activities, she felt the freedom to express herself. These forms of expressions were different from her routine experiences, and evoked feelings of joy and challenges in her. She reported that working in a community of learners made this experience even more powerful for her:

All of this was so out of the box. I am so used to, Read this book and write a paper about it or talk about it. Here we do free expressions kind of things and then I go to my day and my day is not like that.

When asked what involvement in this setting meant to her, Meredith replied, “It was a challenge and a joy to open up that imagination and creativity and then do this with six or seven other people. It was a powerful experience.” Thus, Meredith perceived the seminar environment to be safe, fun-filled, and open. She also experienced building a deeper connection with Martha through their participation in the activities.

Meredith’s Views on Value of PTO in Teaching and Teacher Education

During her student teaching Meredith used some of the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed activities with her first graders. Her purpose was to get practical experience using it with children. She explained:

A thing about our program is that you kind of talked around a lot about various ways of teaching but you have not experienced it in a way where you feel totally comfortable doing it. In this seminar we did things and that helped in recognizing that I could do this and see the practical applications of it in the class. I liked the idea of using it in my classroom for having fun and helping students to feel connected with each other and me.
Specifically, Meredith co-facilitated the Name Game, Colombian Hypnosis, role plays to understand what students think are appropriate and inappropriate behaviors for sitting on the rug, and breathing exercises. These experiences helped her become aware of the students’ personalities and understand them more finely, which in turn strengthened the bonds with the students. She shared the following insights she gained through using Boalian work with the children:

Meredith: I had so much fun doing it and I felt that lot of my students did too. The energy was so positive. I saw it as a way of having fun and getting connected. I learned a lot more about them than I could have [otherwise]. Their personalities came alive.

Foram: Their personalities come alive. How?

Meredith: Like in the Name Game, you can see the ones that were like, I can't wait, I know what I am going to be, and the ones I don't know what I want to be, and then there were some who were like, I don't know if I want to do this. You could read their body language. You could see how their friends helped those who could not think of what to do. I remember Bethany who became the butterfly and her arm movements and Sam the snake who was slithering around the ground. Through all this I just realized that they just wanted to have fun. They were being kids, being themselves. There was so much excitement. And after that first day the students kept asking when Ms. Foram will come next. They wanted to play the games. Colombian Hypnosis was powerful too. Two boys were moving around and dancing with their two hands together to *Twinkle Twinkle Little Star*. I was able to see how the 'bad' boys in the class wanted to pair up with the 'good' girls in the class. Some students wanted to be with me. The images of a good day at school had a lot to do with moving around, being able to run, going to recess—their images reinforced the need we have been talking about of incorporating whole body movement and the issue that we expect children to sit at their desks for most parts of the day.

Foram: That is a lot of awareness. What does having this awareness mean for you?

Meredith: I am intrigued by PTO and would like to use it in my future classrooms. I want to know more of their personalities.

Thus, Meredith saw the value of using drama with children and experienced the potential of PTO as a tool to peek into the minds of the students and connect with them in a different way.
In addition, she saw the value of using theater activities in her classroom to involve students in problem-solving and to build a cohesive classroom climate where the students overcome their differences and are able to respect each other and appreciate the diversity in their class.

After Meredith's and my participation in the Annual Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed Conference, we attended a session with Mr. Peter Duffy. Peter is currently doing his Masters in Fine Arts and has used PTO in public schools. The session we attended was developed for an experiential understanding of his work of using PTO with second grade students. The students had read a story on bullying and Peter with the help of music, structures from Rainbow of Desire and Forum Theater helped the students to understand the characters and their feelings. Finally, Peter used Forum Theater with his students to address the issue of bullying and generate possible ways of preventing it. After attending the conference, Meredith shared a clearer vision of how she would like to use PTO with students in her classroom:

I can see so many possibilities. I am trying to explore it in my classroom during read aloud. I like even the Rainbow of Desire activities to draw out what emotions the authors were really trying to share. In our classes we read such great books but we just read it. The book is not discussed again. I liked the workshop we went to with Peter Duffy. He spent 3 hours on one little story.

When I commented that he probably spent many more days when he used it with children,” Meredith replied,

Yes, so really slowing it down and breaking it down with the children. And that is just one thing. I think creative expression would be something I would like to explore. It is a meshing of creative and emotional knowing for me.
Based on her experiences, Meredith came to value the use of this pedagogy for connecting thinking and feeling and recognizing both as legitimate pathways to understanding text.

Meredith also saw the value of using PTO in teacher education. She reported that it may be used for bringing the realities of teaching into the university classroom and for promoting critical thinking, empathic feelings, and creative explorations among student teachers. She elaborating further in our discussion:

Meredith: It would be nice to have a day or two outside of the student teaching rotation where this could be done. This could be done after the field experiences, as a class you are taking. It needs to be a class you are taking all the way through. If that is not possible then at the very least make it a class you are teaching to express creatively—it could be a monthly thing that ECCO did. Two hours helped to do role plays, visualizations—I think most of the activities we did here have potential in a teacher education program.

Foram: What could be the purposes?

Meredith: It is another tool for reflection and is self-informative. So much came out of my simple role play. Not just about myself but also about the child and the way I was going about teaching my lesson. The entire 30 minutes of torture in my classroom and then the session with the group here has informed me in so many different ways. I feel that as a teacher your entire eight hours in the day are filled with moments like that. You are in a place where you are told to be aware of things and then you process them in a way beyond journaling and writing a diary. I think the entire experience for me was great and it is another way to inform your practice and know who you are in a cooperative and a collaborative environment. So much of insight and learning can take place.

Foram: So what I am hearing you say is that this form of reflection could help in understanding the classroom, the students, and self in a deeper way.

Meredith: Yes.

In addition to recognizing the value of the pedagogy to take the perspective of the students, Meredith also experienced the PTO activities as tools that allowed her to make her tacit
knowledge visible. She felt the freedom of exploration as she started the inquiry from the knowledge she had rather than trying to learn someone else's words.

Meredith described some of the challenges that she faced while working with Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed. From her personal experiences of working with the pedagogy, Meredith recommended making more explicit to the group at the beginning of the sessions that the purpose of the interventions in the Forum Theater is to rehearse and generate possibilities. Saying this out loud, according to Meredith, would help people to be more open to accepting the interventions rather than feeling oversensitive or threatened.

Also, Meredith explained that gradually she understood more of the purposes of the pedagogy. By the end, she saw the value of what she initially experienced as a challenge:

I initially felt that in role playing we were oversimplifying the situation by focusing on some aspects. But after our group conversation and more so now that I am in my classroom, I see and recognize that it is good to simplify the situation so that you can focus on the core concern. Role playing helped me to understand that looking at the specific slices is just as useful and important.

*Meredith's Summary*

- Meredith believed that much of her learning comes from her relationships and her understandings of people and the world and she engaged in knowing her students in a deeper way and continuously examined her relationships with her students as she worked towards sharing power with them.
- Meredith perceived herself as a bridge between her own and her students' culture, and the bridge was made of her heart. Specifically, she believed in the importance of building a
relational community and connecting with the world, the students, and self. She saw the value of using the arts, music, and play for these purposes.

- By participating in Boalian activities, Meredith shared her feelings and the challenges she faced in student teaching, specifically with establishing teacher authority.

- Meredith's involvement with the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in the seminar meetings helped her to see herself as a creator (by becoming aware of the value and the power of owning one's thoughts); contributor (posing questions and offering dilemmas); connected knower (taking the child's perspective and understanding that her feelings may not have been very different from his); collaborator (collaborating with her peers to develop a conceptual understanding of using playlets in teaching); member of the community in the seminar (feeling supported, which helped her to feel more confident and accept her challenges in the field); and having intellectual agency (recognizing the power of using one's body to express one's thoughts).

- Meredith discovered the reflective dimensions of PTO and appreciated having the time to actively and critically reflect on her experiences with power relations in her student teaching. Use of Forum Theater and Colombian Hypnosis particularly supported her reflections.

- Meredith found that her engagement in the seminar meetings led to relevant learning, as there was a close link between the seminars and the field. Her connections helped her to benefit more fully from her student teaching experience, which she felt was authentic.

- Meredith perceived the seminar environment to be safe (she felt safe once she understood the purpose of Forum Theater more deeply); collaborative (working with Martha helped her to feel connected with her); fun (providing opportunities to be silly and playful); and free (having the freedom to express and expand).
• Meredith co-facilitated PTO activities, including the Name Game, Colombian Hypnosis, and role plays, with students in her first grade class. Meredith reported that she became more aware of the students' personalities and understood them and connected with them more fully.

• From her experiences, Meredith found that PTO had the potential to be used with students for examining texts (e.g., stories) using thinking and feeling as legitimate pathways for understanding. In addition, she perceived that pedagogy like this may be able to promote student motivation by engaging students in fun-filled, movement-based activities.

• Meredith saw the purpose of PTO in teacher education for bringing field experiences into the university classrooms to promote empathic knowing, creative exploration, and addressing critical issues like power relations between students and teachers.

Aura

“Forum Theater is not about giving solutions; it is about making a range of solutions available for yourself.”

Aura reported her motivation to be a co-researcher was to engage in learning and sharing. Aura's case was unique as she brought in her insights of using PTO with teachers from her experiences with the ‘STAR’ program. She is very involved with the Latino community and is an advocate for the Latino teachers and students. Aura had completed her student teaching a year ago and had joined this group to build her teaching philosophy. She was experiencing a shift in her thinking as she had begun to recognize the agency in children and adults.
Aura was born and raised in Colombia, South America, where she completed her schooling. Tracing her educational history, Aura said, “I was really lucky to have really good teachers in my elementary school. My parents were very involved in all the years including my high school. They were involved in projects and field trips.”

Aura pursued her undergraduate degree in industrial engineering at a time when engineering was very male-dominated. As a young, ambitious woman, Aura led a very active college life, participating in two sports teams at the university as well as successfully achieving her academic goals. After completing her undergraduate degree and working in her field for a couple of years, she traveled to Switzerland to earn her M.B.A. Along with her degree, she also learned a lot about living in another culture. She said, “It was an eye opener, to see different cultures and different people, and understand the European minds. The political movements in Europe made me learn more about the political situations in my country, Colombia.” After completing her Master’s degree in Switzerland, she returned to Colombia to join a French multinational company while taking a specialization course in marketing, where she learned about the business world.

In addition to living in Switzerland, Aura had the opportunity to travel in countries like Egypt and Israel with her father, who worked with an international organization. Through her travels she learned more about cultures of different lands. With a twinkle in her eye, she noted, “That is how I started my multicultural education.” Furthermore she added, “I have been moving in different cultures and looking at the world through different lenses. I am like the melting pot.”

Aura came to the United States in 1999 to study English and changed her career path. She enrolled in a Master's of Education program in 2003. She said, “I came to the university here and
now, finally, after many years I am trying to understand the American mind, the American style of living, and the American school system.”

For her student teaching experience, Aura worked with “Ms. Jasminè” in her second grade classroom at “Flower Elementary” in Spring 2005. Ms. Jasmine was a young but experienced teacher who skillfully worked with children from diverse cultures. Aura found her to be as a good mentor and they shared a supportive mentor-mentee relationship. There were 15 students in Aura’s classroom from diverse ethnic, racial, and cultural backgrounds.

At the time of the data collection, Aura was pursuing her Ph.D. in Language and Literacy Education. Aura worked as a graduate assistant with the “Star” program, where she co-planned and organized meetings, observed the participants in their academic settings, and provided feedback to the participants. The participants in the “Star” program were teachers who spoke English as a second language.

Aura’s work with the Latino community has been well recognized. She has even received a joint award from the university, county government, and county school district for her contributions to the Latino community. After completing her Ph.D., Aura plans to work as a bilingual teacher initially and later to enter academia. She describes herself as “a life long learner and a citizen of the world.”

Having completed her student teaching a year ago and being involved in ongoing work with the “Star” program placed Aura in a unique position with respect to the rest of the group. Her questions and responses to others seemed to emerge primarily from understandings gained through working with bilingual teachers and observing the power struggles they experienced in their workplace. She was particularly interested in building a tolerant classroom.
Aura reported that she constructed her understanding of the world after examining her experiences with a critical eye, observing the context, readings texts, and talking with others. In addition, she firmly believed that students need to be taught to be critical readers of their world (Freire, 1971), and therefore she was interested in developing their awareness about issues of power and in realizing their agency. For her, the teacher’s role was to challenge their students in order to engage them in a critical dialogue.

Aura’s focus on critically reading the world probably emerged from her thinking about her work with the ‘Star’ program teachers and her observations of Latino students in ESOL classrooms. Aura, who is passionate about issues concerning the Latino and has been active in the Latino community, explained the complexities of teaching Latino students. Contextualizing her responses within the ESOL classrooms she had observed, she expressed,

Aura: I perceive that there are two kinds of students, the American mainstream students and the ESOL students who are treated sometimes like a kind of ‘second-class’ students. Because they are like second-class students, the teachers have to support them or deal with them, but some of the teachers don’t know how to deal with them. People don’t understand that. Students feel that ‘nobody cares about me’ and they feel that ‘if nobody cares about me, then why should I listen?’ With all the new immigration laws, and now not allowing higher education to the immigrant children–I think this is the worst thing they can do in this country. I don’t know what they are thinking. They cannot send 10 million people back to their country. What are all the companies going to do who employ all these people? What will happen to their kids? Their kids have no future. Then the children grow up and join the gangs because they are not challenged enough. There are some kids who really want to learn and understand but in school they come to realize that there is no future. They come to see why they do not have to go to school, if they cannot go to the university, because it is impossible for them to go to the university. When I went to the Latino store, a lady there was once asking me if it is true that when my kids will finish school, they will not be able to go to the university. I did not know what to say to her, because the way things are here they are not eligible to go to the university.
Foram: Why can they not go to school?

Aura: They cannot go to school because they do not have the immigration papers. These children are here not because they want to be here, they are here because their parents brought them here. I see the American education system as dividing the students into first-class and second-class students.

Foram: How does all this make you feel?

Aura: I have visited so many schools and all I see is hopelessness.

Foram: What do you see in the schools that makes you feel hopeless?

Aura: Many ESOL teachers are not challenging the students or are not really understanding the needs of the students. They feel that being politically nice is enough. But this is not what the children need. Children need to be challenged. I have seen so many classes and am beginning to see it is such a waste of time with the kind of curriculum they have. These children are pulled out of their classrooms, they are losing their mainstream information and they are not doing anything in the ESOL class. I have not been lucky yet to see a really good ESOL teacher and children where they are being challenged. It is not the fault of the ESOL teachers. I disagree with the ESOL curriculum and ESOL teachers need to be more challenging. I don't want teachers to be saying this is all good.

Aura, who feels very passionate about this issue, at the time of the interview, was feeling frustrated, hopeless and disappointed. She wanted a change to take place and described her visions as follows:

Foram: What is your vision of future schooling?

Aura: Teachers first need to have anti-bias education. Some teachers don't know how to deal with different cultures. Teacher awareness is important. I would like to be an ESOL teacher.

Foram: What role you would play?

Aura: A teacher is like a guide. A role model. Someone who is constantly trying to find ways in which students can learn better and develop their potential. A teacher is also a researcher. The students are not objects, but subjects. They are like participatory researchers studying something for a goal. Teacher is the one who has more experience, background, qualifications. Students have so many things to say, if you are able to be open to them
and get them to participate. The kids will give you the answer, their home life is important and the teacher needs to be tuned into understanding what is going on at their home.

Foram: So with all these experiences and thinking about the issue of Latino students’ education, what kind of a teacher would you like to be?

Aura: Firm but open. A teacher is like a guide. Students know they can trust you and can give them the support they need. I don't want to be complacent. I like to be fun but the students need to develop their critical thinking. As a teacher, I want to be challenging and funny.

Thus, Aura constructed her worldview from a critical perspective and this worldview informed her purposes for teaching.

*Her Goals in Teaching: Aura's Changing Metaphors*

Aura had perceived herself as a gardener when we created images to examine our purposes for teaching in the seminar meeting. She explained her image:

At that time I was thinking about this gardener and I was thinking that you plant the seeds and the seeds are knowledge and then you wait for the seeds to grow. You give them food. Yet then you wait and are very patient to see your students to blossom.

During the interview with Aura, after talking about topics like her understanding of current schooling and her vision for future schooling, we started to talk about her image as a future teacher that she had created in the previous seminar meeting. As we began to explore the metaphor of the gardener, Aura realized the discrepancies between the image she created and her emerging thoughts about teaching and learning. The following discussion illustrates this realization:

Aura: Now thinking about it, I see my image as very passive. So I don't know if I have the same idea now.

Foram: Passive? Can you explain that further?

Aura: Because the plants could not move.
Foram: They could grow.

Aura: Yes, but they cannot have any actions.

Foram: Ok, so you said that you may not agree with your image now. If you were to change this image, what would your image be?

Aura: It is very difficult. I am in the middle of a crisis. I am trying to adjust to a new culture. I don't know what my philosophy is. I am in turmoil. I still think that I would like to start with a dialogue. I come from a participatory learning, very collectivist way of doing things, understanding and learning together, sharing ideas. But I still don't know what my new image will be. I read an article where the author described doing qualitative research is like dancing—she uses dance as a metaphor. The choreography is very related. In the absence of synchronization there is chaos. Dance helps you to be yourself.

At the time of the interview, Aura was taking qualitative research courses and was engaged in reflecting on her assumptions and constructing her epistemological perspective. This process of self-examination may have created internal conflicts and provided Aura with a sense of choice about how she would like to view the world. I reason that her responses in the interviews may have been embedded in her budding construction of looking at teaching and learning from a participatory research paradigm. Within a participatory research paradigm, students' agency, empowerment, and action are supported, while Aura's metaphor of a teacher as a gardener could imply that as a gardener she is the “doer” while the students are more passive. Therefore, I believe that within this paradigm shift Aura was searching for an image that viewed the students as “actors” and as “agents for change” where students have more freedom for creative movements and teaching becomes a synchronized dance.

Meanings Aura found in Her Involvement in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed
Perceiving Roles/Identity within PTO

Participating in the Boalian activities helped Aura to engage in aesthetic activities to be open to new ways of thinking about teaching and learning. This experience helped her to
recognize that there were openings/possibilities which often emerged from awareness of power differentials in a relationship.

Aura as a creator. Aura explained that Boalian activities helped her to engage in creative thinking and writing. As a result, she was able to organize her thoughts in a way that was meaningful to her and contributed towards her developing philosophy. She noted:

I think a lot before I write. Putting words, drawing pictures, making images were good form of exercises for me. It helped me to clarify because you have ideas and then I could see differences between those who had classrooms and those who did not. Since I did not have a classroom, I wanted to organize my ideas in a particular way and recognize what is important to me.

When asked to give an example, Aura replied:

I thought of [the Boalian activity] Colombian Hypnosis as dancing; the choreography is very related. It helped me to be myself and create specific movements and rhythms. And also when we made images. Because to be able to make an image you have to think and have a clear idea about what you want to say. You have to have a clear idea and then express it. There is a purpose behind each image as you are creating that image.

In addition, Aura reported that she felt that by doing things she was opening doors, and it felt as though she was opening some imaginative space in her.

Aura as an empathic knower. The Boalian activities provided a platform for the members to share with the others their inner thoughts and the experiences that may have led them to form those thoughts. Aura perceived similarities between her experience and that of Lan, which helped her to feel connected with her. The following dialogue examines a specific moment when she felt empathetic towards Lan:
Aura: When Lan was sharing about her feelings about student teaching and she wanted to find a balance between feeling excited and feeling overwhelmed, I kind of understood because all that she had shared in that meeting had also happened to me. When at the beginning of my student teaching I was in the kindergarten classroom, it was the same very vivid experience.

Foram: What did it mean for you to know this?

Aura: Having had similar experiences, I came to know what she is feeling as this also had happened to me. At the beginning of student teaching, I too was unsure about my English skills. I had the support and guidance of my mentor teacher. I took notes of every word she was telling the kids and then I was repeating the same words and saw that they worked. I used the same words and a similar discourse. My methods were different but I kept the language and the similar discourse which helped the students to feel they were in the same class. This gave me comfort.

Foram: So listening to Lan helped you to feel connected with that part of yourself that had experienced student teaching.

Aura: Yes.

Aura feeling her agency. Aura, who clearly has a sense of agency, reported that there are multiple possibilities in any situation. She believed that the awareness generated from the seminar activities served as an impetus for agency. She explained this further in our discussion:

Aura: In general in all the situations and also when I was doing student teaching, I had a lot of trouble. In the beginning I had no idea, I wanted to solve everything. Now in my personal life or in relationships and when I see others in the same situation, I say, Don't worry so much. It is fine. It is a learning experience.

Foram: Can you give an example to help me understand more clearly?

Aura: When you are interviewing me and you ask me all these different questions, and as I am answering there is so much I am learning from the conversation. I now don't have any doubt about what I want to do in the future, and I am ready to move forward and go ahead and do what I need to do.

Foram: So what you are saying is that awareness and alternatives are required for a person to have agency. Is that what you mean?
Aura: It is also like looking at all your troubles and situations all the student teachers presented. I am thinking like, Yeah, all these are learning experiences.

Foram: Having agency really means being able to learn from the situation.

Aura: Yes. The solution comes from awareness. The beginning of agency is that it all comes from awareness.

Participation in various Boalian activities helped Aura to engage in creative thinking and writing about her developing philosophy. As a connected knower she was able to get in touch with that part of herself that faced challenges similar to those of Lan, and sensing her agency, she perceived that there were possibilities and that these possibilities were generated from her awareness.

Aura’s Engagement in Relevant Learning:

Understanding the Complexities of Teaching

Aura found that her engagement in the activities was meaningful because it created a real-life connection from which the group could come together and examine the situation. She used thinking and feeling as pathways to understanding the context. She explained:

Bringing in real life examples included not only the rational but also the emotional component. The complexities become real—it is one thing to imagine the situation and the other to live it. So this makes a dialogue for the group.

I summarized, “What I am hearing you say is that the real-life situations bring in emotions and a reality—a specific context.” Aura agreed. “Yes. If you really want to internalize the learnings then you have to use all your senses. This helps to make more connections with environment, other people, and then this helps in creating knowledge.”

Aura’s emphasis on learning with your senses is in keeping with Boals (2003, 2006) assertion that Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed activities help individuals to,” dedicate
ourselves to seeing what we are looking at, to listen what we are hearing, to feeling what we touch, to writing what we think’ (Boal, 2006; p. 29-30).

Aura’s Perspectives on the Seminar Environment: Reflective

When asked what adjectives she would use to describe the seminar environment, Aura said, “reflective.”

Engaging in reflection. Aura reported that the pedagogy provided opportunities for her to engage in critical reflection using thinking and feeling as pathways to knowing. In addition, by participating in the various activities she now consciously considered the other’s perspective when faced in a difficult situation and from that awareness generated her options. She believed that “you do not have to do something, there is an alternative available.”

Experiencing fun. Aura reported that the pedagogy was fun. An example that I observed was in Seminar Meeting #4 when we were playing the Boalian game called Colombian Hypnosis. Aura and her teammates used movements that created new challenges for the other. Aura laughed easily and heartily when she had to contour her body to follow the hand of the leader. Talking about this incident further, she said, “I loved the activity of Colombian Hypnosis. I enjoyed this activity because it made me laugh and do weird things.”

Experiencing an open learning climate. Aura experienced an open learning climate that helped her to learn from multiple perspectives. She reported:

I learned to take perspectives and in that way I felt the learning climate to be open. In a difficult situation, I have begun to think of the other. Forum Theater is not about giving solutions; it is about making a range of solutions available for yourself.

Thus, Aura perceived the seminar environment to be fun and open.
Aura’s Perception of the Value of PTO in Teaching and Teacher Education:

A Reflective Practice, Reading Body Language

From her experiences with Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in the ‘Star’ program and the seminar meetings, Aura saw PTO as useful in teacher education for the purposes of reflection, developing agency, and empowering student teachers.

Aura believed that Boalian activities created opportunities for her to engage student teachers in reflective thinking. She compared her experiences working with PTO in the seminar meetings to those in the ‘Star’ program. Aura found that the work in the seminar meetings and the continuity of the meetings with the same group of people and the intensiveness of the sessions helped her to be more reflective and to dig more deeply. When asked to explain this further, we engaged in the following interchange,

Aura: I have been a part of this kind of work through ‘Star’ program. You have been the person who has been working with PTO before ‘Star.’ It was like using the same thing in a different way.

Foram: Using PTO in a different way? Can you elaborate on that further?

Aura: In ‘Star’ program we were working with oppression, teachers that may have so many conflicts at the school or in their house. They are living in many different circumstances and they have to face so many oppressions. While working with ECCO, it felt more like a reflective tool. You have the opportunity to see other options, it made you think more. It helped me to understand others, what they were going through.

Foram: In my interviews with others, they also experienced it as a tool for reflection where they were able to examine and grow from their practice.

Aura: Yes. I think it was like a participatory approach where you could say what you were thinking. That was very effective.

Foram: What did it mean for you to participate in these reflective PTO activities?

Aura: I learned the importance to see things with a critical eye. I felt working with power struggles in ‘Star’ program was more emotional while PTO was intellectual.
Foram: Can you explain more?

Aura: My participation in this seminar made me more aware of what was going on in the classrooms, what was going on with the child. So I was an actor and director of the movie. I was both things. When I was working with 'Star' program on power struggles it felt like--I don't know, it was just different. When you are so emotional the reflection part is not that big.

Foram: So, would you say that in the 'Star' program the focus is on catharsis?

Aura: No, it is not that. But because in 'Star' program we have been in a focus group, and we meet [every] 3 to 4 months so there is no continuation and I think, that is the difference. Here we met more often, we continued explorations with topics. While in 'Star' program there are two focus groups during the year. So every time it is the same thing with different people. So that is the difference. You have a continuity of the group and in 'Star' program we do not. When there is continuation, there is more opportunity to go deep.

Foram: What you are saying is that the continuity of the group and the topics helped you to examine in deeper ways, and that in turn helped you to view the pedagogy as a tool for reflection.

Aura: Yes.

Thus, Aura reported that the Boalian activities have a reflective potential through which she could examine herself, others, students, and the classroom to develop a deeper understanding.

From her experiences, Aura believed that for insightful learning the groups need to be structured in a way that there is continuity--continuity of time and continuity of people. Her insights may be an important consideration to keep in mind for teacher educators who may be interested in using PTO in their work. Articulating the value of PTO in teacher education further, Aura said,

Foram: What do you see as the potential of PTO in teacher education?

Aura: I think it is very important. Seeing your actions--it is like your praxis. Seeing what you are talking about and this can give you ideas and helps you to have some agency and empowerment.

Foram: How do you think this will take place?
Aura: When we do Forum Theater and you represent your situation, and people give different perspectives and that will help you to think about; then, you can decide on what you can do. I am sharing my experiences with the other. “Two heads think better than one,” so this gives you the feeling of support and collaboration. And then this gives you empowerment. But at the base is awareness and sometimes finding the problem—because sometimes you do not know what the problem is.

Foram: Yes, the articulation is so important.

Aura: Another thing, I think we as teachers need to learn more about body language and reactions of people. So the more you can practice the better it is. It can be a great learning tool for the students.

Thus, Aura saw Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed as a valuable tool for creating awareness about body language and articulating problems in order to generate possibilities in a collaborative and a supportive environment.

Aura’s Summary

• Aura believed that she came to understand the world after examining her experiences with a critical eye.

• She believed the teacher was a guide, a role model. She perceived herself as having a firm but open relationship with her students, as someone who is challenging and funny. She believed that students need to be taught to be critical readers of their world and therefore she was interested in promoting students' critical thinking skills.

• Aura created an image of a gardener but during the interview recognized the discrepancy between her image and her developing epistemological perspective, which helps her to view the students as having agency and being empowered.

• Aura's involvement with the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in the seminar meetings helped her to see herself as a creator (by engaging in creative thinking and writing); a
connected knower (connecting with a part of herself that had experienced student teaching); and an agent for change (recognizing that the agency comes from awareness).

- Aura compared her experiences with PTO in the seminar meetings to those in the “Star” program. She believed that the continuity of the meetings with the same group of people and the intensiveness of the sessions created a fertile ground for her to be reflective and dig deep.

- Aura found that her engagement in the seminar meetings led to meaningful learning, as it created a real-life connection from which the group could come together and examine the situation. She used thinking and feeling as pathways to understanding.

- Aura perceived the seminar environment to be fun-filled (providing opportunities to be silly and playful) and an open learning climate (offering learning from multiple perspectives).

- Based on her experiences, Aura believed that PTO can be used with student teachers for the purposes of supporting reflection, developing agency, and empowering student teachers. Further, it could help teachers to become more aware of body language and better understand students’ reactions.

- A theme repeated over and over again in Aura’s story is that of recognizing the potential of PTO activities in offering both thinking and feeling as legitimate pathways to becoming aware of a problem, naming it, generating possibilities, and allowing that awareness to guide future actions.

Cross-Case Analysis: Conversations

I now turn to a discussion that brings together the voices of the actors presented earlier in this chapter to construct a holistic summary of the study’s findings. The discussion includes the following categories from the analysis: Epistemologies, Relationships with Students, Teaching Philosophies, Challenges Faced in the Field, Roles/Identities within Boalian Work, Participant’s
Perspectives on Engaging in Reflective Thinking, Participants' Perspectives on Engaging in Relevant Learning, Participants' Perceptions of the Seminar environment, and Participants' Perspectives on the Value of PTO for Teaching and Teacher Education. Finally, I discuss an implicit finding of the value of using PTO as a tool for assessment.

Epistemologies

Although the student teachers did not identify themselves specifically as social constructivists, throughout this study they reflected social constructivist stances through their language, the dilemmas they shared about teaching and learning, and the artistic representations they created in the seminar meetings.

In Table 2, I present the participant's views on definitions of knowledge, processes of knowledge construction, and places where knowledge resides to present their views on these aspects of knowledge and processes of knowledge construction. Their beliefs about knowledge and knowledge construction were evident in their interactions in the seminar meetings. In the seminar meetings, they positioned themselves not as final authority of knowledge but as collaborators and co-constructors of knowledge. Therefore, they perceived themselves not as transmitters of knowledge but as individuals who shared ownership of knowing (Oldfather & McLaughlin, 1993) with each other, Martha, and me. They brought with them their funds of knowledge (Moll, Amanti, Neff, & Gonzales, 1992), for example, Lan reported that in her response she often made visible her Chinese culture, Aura brought the insights she had gained about using PTO with bilingual teachers in the ‘STAR’ program.

Relationships with Students

Without exception, the participants believed in and worked towards building personal relationships with their students. They reported developing this perspective on the basis of their
epistemological stance, their perceptions of students in their classroom, their experiences growing up, and the insights gained from courses taken in the ECCO program. A personal, meaningful relationship was defined by them as knowing the children in a holistic way; for example, having an awareness of their socio-cultural roots, their likes and dislikes, and their personalities.

Table 2

*Participants’ Views on Knowledge and Processes of Knowledge Constructions*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lan</th>
<th>Elliot</th>
<th>Meredith</th>
<th>Aura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Definitions of Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Interpreted, contextual, constructed</td>
<td>Interpreted, contextual, constructed</td>
<td>Interpreted, contextual, constructed</td>
<td>Interpreted, contextual, constructed</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Processes of Knowledge Construction</strong></td>
<td>Collaborative, considered her observations and experiences, Reflective</td>
<td>Collaborative, intuitive process and focused on understanding their feelings and those of others, Ease with use of metaphors as a way of knowing, Reflective, using thinking and feeling as pathways to knowing</td>
<td>Collaborative, intuitive process and focused on understanding her feelings and relationship with others and the world, Reflective, using thinking and feeling as pathways to knowing</td>
<td>Collaborative, considered multiple perspectives, Reflective</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Authority of Knowledge</strong></td>
<td>Teacher-facilitator</td>
<td>Teacher-facilitator</td>
<td>Teacher-facilitator</td>
<td>Teacher-facilitator</td>
</tr>
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</table>

As seen in Table 3, all the participants wanted to develop relationships that were less hierarchical and help their students to build and maintain a connected learning community (Charney, 2002). Furthermore, they believed that connecting students’ lives outside of school with their lives inside the classroom may help in building strong, personal relationships with their students.

Although the four participants did not name it, the thinking behind such beliefs is what researchers like Belenky, Clinchy, Goldberger, and Tarule (1997) and Maher and Tetreault
(2001) attribute to a *connected teacher*. Thus, their epistemological stances were in line with social constructivism.

Table 3

*Participants’ Perspectives on the Nature and Purposes of Building Relationships with their Students*

<table>
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<tr>
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<th>Lan</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Nature of Relationship</strong></td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>Connected</td>
<td>Connected</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Purposes for Building Connected Relationship with Students</strong></td>
<td>Emphasis on fostering student achievement</td>
<td>Emphasis on building relationships with students and their families to foster home-school connections.</td>
<td>Emphasis on creating a holistic perspective of the students.</td>
<td>Emphasis on advocating for Latino students</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Teaching Philosophies

All the participants were striving to translate their commitments into action and to address the burning issues they perceived existed in education in United States today (Nieto, 2005). Their purposes were broader than academic achievement or preparation for taking standardized tests. Guided by their worldviews, each participant's purposes for teaching differed; however, they all shared a remarkably similar vision of building a community of learners and perceived their roles as teacher-facilitators rather than transmitters of knowledge.

As seen in Table 4, all the participants believed teaching to be a commitment. Their convictions guided them to address the deficits they saw in their society and their empathy for the students channeled their commitments into action. Irrespective of what their specific purposes for teaching were, all the participants echoed the theme of “caring for their students” throughout their interviews and in their artistic representations in the seminar meetings.
Table 4

Participants’ Views on Reasons for their Teaching Philosophies

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lan</th>
<th>Elliot</th>
<th>Meredith</th>
<th>Aura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Explicit emphasis on Teaching</td>
<td>Promoting student achievement</td>
<td>Promoting family involvement</td>
<td>Promoting strong and positive relationship with and among students</td>
<td>Promoting awareness with issues of power, feeling of agency and empowerment in students.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Perceptions that influence their Purposes for Teaching</td>
<td>Viewing students as not motivated to reach their optimum level</td>
<td>Viewing family and community as not supporting students’ development</td>
<td>Personally Experiencing student-teacher relationship as impersonal</td>
<td>Viewing education for Latinos as a non challenging environment</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Negotiating with Traditions

The Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed offered opportunities for the student teachers to negotiate with traditions of teaching and learning and a theatrical space for them to try out their new emerging ideas. In this study, the student teachers brought in classroom dilemma that challenged them to think of alternative ways of thinking about presenting their lessons, inviting students to participate in activities. In addition, creating images of future classrooms and their articulating their purposes for teaching created spaces for the student teachers to go beyond the norm, the traditions and articulate what they believed to be important aspects of teaching and learning.

An example of a negotiation is evident in Meredith's dilemma of “Give Me Clay.” Meredith had prepared her lesson keeping in mind the traditions of lesson format she may have learned from her experiences and her coursework at the university. In her lesson she had planned to first start by asking the students to read a book on procedural writing and then would follow it with a hands-on activity where the students could apply what they had read. From a pedagogical perspective, Meredith's lesson may be considered as well planned. However, during
implementing the lesson, Meredith was challenged by a student who showed more interest in working with the clay than in reading the text. One of Meredith's challenges included her working with traditions of teaching and required her to open a space within herself where she could allow other ways of thinking about approaching her lesson. In this process she was negotiating with what she perceived to be the traditions of teaching and considering new ways of conceptualizing teaching and learning.

Challenges Faced in the Field

All the participants though were appreciative of their student teaching, their mentor teachers, and their students; they experienced challenges during their student teaching.

Table 5

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Participants’ Perceptions on Challenges Faced, Reasons for Challenges, and Experienced Feelings</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Types of Challenges Faced</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Establishing authority; difficulties with spelling, grammar, and pronunciation; low confidence</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceived Reasons for Challenges</strong></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Feelings Experienced</strong></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

As seen in Table 5, the challenges the participants experienced varied—but they included establishing teacher authority, coping with feelings of anger, frustration, and disappointment, and feeling low in confidence at the beginning of student teaching. They perceived different reasons for their challenges experienced. Often the reasons were embedded in the meanings they gave to
their teacher role and in meeting their purposes for teaching. Elliot, who was a first-year, full-time teacher and was student teaching in his own classroom, perceived his challenges to emerge from creating a curriculum that balanced the students’ needs, desires, and interests with meeting the curriculum requirements.

The embodied and hands-on activities facilitated in the seminar meetings, created a platform for the participants to share their challenges and explore with others possible ways of responding to the complexities they perceived in their teaching.

Roles/Identities within Boalian Work

All four participants perceived themselves as creators, connected knowers, collaborators, members of the community, and agents for change as outcomes of their participation in the Boalian activities. Also, two participants stated that they perceived themselves as contributors. In Table 6, I explain the roles/identities that the participants perceived as being evolved because of their participation in Boalian work. Specifically the roles/identities are as follows: Selves as Creators, Selves as Empathic Listeners, Selves as having Agency, Selves as Experiencing Belongingness, and Selves as Collaborators.

Selves as Creators

The four participants unanimously agreed that working with Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed engaged them in creative thinking. Meredith posed a key question in one of our conversations: How often do we in teacher education start with what the students know? How often do we assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating on it? Meredith also brings forth the feeling of joy she may have felt in recognizing she had ‘wonderful ideas’ (Duckworth, 1987) and her feeling of agency when she was able to use her mind to take those ideas further and translate them into actions.
When actions emerge from an awareness of one's tacit thoughts and feelings, individuals are more likely to be guided by their inner wisdom and may move closer to their authentic selves, which may further the experience of joy in creation.

Table 6

*Roles/Identities within Boalian Work*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lan</th>
<th>Elliot</th>
<th>Meredith</th>
<th>Aura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selves as Creators</strong></td>
<td>Recognizing the power of using her body to express her tacit thoughts.</td>
<td>Recognizing that he could use his hands and body to visualize the thoughts he had in his mind. This awareness could inform future steps.</td>
<td>Perceiving the value and power of expressing and owning her thoughts and sharing what she knew about teaching</td>
<td>Recognizing the value of creative thinking and writing in developing her teaching philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selves as Empathic Listeners</strong></td>
<td>Noticing and understanding the details in the representations of her peers and considering what she could add to her thinking.</td>
<td>Becoming more aware of joys and challenges of others. Engaging in perspective-taking.</td>
<td>Feeling with the students and understanding his behaviors from the student’s perspective.</td>
<td>Perceiving similarities between her experiences and that of Lan’s. This awareness created feelings of connection.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selves as having Agency</strong></td>
<td>Seeing the possibilities of incorporating the suggestions in her context</td>
<td>Feeling the power as he realized the possibilities that were available to him.</td>
<td>Seeing the possibility of sharing her agency with her students. Experiencing intellectual agency as started from what she knew rather than what research said.</td>
<td>Recognizing and seeing multiple possibilities in any situation.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selves as Experiencing Belongingness</strong></td>
<td>Feeling of belongingness as increased awareness of similarities of experiences with others.</td>
<td>Participating in activities created a personal connection evoking feelings of comfort and belongingness.</td>
<td>Participating in activities promoted in accepting challenges in teaching and feeling confident.</td>
<td>Sensing belongingness as understanding similarities between her experiences and her peers.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Selves as Collaborators</strong></td>
<td>Seeing similarities between her and others encouraged her to initiate collaborative conversations with peers.</td>
<td>Natural collaborator – collaborated with parents at school and in the seminar meeting collaborated with his peers to generate alternatives.</td>
<td>Becoming aware of her inner thoughts and feelings by sharing and listening to peers. Promoting the group’s understanding by posing questions and offering dilemmas to work with.</td>
<td>Collaborating to think with others and to create possibilities for self and others.</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Selves as Empathic Listeners

All four participants reported that by engaging in the Boalian activities they were able to understand their peers' feelings and actions as they shared their experiences and visions through embodied and paper-based activities. They played what Peter Elbow (1973) calls the “believing game” where they listened to each other to understand and support rather than to judge. Belenky et al. (1997) call this relational and intimate form of knowing the participants were engaged in connected knowing.

Selves as having Agency

All four participants perceived themselves as having agency. Within PTO, participants recognized that agency emerged from awareness and guided future actions. The participants reported that awareness was the first step to having agency; that expanded awareness helps to bring more of ourselves to be mindful of our thoughts, feelings, and actions in a particular context. Riso and Hudson (1999) state that “Awareness opens us to real relationship with others and the world around us. Even what we would ordinarily regard as unpleasant experiences have a very different quality when we experience them with awareness” (p. 40). Furthermore, the participants shared that this awareness helps us to see fresher possibilities in dealing with the challenges we face.

Selves as Experiencing Belongingness

These participants experienced a sense of belongingness within the seminar group. They reported that sharing, listening to thoughts and feelings, supporting, engaging in problem-solving created opportunities to understand each other, which further led to promoting feelings of belongingness in this group.
Selves as Collaborators

Though two participants explicitly perceived themselves as collaborators, I believe that all the participants were collaborators as they brought in their experiences from the field to give form to the content and processes Martha and I had to offer in the seminar meetings. They became conscious of their roles in constructing knowledge and meaning (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994). This sense of ownership unleashed their passion for learning and they were more willing to take risks (Pate, Homestead, & McGinnis, 1997), and to contribute, and share their “wonderful ideas” (Duckworth, 1987).

Specifically, the participants brought challenges, observations, ideas, and possibilities with them, sharing these with others and at the same time asking others to support them. This helped Martha and me to think of what pedagogical experiences we could bring to further mentor them. We all felt that we learned and grew from our interactions. Furthermore, this approach helped diffuse the hierarchical structure between the students and Martha (the course instructor/co-facilitator) and me (the co-facilitator/researcher). Thus, the participants experienced positive roles and identities emerging from their participation in PTO activities.

Engaging in Critical Reflective Thinking

The participants unanimously agreed that the Boalian activities provided them with opportunities to engage in reflective thinking. They reflected on student-teacher relations, power relations, and their elementary school classroom context that facilitated and confined their actions. Further, they all agreed that they engaged in thinking about critical issues that helped them in consciousness-raising, which in turn increased their sense of agency in shaping their own future actions (Freire, 1971). In Table 7, I summarize the topics they reflected on, the ways of knowing used, and the expressed outcomes from their reflections.
Table 7

*Participants’ Perspectives on Engaging in Reflective Thinking with PTO: Topics, Ways of Knowing, and Expressed Outcomes*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lan</th>
<th>Elliot</th>
<th>Meredith</th>
<th>Aura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Topics</strong></td>
<td>Student-teacher relationships, cultural background of students, evoked emotions of anger, frustration, depression</td>
<td>Student-teacher relationships, handling personal anxiety,</td>
<td>Student-teacher relationship, working on issues of power, sharing agency with students</td>
<td>Teaching philosophy</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Ways of Knowing</strong></td>
<td>Emphasis on thinking</td>
<td>Emphasis on thinking and feeling</td>
<td>Emphasis on thinking and feeling</td>
<td>Emphasis on thinking and feeling</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Outcomes</strong></td>
<td>Awareness of self, others, and context, multiple perspectives, available alternative possibilities, improvement in praxis</td>
<td>Awareness of self, others, and context, multiple perspectives, available alternative possibilities, becoming aware of assumptions, mind-body connection, therapeutic effect, decreasing anxiety</td>
<td>Awareness of self, others, and context, multiple perspectives, available alternative possibilities, connecting with a student recognizing similarities between her and the student</td>
<td>Awareness of self, others, and context, multiple perspectives, available alternative possibilities, restructuring her teaching philosophy</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

All the participants perceived that engagement with reflective thinking created awareness. They became aware of multiple perspectives and multiple courses of action available to them in a particular context. Elliot's and Meredith's experiences further emphasize the value of Boalian Theater in teaching and teacher education. Elliot experienced a mind-body connection and this awareness helped him to take specific action to deal with his feelings of anxiety. He found his reflections and participation in the activities had a therapeutic effect on him. Many student teachers experience anxiety and low confidence in dealing with the ambiguities of teaching. PTO experiences may further help them to become aware and articulate the feelings that may be debilitating their confidence and then support them as they are consciously working through the feelings.
Meredith was able to take the perspective of a student in her class and recognize that there was probably little difference between her and that student. In recognizing how dramatic this awareness was for Meredith that it occurred to me that this may be seen as a peak experience that evoked a transcendental consciousness (O'Neil, 1985). Meredith’s experience brings to the forefront another type of reflective practice that student teachers may engage in to connect with their students.

Drawing on Van Manen’s (1977) typology of stages of reflection, it was evident that student teachers engaged in all the three stages. For example, Aura engaged in critical reflection where she questioned the education for Latino students, Lan questioned from a socio-cultural perspective, why students in her class were not motivated to learn math, Meredith was concerned with how power relations played out in her relationship with her students. Practical Reflections were common when the student teachers looked at their teaching practices and wondered in which other ways they could reach to their students. PTO offered a space for them to reflect on their current situation and look for possible alternatives. In this sense the reflections helped the student teachers to perceive they had a choice in the situation, which created feelings of liberation and agency.

Engaging in Relevant Learning

The participants unanimously agreed that they found their engagement with Boalian activities to be relevant. All of them agreed that the nature of the Boalian activities led to examining and understanding themselves, their experiences in the field, and their teaching philosophies. In Table 8, I state the participants’ perspectives on dimensions/activities of Boalian Theater that promoted relevant learning.
As indicated in Table 8, the participants expressed that participation in PTO activities helped them to engage in relevant learning. When closely examining the reasons the participants suggested, the dimensions they were considering came to the forefront were as follows: becoming aware of non-verbal communication, becoming aware and expressing tacit thoughts and feelings, engaging in creative thinking, a feeling of moving forward, bringing in real life experiences, understanding students’ perspectives, and listening to others.
Two participants explicitly pointed to the role of warm ups for establishing a comfortable and a safe learning environment. Specifically, they concluded that laughing together, being silly and goofy, and listening to our bodies helped in creating such a learning environment. I elaborate more on their perspectives on the seminar environment in the next section.

Seminar Environment

The seminar environment was an outcome and a vehicle for more deeper and personal participation. In Table 9, I describe the participants' perspectives on the seminar environment.

Table 9

*Participants’ Perspectives on the Seminar Environment*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lan</th>
<th>Elliot</th>
<th>Meredith</th>
<th>Aura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Adjectives used to Describe Seminar Environment</strong></td>
<td>Informative, reflective, playful, collaborative, safe, cohesive, “coming together”</td>
<td>Different, fun, eye-opening, reflective, “bringing forth what is inside of you”, collaborative, fun</td>
<td>Introspective, reflective, engaging, inspiring, motivating in terms of my thinking and practice, transformative, creative, imaginative, alive, animated, supportive, collaborative</td>
<td>Reflective, collaborative</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons for Experiencing Fun</strong></td>
<td>Being silly and playful made the environment playful and enjoyable</td>
<td>Being silly, spontaneous, and playful</td>
<td>Being silly, being connected, lowering defenses</td>
<td>Laughing heartily while participating in some activities</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Experiencing Safety</strong></td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Safe</td>
<td>Safe for most parts</td>
<td>Not safe</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Reasons for Feeling Safe</strong></td>
<td>Non-judgmental environment, seeing similarities between self and others, seeing growth in self and others, feeling connected with others</td>
<td>Knowing the peers, communicating honestly, activities that started from least threatening to more personal</td>
<td>Knowing the peers, understanding the purpose of Forum Theater</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Perceiving an Open Climate</strong></td>
<td>Responding from our own subjective position</td>
<td>Bringing forth tacit / intuitive knowledge</td>
<td>Creative and imaginative activities felt the freedom to express and elaborate</td>
<td>Engaged in learning from multiple perspectives and creating a range of</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
herself, evoked feelings of joy described as a “powerful” experience solutions available to her

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Relationship with the Course Instructor</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Collaborative</th>
<th>Ultimately collaborative</th>
</tr>
</thead>
</table>

**Experiencing Fun**

The participants unanimously agreed that they had fun participating in Boalian activities. The laughter and being goofy helped the student teachers feel connected and made the environment lively and engaging.

**Experiencing Safety**

The participants reported the seminar environment to be safe and identified several reasons for this feeling. First, all of the student teachers experienced more or less similar challenges during their student teaching. As a result, each of them could identify with the others and accept the challenges and the vulnerability of the others on their own terms, suspending any judgment. In the absence of judgment, the student teachers and the course instructor were able to attend to and accept each other, and to develop trusting relationships. Authority in this group rested not on power or status but on commonality of experiences (Belenky et al., 1997).

Another characteristic that helped build a safe seminar environment was that most of the group members knew each other, as they had taken some courses together in their Master’s program. The collaborative seminar environment in our seminar meetings and in most of their other courses provided opportunities for the student teachers to get to know and bond with each other.

Two participants shared that they felt unsafe in this learning community. One explained that she felt unsafe initially, but after she understood that the purpose of Forum Theater was to generate possibilities and not to judge the person who poses the dilemma, she felt more secure,
participated in the activities more fully, and took more risks. The other co-researcher felt insecure and unsafe until the very end. She felt shut down, as she perceived that some group members felt threatened by her interventions in Forum Theater. These experiences emphasize the importance of providing opportunities for the participants to reflect on the group process and talk through situations that give rise to feelings that may affect their participation in the group. Furthermore, this raises questions about how group members and group dynamics affect participation in Boalian Theater.

This experience throws light for consideration in building safe environment. it is one thing to talk about safety and to use activities that would promote safe learning environments. However, one can not assume that these steps would lead the participants to feel safe. In fact, the facilitators' provisions for safety are earned. Factors like individual maturity, group dynamics, past experiences with the members, personal methods of conflict resolution possibly further impact the individual's feeling of safety in a group.

Perceiving the Relationship with the Course Instructor

Three of the participants valued their relationship with the course instructor. Specifically, they reported her collaboration and support; her participation in the theater activities, which made her vulnerable like the others; her efforts at thinking and feeling with the students; her engagement in problem-solving; and the value of her suggestions. One student teacher appreciated the ‘teacher talk’—the language she used in enacting her interventions in Forum Theater. Meredith considered how the words Martha used may help her to reach out to students with whom she previously had difficulty connecting.

On the other hand, one student teacher shared a different perspective. Her purpose for engaging in the Boalian activities was to begin to construct her philosophy of teaching. She
therefore wanted more space and freedom to draw on her latent knowledge, make her tacit knowledge more explicit, and elaborate upon it. Therefore, initially she would have preferred the course instructor to give her more space to do her own thinking. However, as the semester progressed she came to see that the other student teachers appreciated the contributions the course instructor made. In addition, she recognized that having the input of the course instructor had not taken away her freedom to construct her view about teaching and learning with.

Perceiving an Open Learning Climate

The participants unanimously agreed that the theater activities created a platform for them to share their own vision of the world while helping them to acknowledge the multiplicity of constructions. Further, creating the vision from their perspective helped them become aware of their latent thoughts and release, expand, and elaborate on their ideas. Reflecting on their deeply held beliefs and exploring them in a collaborative environment by engaging in creative and imaginative activities evoked feelings of joy and community for two of the participants. Lan, for example, believed that the learning climate helped her to see the power of hope in bringing people to think together and to create possibilities for alternative actions.

Thus, the participants reported that the Boalian games helped in creating a seminar environment that was playful, fun-filled, safe, open, and collaborative.

PTO Activities Promoting Higher Order Thinking Skills

Engagement with the PTO activities fosters higher order thinking skills (analysis, synthesis, and evaluation) identified by Bloom (1956). For example, the student teachers were in general breaking down their issue to get a more fuller understanding the causes and the relationships. On some occasions the student teachers were creatively and divergently applying what they already knew about teaching and learning to produce something new (for example,
making images, generating alternatives in Forum Theater). Finally, PTO activities is likely to promote evaluation where the student teachers begin to make connections between what they have learned from the seminars and create opinions to believe what would be applicable in their environment.

The Value of PTO Activities for Teaching and Teacher Education

The four participants unanimously saw the potential of PTO for teaching and teacher education, based on their experiences with PTO activities both in and outside of the seminar meetings. Meredith and Elliot used some of the Boalian Theater activities in their classrooms during student teaching, and Aura worked with PTO in the ‘STAR’ program. In Table 10, I describe the participants’ views on the value they perceived of PTO activities for teaching and teacher education.

Table 10

*Participants’ Perspectives on the Value of PTO in Teaching and Teacher Education*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Lan</th>
<th>Elliot</th>
<th>Meredith</th>
<th>Aura</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>In Teaching</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td>To draw out the latent knowledge and promote expression in students,</td>
<td>‘To understand the students’ perspectives, To read literature to</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>to foster relationship between students and their parents and among</td>
<td>understand feelings of the characters, to build classroom communities</td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>parents of the students</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>For pre-service and in-service teachers to consider and to initiate</td>
<td>To consider multiple perspectives, reflecting on power relations,</td>
<td>To consider multiple perspectives, to create learning environments that</td>
<td>To consider multiple perspectives, reflecting on issues of power,</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>dialogues about issues related to teaching and learning.</td>
<td>developing empathic relations, and engaging in creative explorations</td>
<td>begins from what the students know, making tacit knowledge more visible,</td>
<td>developing agency and empowerment, engaging student teachers on</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>beginning inquiry from student teachers’ questions</td>
<td>problem-solving, learning to read body language.</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>In Teacher</strong></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Education</td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td></td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

The responses of the participants suggest the following possible ways in which PTO may be integrated in teaching and teacher education: Building an Open Seminar Environment, Engaging in Reflective Practices, and Engaging in Alternative Processes of Knowing.

*Building an Open Seminar environment*

Meredith’s question about how often in teacher education we begin from students’ knowledge opens a window to see the potential of PTO activities for building seminar environments that draw out students' latent knowledge. Meredith reflected:

It is such a simple question to ask—like create a pose to express your vision as a teacher, but when do we do that in teacher education courses? I have been fortunate to have wonderful teachers, but so much of our time goes in theory or what is going on inside someone else's classroom instead of taking on the ideas you have for yourself—the vague ideas, the unnamed ideas and bringing those out and then making a pose—it is like owning your thoughts and I think it is the power of thoughts and making it in action and taking it beyond—all of this is just making you able to be what you want to be. I enjoyed making the hands-on things as well as embodied images.

In Meredith’s response is embedded her need for freedom: to find her own words to make meaning of her experiences, and to know that she is capable of knowing and thinking for herself and of generating ideas that can be put to use. She is beginning to articulate ways of knowing that are more experiential and embryonic, and that relate to her life personally as opposed to working with theoretical abstractions. Similarly, Belenky et al. (1997) in their research found that women start their exploration of an issue first by finding a personal connection and then by using that connection they explore the unknown. In this sense, PTO may be used to initiate a
process from within and engage students in a form of learning that may become an authentic experience.

Another way in which PTO activities may be used to create open learning environments is by helping students work with multiple interpretations. Considering multiple interpretations helps students move away from traditional views of knowledge as requiring one right answer to an environment in which students and teachers share their perspectives with each other to construct a deeper understanding. This form of sharing is likely to promote collaboration, help students and teachers to be partners (Freire, 1971), and open students' hearts and minds to embrace their world (Belenky et al., 1997).

Engaging in Reflective Practices

The participants unanimously recognized the potential of PTO as a tool for reflection and promoting hope, agency, and empowerment. They valued the opportunity to bring dilemmas, observations, and questions from the field and examine them with their colleagues and their course instructor. The participants believed that it would be valuable for the groups to meet during student teaching. In addition, Meredith suggested the value of offering PTO as a course where students could work with Boalian activities to become aware of their assumptions about teaching and the students. Further, Boalian Theater could also be used with pre-service teachers to promote critical thinking and agency, helping the students to recognize that there are alternatives if they wish to look for them. Finally, engaging in a reflective praxis and learning to search for alternatives may kindle hope, which in turn may motivate the student teachers to look for further possibilities (Greene, 1995).
Engaging in Alternative Processes of Knowing

All of the participants perceived the potential of PTO for engaging student teachers in perspective taking and empathic knowing, and in constructing knowledge by integrating thinking and feeling. From their experiences, they recognized the value of theater activities in giving learning a context and providing them with a dilemma to care about that resonated with their lives. Using social imagination (Greene, 1995), the student teachers expanded their knowledge base both directly and vicariously and achieved a better understanding of themselves and the other.

In addition to legitimizing thinking and feeling as ways of knowing, PTO can also be used to learn to read nonverbal communication like body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice. Learning to read body language and understanding ways in which it can be interpreted can create a sense of agency. Furthermore, body language can complement verbal language and integrating the two can help student teachers to connect with their students and understand them in a deeper way.

Thus, the participants have identified possibilities of using PTO in teaching and teacher education for the purposes of promoting habits of mind (accepting multiple perspectives), reflective thinking (searching for possibilities initiated by one's awareness), and processes of knowing (understanding nonverbal communication like body language, facial expressions, and tone of voice).

An Implicit Finding: Value of PTO as a Tool for Assessment

Finally, the implicit findings of this study also suggest the possibility of using Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed for student assessment. I believe that the focus on report cards, grades, percentages, and standardized tests forces students to consider learning from a narrow
perspective, i.e., learning to pass a test rather than learning for life. Teachers, likewise, often seek to identify what the students don't know, rather than allowing themselves to observe what the students can do with what they have learned and identifying the students' strengths and needs (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997). Within a social constructivist and a critical framework, I assert here the potential of Boalian Theater as a tool for student assessment.

Educators have been considering authentic assessment practices to help students engage in meaningful learning (Darling-Hammond, Ancess, & Falk, 1995) and to promote student motivation (Thomas & Oldfather, 1997). A specific type of authentic assessment is performance assessment. Performance assessments evaluate students by inviting them to put their knowledge and skills to use in real-world settings. Boal's Image Theater and Forum Theater have the potential to be used for this purpose.

What Made It Authentic?

The activities created an authentic learning environment as the student teachers brought in real-life dilemmas from their classrooms for us to consider. These were real concerns that the student teachers were currently facing, and they asked the other group members to help them think through their dilemmas. Further, the other student teachers were often able to identify with the dilemma as it frequently resonated with their own lives. As a result of this identification, they readily took ownership in learning and collaborated in the task of generating possibilities. In this sense, the dramatic situations gave learning a context and the activity a human purpose.

The Image Theater created opportunities for the student teachers to connect with their experiences, thoughts, feelings, and beliefs on specific aspects of teaching and learning. In addition, they used Image Theater to look into their past, present, and future and to clarify their developing teaching philosophy. Specifically, the embodied and arts-based activities helped
student teachers draw out their latent knowledge and integrate what they had learned from their courses and other experiences. Through these activities they realized that the purpose of these activities was not to reach “a response” that the teacher wanted the students to articulate. Instead, the purpose was to become aware of one’s inner thoughts, feelings, and wisdom and use that awareness to guide future actions. This realization helped them to perceive the seminar environment as an open space where they felt the freedom to express themselves using their artistic voice.

The opportunity to make personal connections helped student teachers to perceive this as a meaningful seminar environment. I believe that seeing the value in the activity may further help them to perceive assessment as a valuable process.

What Did I Learn?

The student teachers’ participation in various activities and the group processes helped me gain a deeper understanding of the student teachers’ knowledge, their concerns, and their habits of mind (Dewey, 1916) and heart. The themes in the student teachers’ artistic representations philosophically resonated with the ECCO (Early Childhood Certification Option) program and the Department of Elementary Education. For example, home-school partnerships, an emphasis on diversity, taking the perspective of the child, connecting learning with who the children are, teaching with integrity, building relationships grounded in an ethic of care, sharing ownership of knowing with the students, and having agency are some of the philosophical foundations that student teachers are likely to integrate from the various courses they take in their program of study.
The artistic representations and the student teachers’ sharing thereafter helped me understand of how they have interpreted and integrated these conceptual understandings and constructed a personal language to guide their work.

By bringing in dilemmas and constructing images to express their classroom realities, the student teachers helped me to understand the various challenges they faced. For example, the student teachers shared their challenges with establishing teacher authority; building connected seminar environments; balancing the needs of the students with administrative curricular requirements; managing a classroom as a non-native speaker of English; and dealing with affective challenges like high anxiety, frustration, and anger. Articulating the challenges also helped the student teachers generate possible responses, consider what they would like to do, and allow their insights to inform their future action.

Listening to the student teachers’ insights may help university facilitators and/or course instructors to support their students in their path to independence. This form of mentoring would begin from where the students are and move toward where they would like to be. In such a relationship, the university facilitators are likely to share their power with the student teachers as they encourage and foster a sense of agency in them.

Boalian Theater also helped illuminate the psycho-social dispositions of the student teachers, specifically their habits of mind and heart. Through their participation and interaction in the group, the dispositional strengths of the student teachers became evident. The dispositions I noticed included empathizing (Meredith’s understanding of why the student in her class wanted to play with clay); sharing (each group member brought in their own ideas to enrich the group learning); encouraging (Aura encouraged Lan to try a particular strategy while teaching her lesson in Second Step); collaborating (each group member contributed their own perspective and
then joined together to learn from each other); risk-taking (while sharing one's tacit thoughts through artistic expression, stepping up to enact an alternative in Forum Theater); problem-solving (participating as spectators in Forum Theater); problem-posing (Lan posed a problem to the group about working with student resistance while teaching Second Step Curriculum); having agency (Elliot, Lan, and Meredith reported that they could use what they learned in their classroom); engaging in higher order thinking (including engaging in analysis–considering the context; engaging in synthesis–creating an image to express one's tacit knowledge; and engaging in evaluation–considering what alternatives would work in one's context); accepting diverse perspectives (understanding that the same image can be interpreted in many ways in Statue Game); taking ownership in knowing (connecting learning to their own lives and identities as they create images to describe their purposes of teaching; Meredith appreciating the having of wonderful ideas); and feeling hope (Lan stating after a Forum activity, ‘With all those people thinking together, I realized that there must be a way.’).

Thus, this form of assessment is likely to invite student teachers to engage in an assessment practice that goes beyond memorization of facts and encourages them ‘to frame problems, find information, evaluate alternatives, create ideas and products, and invent new answers to messy dilemmas’ (Darling-Hammond et al., 1995, p. 5). Additionally, with closer attention to how student teachers interpret their student teaching experiences, university facilitators are better able to support their understanding of teaching and learning. Finally, the student teachers may recognize their own agency as they gain a metacognitive awareness (McCombs & Marzano, 1990) of the habits that prevent them from participating fully in the experience and use this awareness to construct their future action.
CHAPTER 6
CONCLUSIONS: DENOUEMENT

Overview

“Forum Theater is not about giving solutions; it is about making a range of solutions available for yourself.” - Aura

As a teacher educator and a researcher, I value and want to understand the pre-service teachers' perspectives on their outcomes from their participation in Boal's Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed. In addition, I want to examine their perspectives on the potential of PTO in teaching and teacher education. This study's most significant findings are insights that contribute to the understanding of the value of PTO for teacher education within a framework that encourages an inquiry-based reflective practice.

Through their interviews and participation in the seminar meetings, my co-researchers revealed to me that Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed helped them to reflect on their student teaching experiences in a meaningful way and to search for possibilities that often moved them beyond their self-imposed limitations. Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed supported the student teachers' teaching and learning in relevant ways by starting from their personal experiences and making their tacit knowledge explicit to themselves and other members of the seminar's learning community.

The process helped the student teachers recognize their own abilities and wisdom in their roles in action and decision-making. As Meredith explained:

[Starting with] the vague ideas, the unnamed ideas and bringing those out and then making a pose–it is like owning your thoughts and I think it is the power of thoughts and
making it in action and taking it beyond—all of this is just making you able to be what you want to be. I enjoyed making the hands-on things as well as embodied images.

This form of inner consciousness provided guidance and a feeling of intellectual agency. This sense of agency was self-reinforcing as it led to action, which further reinforced participants’ feelings of agency and empowerment. By taking actions that were grounded in self-awareness, the co-researchers were able to choose actions after considering their purposes and alternative options. They felt more in control and competent in the classroom.

Oldfather and Dahl (1994) explained that epistemological empowerment results when students experience a sense of intellectual agency and become conscious of their role in the construction of knowledge and meaning. In addition to experiencing a growing sense of intellectual agency, the student teachers in this study also felt socially empowered as their critical consciousness (Freire, 1971) motivated them to make commitments and take action(s). They viewed themselves as having a social agency (Boal, 2003; Freire, 1971; Greene, 1995); as agents for social change, they believed that their actions could affect themselves and others around them.

The co-researchers gained clarity of their thoughts and feelings through self-awareness and better understood the effects of their actions on their students. Awareness introduced choice, which in turn brought freedom to think about a world that could be otherwise, to search for alternatives, and to rehearse those possibilities in this safe environment. Finally, Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed was not about prescribing solutions but was instead about making a range of possibilities available for oneself, promoting a feeling of openness and freedom (Boal, 2006).
Throughout this study, the student teachers reported in words and actions the potential of the Theater of the Oppressed to engage them with each other in collaborative activities that promoted thinking about issues of power and social imagination (Greene, 1995). PTO gave learning a context and provided an engaging dilemma to care about and work through that often resonated with their lives. In addition, engaging in collaborative problem-solving gave the activities a humane purpose. For effective problem solving, the group members needed first to view the dilemma within the context and understand the needs and feelings of those involved. This required them to use their social imaginations—the ability to put oneself in another's shoes” (Greene, 1995; p. 43). The student teachers acknowledged a shift in their thinking from being self-absorbed and self-conscious to focusing more of their attention on their students and their peers. This form of empathic knowing evoked feelings of connection and motivated the student teachers to engage in an intellectual quest. By releasing their imagination, they came to experience new ways of seeing, feeling, thinking, and acting.

Use of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed legitimized both thinking and feeling as pathways to knowing (Belenky et al., 1997). It provided opportunities for the student teachers to read their world by understanding both verbal and non-verbal communication (e.g., gestures, emotional states, and expressions). It encouraged student teachers to respond to a classmate's situation after understanding the individual's feelings about that particular situation and to then critically think through the dilemma with him/her. An example of this process is evident in the following response from Lan:

I understood the feelings of others. For example, Elliot—like I could really understand his situation and his difficulties and the things he needed to take care of, the multiple tasks he needs to do, when I saw his image of “finding a balance.”
This experience of feeling with enabled all the student teachers to see similarities between their own experiences and those of the others. Furthermore, it encouraged them to be mindful of the situation from the perspectives of the individuals sharing the dilemma. This helped them to suspend judgment and accept and support one another, and this ‘connected,’ familial mode of knowing promoted group solidarity (Belenky et al., 1997; Maher & Tetreault, 2001).

Solidarity in this group was described variously by participants as trusting, respecting, and appreciating one another and as being hopeful, emotionally engaged and expressive, and concerned. Elliot explained his experiences in the group:

I felt the group was friendly, warm, secure, supported by others, a feeling of solidarity. The group was like a family, having certain confidence. In the group I felt comfortable, had a sense of belongingness. The group was responsive to each other. For example, we shared our ideas, visions, and challenges in the activities and were able to reach out to the others, feel with them, and think of alternatives with them.

Elliot helped us to understand here that his sense of belongingness in the group and a feeling of safety motivated him to want to explore further and grapple with his emerging thoughts about teaching and learning.

The student teachers were intrinsically motivated to reflect on their experiences, ask authentic questions, and engage in collaborative meaning construction. The form of intrinsic motivation that the student teachers experienced is what Penny Oldfather (1994) describes as continuing impulse to learn (CIL). By engaging in the seminar activities, the student teachers focused their attention on finding their passions, discovering what they cared about, and connecting who they were to what they would do in their classrooms.
Being *spect-actors* (Boal, 2003) helped the student teachers and Martha to respond to the dilemma put forth by a student teacher from their own experiences. They viewed each other as experts with something worthwhile to contribute to the dialogic environment the Image and Forum Theater created. The traditional roles of teacher and student blurred at this point, as the student teachers and Martha came together as knowers and shared ownership of knowing (Oldfather & Dahl, 1994). Martha was perceived more as an “ally” (Freire, 1971) than as the only bearer of knowledge. In addition to blurring the traditional power relations between teacher and students and inviting all group members to speak from a position of knowers, the Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed activities invited the student teachers to engage in higher-order thinking: analysis, synthesis, and evaluation (Bloom, 1956).

The metaphors used in these activities permeated our language, both shaping and reflecting our thinking about teaching and learning, and helped to scratch beneath the surface. The metaphors were powerful because they were personally constructed and personally meaningful in helping the co-researchers to explore their beliefs and arrive at a deeper understanding of their philosophies and personal theories about teaching and learning. At the same time, the metaphors provided interesting and imaginative pathways to understanding. Forum Theater and Image Theater created a space for the student teachers and the course instructor to come together to invent and re-invent through restless, continuing, hopeful inquiry in their own world and between their shared worlds (Bakhtin, 1981).

Student teachers often want a recipe, a formula for becoming a teacher. They often are searching for hoops that they can jump through to get their certification. When things are not going well, student teachers tend to blame the program, the mentor teachers, or even the students. What was evident among these student teachers was that went well beyond seeking a
formula for teaching, they began to take personal responsibility for teaching and for their students' learning. In addition, by considering the perspectives of their students, the student teachers began to move away from perceiving student teaching as a space of performance to a space of learning and understanding themselves, their students, and their purposes for teaching. This shift from ‘being a performer’ to ‘being a learner’ was not only emancipatory, but it also helped them to see the value of the experience beyond meeting program requirements and getting a grade.

Significance of the Study

As noted in the problem statement, teacher educators are faced with many challenges as they prepare pre-service teachers for teaching in the 21st century. These challenges can be broadly summarized as follows: (a) Building teacher education programs that present and embodies the constructivists paradigms, (b) helping pre-service teachers to develop their own visions for teaching, (c) sensitizing pre-service teachers to issues of social justice, (d) building caring democratic learning environments, and (e) engaging pre-service teachers in critical reflections. As the study unfolded, from the perspectives of the participants PTO offers some alternative and powerful solutions for addressing these needs.

A Constructivist Approach: Starting from Student Teachers’ Vision and Knowledge

The co-researchers shared the joy they experienced in considering what they valued and creating images to express it. Teacher educators must recognize how important it is for student teachers to view themselves as knowers, creators of ‘wonderful ideas’ (Duckworth, 1987), and contributors to their future development and that of others. It is important that we recognize and integrate a variety of strategies that allow student teachers in our classrooms to express and
furthermore tune into their beliefs, thoughts, and feelings. On one hand, such an opportunity for release may help student teachers recognize their inner wisdom. On the other hand, they may take this self-awareness and the joy they experienced as knowers into their own classrooms, enabling their students to be knowers and contributors. Greene (1988), for example, observes that teachers in search of their own freedom may encourage their students to go in search of theirs.

In addition, becoming aware of the students’ questions and concerns may provide insights for teacher educators in terms of becoming helpful for providing mentoring and in reaching out in ways that may be meaningful for the student teachers. For example, in this study, it became evident that the international students faced challenges with language and that building and maintaining teacher authority was a concern for all student teachers. Awareness like this may help teacher educators to not only become more aware of the reality of their students but also may play a role in mentoring and supporting them in ways they perceive as meaningful. Furthermore, the student teachers’ voices may be included in evaluating the quality and the impact of the program.

Thus, within a constructivist paradigm, PTO activities offer possibilities for student teachers to see themselves as knowers and inquirers capable of constructing knowledge.

*Developing their Own Visions for Teaching*

PTO activities offered an aesthetic space for the student teachers to purposefully and creatively explore and expand their visions for teaching. The participants of this study engaged in metaphorical and embodied experiences to share their developing visions for teaching with others. The students constructed their images by bringing together what was important to them along with what they had learned from others. As noted by Darling Hammond and Bransford
an articulated vision for teaching is likely to help teachers in defining and defending their goals to the various stakeholders and may guide their decision-making in high-stakes testing environments.

Sensitizing to Issues of Social Justice: Seeking Exploring

Multiple Alternatives for Actions

The student teachers perceived seeking alternatives and becoming aware of their own agency as the most powerful lesson from their participation. They were committed as being change agents to address issues of social justice in their classrooms. However, this process of gaining agency could not be seen as an isolated activity. Instead, it was situated within a safe and open seminar environment in which student teachers shared ownership of knowing by bringing in their experiences from the field, asking authentic questions, sharing their challenges, and taking an active role in identifying alternatives for themselves and others. In addition, it was situated within the student teachers’ individual personalities, epistemological perspectives as connected knowers, and strong commitment to their students’ happiness and well-being. The power of thinking together and the opening of minds and hearts to alternative conceptions of thought, feeling, and action were nested within this cognitive-socio-emotional context.

In further elaborating the significance of this study, it is important to consider the connections between engaging in reflective thinking, seeking alternatives, perceiving identities, developing a feeling of solidarity, and experiencing a sense of competency as a student teacher. Aura made this clear, stating in our last interview “The solution comes from awareness. The beginning of agency is that it all comes from awareness.”

Being without choice or alternatives—being constrained—is a condition of the oppressed. Whereas being unaware of the world we live in and seeing no alternatives are characteristics of
oppression and can limit human growth and development, awareness and agency are sources of power. Being unaware of the world we live in and seeing no alternatives are characteristics of oppression and can limit human growth and development. Having a choice is empowering, not only because it gives one something else to consider but also because it gives one the freedom to engage in self-reflection and ask the question, Is this what I would like to do? (Belenky et al., 1997).

The freedom of choice and action that emerges from this awareness is empowering not only because one can listen to one's inner voice to provide an alternative but also because embedded in this inner voice is the freedom to choose after considering who we are and who we would like to be. In other words, undertaking a journey of finding one's home and one's identity, becoming aware of the potential choices available to self, and purposefully selecting one possibility after considering its connection with which we are results in the development of commitments of actions. This intrinsic process allows more freedom to the student teachers as they take ownership in creating their teaching philosophy by integrating what personally is important to them with what they have learned from others. Thus, having agency to name, search for, and enact alternatives is necessary to achieve competency, reach out to their students so that no child is left behind, as well as to further their personal growth and development.

**Caring and Democratic Learning Environment**

Connected knowers build connected learning environments and PTO has the potential to invite students and teachers to build such environments. Specifically, PTO activities invite the student teachers to participate in a way of knowing that is more relational, includes thoughts and feelings, and is collaborative. The participants avoid judgment and play the believing game (Elbow, 1973) to understand what their peers are experiencing and what their experiences have
led them to think and feel. Through this intimate form of thinking and feeling, the students are more likely to become aware of the humanity of others. Motivated by ‘seeing what we are looking at, to listening what we are hearing, to feeling what we touch, to writing what we write’ (Boal, 2006; p. 29-30), the students and the teacher in such an environment are likely to participate in collaborative problem-solving. Through this process, they may construct their knowledge of teaching and learning. The feelings of connections may be further fostered by recognizing the similarities in experiences, thoughts and/or evoked feelings between self and others.

The student teachers reported that sharing personal stories, listening to the stories of others, engaging in meaning making, and searching for alternatives helped them to connect with each other by enabling them to perceive the commonalities in their experiences and in their socio-emotional-cognitive responses to those experiences. The Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed activities invited student teachers to adopt an ethic of care (Noddings, 1984) in ways that had a personal, humane touch and which fostered group solidarity. Group solidarity became both the outcome of and the vehicle for fostering a deeper and more authentic inquiry to self-awareness.

Finally, Belenky et al. (1997) liken the teacher in a connected learning environment to a midwife who ‘assist the students in giving birth to their own ideas, in making their own tacit knowledge explicit and elaborating it’ (p. 217). In the PTO activities, the ‘joker’ may play a similar role as the midwife teacher Belenky et al. (1997) describe. The joker, instead of depositing knowledge in the heads of the students, starts from where the student is, and then draws the students’ inner thoughts and feelings and represents them in an artistic way. In this way, as a midwife, the joker supports the evolution of students’ thinking, making it visible for others to see.
At the very end it should be noted that critical reflections were inherent aspect of this work. The student teachers were continuously engaging in a reflective practice.

*Painting New Horizons - Taking Arts into the Classrooms:*

*Insights for Educators and Researchers*

The co-researchers painted broad strokes on the basis of their views of the values of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed for teaching and teacher education. The possibilities they created are as follows:

- Releasing imagination and beginning to learn by drawing out one's tacit knowledge.
- Promoting acceptance of multiple perspectives and diversity among members of a learning community.
- Fostering empathy in members of a learning community.
- Understanding non-verbal language (e.g., body language, facial expressions, tone of voice, etc.).
- Becoming conscious of one's assumptions by engaging in critical reflection.
- Engaging in a collaborative environment to foster learning from participants' field experiences.

*Limitations of the Study*

The findings of this research represent the views and experiences of the student teachers in this specific cohort. Further research is needed in a variety of other contexts, both to develop a grand theory and to widen programmatic applications based on the research findings. Such additional research would enable teacher educators to connect research with pedagogy and create possible ways to engage student teachers bettering reflective praxis. Research and application of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed in teaching and teacher education is in its teething stage.
We need research in multiple contexts including pre-service teachers, in-service teachers and students in schools (e.g., incorporating variations in grade level, socioeconomic status, cultural background, etc.), for the purposes mentioned in the section above to deepen our understandings, and to strengthen the findings emerging from this research.

Is this a work of fact or fiction? How best can this work be described? How close were we in getting at an accurate depiction of what took place in the study? I acknowledge that the participants' stories may be incomplete, their experiences from the field may not have all the details from their environment; but their stories reflect their perceptions and the realities as perceived by them in that context, at that time in their life.

What limits and potentials did the various representational modalities create? Using Image Theater, Forum Theater, drawing, metaphors, and construction paper creations/work/pieces? provided opportunities for the participants to explore and express their experiences in multiple ways and engaged participants to use their aesthetic senses. These modalities possibly opened spaces for them to consider ways that were freeing rather than prescriptive.

However these modalities created some limits. Working with abstract thoughts and giving them a shape was often challenging for some participants. Further research is required within different contexts to understand the limits of these modalities more clearly and to sort out the personal and cultural factors that may contribute to the limitations.

Addressing the Tension: Learnings from this Research
The issue of quality within Arts-based educational research is difficult and complex. Barone (2005) urges arts-based researchers to grapple with the emerging tensions between the need for quality controls and the democratic impulse to share artistic expressions. I state here my understandings.

I believe that the worth or the utility of any research including arts-based educational research needs to be evaluated by the participants of the research and other stakeholders. Arts-based educational researchers engage in a purposeful inquiry. Understanding the influence of the research on the various stakeholders (including the researcher) may provide some insight in considering the worth and utility of the research. Therefore, considering the possibilities and openings, the changes in attitudes, the understanding of multiple perspectives, the feeling of agency could be some possible indications of quality. However, more research and conversations are required to keep this list growing to include other nuances of quality. Ultimately, I believe, the utility of a research is dependent on the action and the process of that action which follows the study.

This research process, like other research processes, has had its share of trudging through murky waters and the messiness emerging from it. Some of the messiness was created by my hopes and dreams about this study. When I entered the field, I imagined that all the research participants would share the same level of passion I had for this study. I imagined that all the invitations I offered for collaboration would be welcomed by all. I found out that the reality was quite different. The participants, though interested, had their plates full with many other things going on in their lives. I was aware that I was offering invitations and respected their decisions. By wading through these waters I learned the role of being a research-facilitator and came to value the collaboration (intellectual, emotional, and in time and energy) with the participants.
Another area where I encountered messiness was in building safe learning seminar meeting environment. I had to make efforts at creating safe learning environments. However in the process of the research, I came to understand that safe learning environments are created when the participants feel safe in that environment. One of my participants did not feel completely safe in the seminar environment, though she felt safe with me to be honest about her feelings and concerns.

I entered messiness when ‘jokering’ – in considering where to probe, where to be silent. I questioned myself when one student (not a focal participant) broke down crying because of the vulnerability she felt due to all that she was dealing with. Crying was a response to her awareness. I wondered what I could have done in that situation. Could I have worn my counselor hat, stopped the activity, and engaged in a process-based conversation? Did she feel supported when I talked her at the end of the meeting? I realized in this situation and in others like it, the complexities of playing a joker.

During data analysis, I swam in the murky waters for a long time as I decided my categories and worked towards creating independent categories. In my effort to fit the data in the same labels across the cases, I ran into the issue of imposing categories rather than generating categories from the data. Recognizing the convergences and divergences helped me to work again with the data and recreate category labels that were more grounded and inductive.

Recommendations for Future Research

In addition to the areas the co-researchers have described, the implicit findings of this research indicate the potential of Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed for assessing student teachers’ beliefs about teaching and learning. The insights created from this assessment could guide the changes that aim to strengthen teacher preparation programs and provide effective
mentoring experiences to the student teachers. What do student teachers perceive as the potential of using their embodied creations for the purposes of assessment? What happens when student teachers participate in Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed to engage in authentic assessment of their own learning? What insights can be created for program assessment from the student assessment? What happens when student teachers' voices are included in evaluating the quality and the impact of the program? Using PTO as a means for program assessment may serve as one possible tool for engaging the participants to consider the affective, cognitive, and ethical dimensions of the program. In this sense, the assessment is more likely to be holistic and inclusive of logical and intuitive thoughts. Furthermore, inviting the student teachers to participate in problem-posing and problem-solving may create opportunities for the faculty to listen to the students' voices and include those in their considerations for program development. Including their voices may further promote sharing of power and open channels of communication among the different stakeholders which may further facilitate the building of democratic learning environments.

Impact of the Study

As a researcher, I was interested in understanding the impact of my interactions with the co-researchers and of their participation in the study. I asked them to write a letter to tell me how they felt about participating in the study and their responses to reading their cases. Lan and Elliot wrote the letters to me. At the very end of this study, I also stepped back to consider what it meant for me to be a co-researcher with them. I expressed my feelings in a form of a letter which I sent to the four co-researchers. I first present the letter Lan wrote to me followed by that of Elliot. Finally, I share the letter I wrote to my co-researchers.

Lan wrote in her letter,
Dear Foram,

I don’t think you need to make any changes [to the case]. I felt you have captured the essence of my thinking during the study quite well. I like the way you wrote the case and it is informative to me as a participant to see how I have been growing as a teacher. I think you have conducted an interesting study. Learning with a group of other new teachers is beneficial to me and encouraging. I enjoy participating in the study and enjoy the opportunity to learn and to share the happiness and frustrations with others.

Elliot’s letter was as follows:

Dear Foram,

It has been a pleasure working and learning with you about Boalian Theater. Participating during these months in the Boalian Theater activities, have helped me to explore myself and find out how to approach situations I encounter in my daily interactions, especially for situations I experience in the classroom.

As I was reading my case, I can see that we have touched in our conversations a lot of interesting points. I am not a person that reflects enough—and I know I should do it more—so reading the case has made me see those points of “who am I and why” and “where I am planning to go.”

Working with you in this seminar has made me see other ways to enter in my classroom and look for the participation of the students. Thanks for helping me, through the writing of the case, to put in paper these thoughts; thus making my goals more doable.

Finally, I end this chapter with a letter I wrote to the co-researchers when I had nearly completed this manuscript. This letter was intended to thank them, to express what this work had meant for me, and to share the highlights of the findings.

Dear Lan, Elliot, Meredith, and Aura,

Thank you SO much for being co-researchers on this project. Your enthusiasm and honesty made my work fun, engaging, authentic, and personal. I know that each of you is working towards reaching your dreams—thank you for including me in your journey. I have learned with you by listening to your oral, written, and artistic voices which has been a very growing experience for me both personally and professionally.

Personally, I came to understand that I am not very different from you. The experiences you had growing up, the stories you shared of your experiences in the field, your visions as a teacher resonated in many ways with my experiences. Through you, I came in touch with parts of myself that I may have lost over the years. I connected not only with you but also with myself and with the world I live in.

Professionally, I deepened my understanding of how student teachers develop their teaching philosophy; how their personal experiences, their course work, and their beliefs come together to create a vision. I came to understand the value of a collaborative reflective process used to learn from our experiences—what a powerful feeling it was for
us to be able to become aware of ourselves, our relationships with our students, our actions, and to generate possibilities for ourselves in situations that constrained us. Some of you took the pedagogy into your classrooms and we learned with your students ways to facilitate the activities and their responses increased our faith in continuing to use this pedagogy in teaching. What I hope to share with the field of teacher education is what I have learned from you. Here I share these learnings with you.

Agency comes from awareness. Where awareness and agency are power, being unaware of the world we live in and seeing no alternatives is oppression and can be limiting for growth and development. Choice is empowering, not only because it gives us something else to consider, but also because it gives us the freedom to get in touch with ourselves and question what it is that we would like to do.

By reflecting on your experiences with the pedagogy, you helped us to understand its potential in developing group solidarity, developing empathy for our peers and our students, and engaging in reflective and meaningful learning. We also recognized that group solidarity was not only an outcome but also a vehicle for our engagement in deeper learning about teaching.

Finally, you went beyond your experiences and began to paint broad strokes as we considered ways in which we could use this pedagogy for teaching and teacher education, and for in-service and pre-service teachers. Specifically, you noted the value of the pedagogy in learning to read texts with thinking and feeling as pathways to knowing, for understanding non-verbal communication, for problem-solving classroom conflicts, and for engaging in reflections during student teaching.

Your voices are honored not only in the written manuscript of this study, but through the future work I will undertake in this area. I deeply thank you for your collaboration, time, and energy in this endeavor.

Sincerely,
Foram Bhukhanwala.

As I mention in this letter, the voices of my co-researchers are honored not only in the written pages of this document but have integrated within me and will guide my future work.
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APPENDIX A

A LETTER OF INVITE
A Letter of Invite

An Invitation: TOWARDS LEARNING ABOUT PROFESSIONAL TEACHER IDENTITIES

Dear Friend,

I am writing to extend to you an invitation to encourage you to participate in a project planned towards learning about professional teacher identities. I am a Ph.D. student in the Department of Elementary and Social Studies Education, at The University of Georgia. My major advisor is Dr. Penny Oldfather (Professor in the Department of Elementary and Social Studies Education, The University of Georgia) and I have developed this study under her careful guidance.

The purpose of this project is to use theater activities to help you to reflect on your self, your students, and your practice in a safe, collaborative learning environment. As a possible outcome of your participation in this project, you may further your abilities in perspective-taking, empathic knowing, and problem-solving. You may feel a sense of hope and empowerment as well as greater belief in your own potential to make a difference in your own lives, in lives of the children you work with, and in the larger community. The project will be the basis for my dissertation research.

Below, are some answers to various questions that you may have about the project

1. What is this project about?

This project is developed for ECCO students during student teaching. The project is specifically aligned with the ECCO program themes of reflection, scholarship and research, collaboration, and appreciation for diversity. The 10-weeks of student teaching are a very special time in the preservice teachers' thinking about teaching and learning. It is a time for building connections between the classroom experiences at the field, related literature, and your ideals about teaching and learning. It is a period of growth as we experience the joys and the challenges of teaching and learning. We interpret and reinterpret our experiences individually and collaboratively. In the process we begin to build a professional teacher identity and develop appreciation for our students, our profession, and ourselves. Recognizing the value of a student teaching experience in shaping one's future work as a professional in the field, I wish to provide a platform where we can come together to reflect independently and collaboratively on our classroom experiences.

Within this context, I want to understand the role of situational theatre as a pedagogical tool for understanding the experiences and the evolving professional teacher identities of the student teacher. Dramatic activities, in particular, provide opportunities for you to engage in imaginary and unscripted scenes. By participating in these structures, you can examine issues
that are relevant to your lives as a classroom teacher. You are likely to become more aware of human relationships and the ways in which your actions can influence your classroom. These activities will also provide a means of community building with other ECCO students and a source of fun.

Performance before an audience is not the purpose of situational theater. The focus will be on process, rather than product. The work will be improvisatory and not based on a goal of producing plays.

2. What would my role be?

You would be a co-facilitator of the situational theater activities during the seminar. You would collaborate with others in planning and implementing a few situational based theatre activities with students in your class. You are the ones who really know the students in your class, and you will be the key in the planning and implementation, but always with support.

Additionally, if you wish, you could be involved as a co-researcher for the project. As a co-researcher you would pose emerging questions, share observations, and or insights. You may even consider the possibility of becoming co-authors to articles that may be published as an outcome of this research and/or co-presenters at local, national, or international conferences. You could choose to be involved (at whatever level is comfortable for you)

3. Who will be involved in this project?

This project is designed as a collaborative project that will involve some ECCO graduates, Dr. Allexsaht-Snider, who is an instructor for this course, and the researcher. I believe that there is great potential for ‘cross-pollination’ among these interested people. I think there will be great fun for you in this group and that group members will energize and inspire each other.

4. How often will we meet and what will I do?

The Seminar Group will meet once every 15 days from January to March on a day, time, and place that will be mutually agreed upon by the members. We will participate in different theater activities and learn together more about ourselves as teachers and learners, our students, and our relationship with our students, and the pedagogy. In addition to meeting in the seminar, you will also be invited to participate in conversations with the researcher and your other group members. The purpose of these discussions is to reflect, raise questions, and enhance our understanding of professional teacher identities.

5. Who will the participants be?

The participants will be those ECCO students who plan to student teach and those who plan to do their five week internship in Spring 2006. In addition, graduates from ECCO who are currently full time teachers will also be invited to participate in the seminar and as participants in the research study.

6. Will you be studying me? (That might make me feel a little nervous.)
This research is not an evaluation of students or facilitators or their performances but is geared towards understanding the experiences and the perceived outcomes of the participants as a result of participating in situational theatre. I will want to interview you periodically, to gain your perspectives on the process and how it is working (or not working). I would also hope to document the activities from time to time through photos or videotape. You will be provided with consent forms that will provide thorough description of the research and what we are asking you to do.

This project has been sent for an approval by the Institution Review Board (University of Georgia), and the researcher hopes to have the approval before starting the project.

**How do I become involved?**

It is very simple! Send an e-mail to me (foram@uga.edu) indicating that you would like to participate in this project. If you are interested, please respond by December 8th. I will get in touch with you right away. In your e-mail please also indicate your contact information (phone number and e-mail address) that you would like me to use to reach you.

Please let me know if you have questions. You can contact me at the email address above or at (706) 389-6324

Sincerely,
Foram Bhukhanwala

**References**


APPENDIX B

BASELINE INTERVIEW QUESTIONS
Baseline Interview Questions

1. What do you understand by teaching and learning?
2. What roles teachers play in a classroom?
3. What roles students play in a classroom?
4. What is knowledge? How do you come to know? What would you do in a conflicting situation?
5. Can you think back to your educational history and tell me a little bit about your schooling experience?
6. What kind of a teacher would you like to be? Is this the kind of teacher you have always liked to be?
7. What experiences in your life have influenced your image of an ideal teacher?
8. What is your vision of current schooling?
9. What is your vision of future schooling?
10. What did you learn about yourself from tracing your history of learning?
APPENDIX C

EXAMPLES OF QUESTIONS ASKED IN INTERVIEWS
Examples of Questions Asked in Interviews

The following questions were asked in the interviews. These are examples and the interview did not follow the order in which they appear here. The questions served as a starting point and additional questions were asked for clarity and elaboration.

#1 Stimulated photo recall
Can you look at these photographs that we took in the seminar meetings and tell me more about them? What stands out for you as you see them?

#2 Image of a future teacher
Can you tell me more about the image you have created here? What does it mean? How does this image resonate with what you do and who you are? What experiences in your life has informed this image?

#3 Educational history
What are some of your memorable educational experiences that has influenced your thinking about teaching and learning?

#4 PTO activities in the seminar meetings
What did it mean for you to participate in the PTO activities? What value was X activity to you? What were the feelings you experienced?

#5 Learnings from participation
What did you learn from your participatory experiences in the seminar meetings and using Boal’s Pedagogy and Theater of the Oppressed?

#6 Challenges faced
What were some of the challenges you faced?

#7 Applications of PTO
What potential do you see of PTO in teaching and teacher preparation?
APPENDIX D

MAKING VISIBLE THE PROCESS OF DATA ANALYSIS
Making Visible the Process of Data Analysis

To make visible the processes of data analysis, I present in this section various examples to highlight the steps that led to writing individual cases and doing cross-case analysis.

Step by Step Process

I explain the various steps I undertook in data analysis with examples.

Engaging in Line-by-Line Coding

Using the methods of data analysis suggested by Grounded theorists like Strauss and Corbin (1998), I started by being open to the data and being grounded in the data so that embedded meanings and relationships can emerge. I started with carefully reading the transcripts and identifying the properties in a specific paragraph. Some the paragraphs were as short as a line or two, at times the paragraphs were long. I underlined the properties and wrote the emerging category. For example:

I feel that once they have those connections, then they come in happy—so the roles of the students are waiting to be here ready to participate and once that has been taken care of then the second one is willing to share what they are bringing from outside and be willing to be open minded to accept others. (Categories: roles of students, impact of connections on students, relationship between students' roles and students' feelings of connections)

Sticking Data Segments on 5”x8” Index Cards

I cut out data segments and stuck it on index cards. Each index card had identification information like name, line number, and date. These index cards were then organized according to categories and the categories were further organized according to themes. The data were stored in a shoe box. In the final analysis the themes and categories used for writing individual cases and cross-cases were as follows:
The Activities

Time for Connections

Topics shared

- Fears and challenges
- Joys and successes
- Doubts and concerns

Boalian Activities

Games

- Type of games
- Rules for the game
- Descriptions of creations
- Student teachers’ responses to the game

Images

- Prompts given
- Description of creations
- Student teachers’ responses to the images

Forum Theater

- Process of preparation
- Scripts of the role play
- Student teachers’ responses to the Forum Theater

Scale of Confidence

- Directions given
Student teachers’ placement of themselves on the scale

Perceived reasons for their placement

Other Activities

Directions given

Student teachers’ creations

Responses to their creations

Cases

Epistemological Perspectives

Shifts in epistemologies

Beliefs about teaching and learning

Beliefs about knowledge and knowing

Educational history and other important life events

Relationships with Students

Perceptions of students in the classroom

Relationships with students

Relationships with parents

Processes and reasons for building learning communities

Challenges faced in building relationships with students

Goals in Teaching

Image created in the seminar meeting

Metaphorical exploration of the image for articulating the goals in teaching

Meanings Found in Involvement in PTO

Roles / Identity within PTO
As a creator
As a contributor
As a learner
As taking role of her students
As a collaborator
As a teacher
As an empathic friend
As a member of the seminar group
As feeling powerful / sensing agency

Engagement in reflective thinking
Engagement in relevant learning

Views on Seminar Environment

Experiencing safety
Experiencing collaboration with course instructor
Having fun
Experiencing an open learning climate
Experiencing free and creative expression

Pedagogical insights about using PTO with students

Perception of the Value of PTO in Teaching and Teacher Education

Cross-Case Analysis

Epistemologies
Relationships with students

Teaching philosophies

Challenges faced in the field

Roles/identities within Boalian work

  Selves as creators
  Selves as empathic listeners
  Selves as having agency
  Selves as experiencing belongingness
  Selves as collaborators

Engaging in reflective thinking

Engaging in relevant learning

Perspectives on seminar environment

  Adjectives used by the participants to describe the seminar environment
  Reasons for experiencing fun
  Reasons for experiencing and not experiencing safety
  Perceiving an open climate
  Relationship with the course instructor
  Engaging in higher order thinking skills

Value of PTO activities in teaching and teacher education

Value of PTO as a tool for assessment–An implicit finding

Creating Concept Data Maps
Concept maps were created to flesh out each of the themes and categories with specific properties. These properties included the voices (oral, written, and artistic) of the participants. At this time data were included from multiple sources for reaching data saturation and checking for consistency. I explain this with an example of a concept map of ‘Elliot's Goals in Teaching’ (refer to Figure 27).

After creating concept maps for each focal participant, I created concept maps for the themes across the cases to for cross cases. I illustrate this with an example in Figure 28.
Figure 27: An Example of a Concept Map to illustrate a Theme, Categories, and Properties
Figure 28: An Example of a developed Category Using a Concept Map for Writing Cross-Case Analysis

**Triangulating Data for Consistency and Gaining In-Depth Understanding**

The data was triangulated and member checked for consistency and gaining in-depth understanding. As an example, I extend the category explained in Figure 28 to illustrate how data from other sources were used for triangulation, deepening understanding, and reaching data saturation. I drew data from transcribed video data, photographs, transcribed interviews, and field notes. I watched the video and read the transcripts to check in for consistency between what focal themes the focal participants had shared throughout the sessions on this topic. There was consistency. Further the photographs were used in the interviews to elicit details. I looked for
student teachers’ responses as well as paid attention to their non-verbal cues to look for their thoughts and feelings.

In addition to triangulation of the data, I member checked with the participants during the process of analysis and after the individual cases were written to make sure I had “got them right.”
APPENDIX E

AGENDA: SEMINAR MEETINGS
Agenda: Seminar Meetings

Seminar Meeting #1: Sunday, January 8, 2006
- Connection Time
- Setting norms
- Tracing educational timeline—Learner's autobiography
- Critical reflection: What did you learn about yourself from tracing the history of your learning?
- Planning for the next meeting

Seminar Meeting #2: Saturday, January 21, 2006
- Connection Time
- Signing consent forms
- Game: Statue Activity
- Game: Walks
- Forum Theater: “Teaching Second Step”
- Planning for the next meeting

Seminar Meeting #3: Sunday, February 5, 2006
- Connection Time
- Group Conversation: Value of Role Playing
- Forum Theater: “Give Me Clay”
- Working with cultural identities
- Planning for the next meeting
Seminar Meeting #4: Saturday, February 18, 2006

- Connection Time
- Game: A Round of Rhythmic Movement
- Game: Colombian Hypnosis
- Art-based activity: Exploring challenges faced in the classroom
- Planning for the next meeting

Seminar Meeting #5: Sunday, March 5, 2006

- Connection Time
- Group conversations: Purposes of Forum Theater and establishing a safe environment
- Images: Lan’s Journey during Student Teaching
- Images: Classroom from Students’ and Teacher’s Perspectives
- Scale of Confidence: Level of confidence at the beginning of student teaching
  - Level of confidence towards the end of student teaching
- Planning for the next meeting

Seminar Meeting #6: Saturday, March 26, 2006

- Connection Time
- Images: Issues Grappled with during Student Teaching
- Images: Your Strengths as a Teacher
- Art-based Activity: Visions of Future Classroom
- Images: Goals as a Future Teacher
- Group Conversation: Value of Boalian Theater in understanding student teaching experiences
- Closure with a Boalian game.