7-20-2022 10:00 AM

Acting Out Gender: Embodied criticality and performance-based pedagogies

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A thesis submitted in partial fulfillment of the requirements for the Doctor of Philosophy degree in Education
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Abstract

Using an adapted *Theatre of the Oppressed* workshop titled Acting Out Gender, this study explored the use of embodied, performance-based pedagogies to examine gender identity and performance with undergraduate and teacher education students. Attending to feminist and queer epistemological questions of embodiment and gender, this qualitative, arts-based study used observation and interviews to explore participants' understanding and experience of gender and to experiment with performance-based pedagogies for exploring embodiment and embodied rituals. This study highlighted the usefulness of Acting Out Gender in supporting students' interrogation of embodied gender subjectivity in their own lives and illuminated how performance-based pedagogies function in the service of that interrogation. These functions, referred to as the 3 C's, **c**entred the body in learning, created opportunities to have **c**onversation across difference and engaged in **c**ollective meaning making to move students from anti-oppressive recitals to anti-oppressive rituals.

Keywords: Theatre of the Oppressed, performance-based pedagogies, gender embodiment

Summary for Lay Audience

What happens when we get out of our seats and into our bodies to learn about ourselves and others? That is what I wanted to know when I developed and delivered the *Acting Out Gender* workshop to undergraduate and teacher education students. This workshop used theatre and performance tools to guide participants in an exploration of our embodied experiences of gender, and this study tried to understand how using these tools made that exploration more effective. I video taped the workshops to review later and interviewed self-referred participants to begin answering my questions. Not only did this workshop deliver meaningful learning moments about gender and gender performances, but it uncovered just how these tools delivered those learning moments – by making the body central to learning, engaging in conversations across difference, and through collective meaning making: the three C's!

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Chapter 1

1 Introduction and Theoretical Framework

1.1 Introduction

Gender serves as a central organizing feature in all societies (Connell, 2009), and the ways in which people are socialized as gendered beings supports the hierarchical nature of this organization. This results in very real power imbalances across genders where male and maleness (masculinity) is privileged or preferred and female and femaleness (femininity) is Othered or subordinated. Further to this, there exists rigid scripts as to what constitutes masculinity and what constitutes femininity and how those should be enacted in everyday life. The outcomes of this organization and these scripts are far reaching and central to the perpetration of gender-based violence (GBV)[1].

Consequently, as a gender-based violence prevention educator in post-secondary education, when asked what I believe to be the best way to approach prevention efforts, my response is always this: there is no one-size-fits-all approach to GBV prevention, and there are many complex layers to this work, but one thing is clear: the critical examination of gender socialization and gender expression is a vital task in GBV prevention. The question for me then, is not what do we 'teach' but how do we 'teach' – how do I support students' critical examination of gender socialization and expression?

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[1] Violence based on gender norms and unequal power dynamics, perpetrated against someone based on their gender, gender expression, gender identity, or perceived gender. It takes many forms, including physical, economic, sexual, as well as emotional (psychological) abuse. (Goverment of Canada, 2021)

Throughout my career as an educator and facilitator, I have used various embodied techniques and performance-based pedagogies (PBP) to explore difficult, social justice-related issues and wondered if this was a viable route to better support post-secondary school students in their exploration of gender identity and expression. And because both gender and theatre are, in part, embodied performances and experiences, this use of embodied and performance-based pedagogies, may enhance learning or offer new critical insights into the interrogation of gender identity.

Consequently, the aim of this study is to understand the contribution of embodied-based performance pedagogies to explore gender identity and gender expression, a central and conspicuous part of the sociocultural embodied experience. Using an adaptation and reimagining of an existing embodied performance-based pedagogy, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO) (Boal, 1997), this study investigated the following questions:

(a) Is a TO-based PBP a viable tool for interrogating questions of how participants understand themselves as gendered embodied subjects?
(b) To what extent can this tool be employed to encourage participants to develop and foster critical and creative capacities vital for the interrogation of gendered power structures and embodiment?
(c) To what extent can TO-based PBP provide spaces for imagining possibilities for resistance and critical embodied reflexivity as it relates to interrogating restrictive and oppressive systems?

Scope of the Study

I developed and conducted four embodied, performance-based workshops, named *Acting Out Gender,* with undergraduate and teacher candidate students at a large university in southwestern Ontario using an adaptation and reimagining of *Theatre of the Oppressed* methods, an embodied, performance-based pedagogy. Following the workshops, I

interviewed participants to understand the impact of the workshops and their reflections on their experiences, reviewed participant written reflections and analyzed videotaped workshops.

Theoretically informed by the field of Geography's spatial-relational conceptualizations of the body, explorations of embodiment approaches, theories of gender performativity and performative gesturing, a performance studies lens, and through adaptations of Augusto Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO), this study used embodied, performance-based workshops to interrogate questions of gender identity and its embodied performance. Through workshops developed for this study, participants were provided with space and tools to explore their embodied experiences and understandings of gender identity, and to creatively explore the construction of gender performatives in their own lives.

But wait, there is more: Emerging questions of slippage

As I started collecting data for this study, I began to notice a trend that was showing up in my data and in my professional work- this trend was *slippage*. Given the embodied nature of this study I had ethics approval and participant consent to video record all workshops, and while reviewing this footage, *slippage* between what the participants were saying in the workshops and what they were doing on video became visible. That is, there were noticeable discrepancies occurring between participants' gender identity knowledges, languages and values and the embodiment of that knowledge.

At the same time, I was responsible for training a large cohort of students on GBV prevention and sexual consent and I left each session feeling relieved, motivated and

excited - the groups were great, they were open, vulnerable and spoke in ways that demonstrated strong feminist and anti-oppressive knowledge and values – I was feeling hopeful (and I still do!). It wasn't until the sessions were over and I was debriefing with their leaders, that idea of slippage became apparent. The leaders said, "they talk one way, but they sure as hell act another". They knew how to talk the talk, but not walk the walk. The slippage I saw in each space got me thinking: why do so many demonstrate strong knowledge and ideas about gender equality and other anti-oppressive themes but don't seem to *embody* it? Don't seem to *live* it?

These examples and emerging questions of slippage reminded of a quote that so perfectly speaks to the integral connection between embodiment and oppression, exclaiming how oppressive ceremonials, like GBV, are "performed from babyhood, slip from the conscious mind down deep into muscles and glands and become difficult to tear out" (Smith L. , 1949, p. 1). Smith is speaking to how oppression and privilege become embodied rituals – how conversations between the body and its sociocultural location over time create harmful and pleasurable experiences, and these embodied experiences shape our cultural performances, and culture itself. That is, our embodied experiences shape how we *act* in this world and what ceremonials, destructive and protective, we engage with (Piran, 2017).

And so these moments of slippage and this quote compel me to ask an important emerging question: can *slippage* can be addressed, in part, by placing emphasis on the role of the body in learning and by intentionally including embodied and performance-based pedagogies in the exploration of gender identity and expression?

Organization of the Dissertation

This study is concerned to generate pedagogical knowledge about how embodied and performance-based pedagogies can support students' interrogation of embodied experiences, cultural performances, and specifically the performativity of gender (Butler, 1998). Engaging with critical social theories that attend to questions of embodiment then, is integral to interrogating oppressive structures and their grasp on bodies. To do this, these three theoretical spaces govern the study:

1) The/your body
2) embodiment
3) performance studies and performance-based-pedagogies

In Chapter 1, I begin with a theoretical exploration of these themes. I first offer geographical, spatial-relational theories of the body (Grosz, 1994; Longhurst, 2010; Nast & Pile, 2005; Rich, 1984), opening important pathways for conversations about theorising the body as a location, and to encourage a conceptualization of the body as more than an anatomical collection of bones and tissues (*the* body), but as site for inscription and resistance (*your* body) This geographical understanding of the body then provides important and necessary grounds for examining theories of embodiment – the interaction of our bodies, our location, and our sociocultural contexts over time. Using this lens, I introduce Butler's theory of gender performativity and, as an extension of Butler's theory, I offer a focus on Noland's (2009) theory of *performative gestures,* an embodied outcome of gender performativity and a tool for seeing our gestural performances as "a discipline (through which society imprints itself on the body) and a conduit of agency (through which the subject innovates and departs from the script)"

(Noland, 2009, p. 3). Focusing on gestures addresses the antagonistic and binaristic nature of gender, brings us back to the body, and offers an exploration of how "kinesthetic experience, produced by acts of embodied gesturing, places pressure on the conditioning a body receives, encouraging variations in performance that account for larger innovations in cultural practice that cannot otherwise be explained, (Noland, 2009, pp. 2-3) thereby highlighting the possibilities of how agency and resistance can, and indeed do, become embodied rituals. Finally, an introduction to Performance Studies as a field and performance-based pedagogy will be offered to help explore the development of the workshops.

Chapter 2 offers related literature, highlighting existing empirical research that specifically explores embodied and performance-based pedagogies, with a focus on TO, that explore social justice education broadly, while concentrating on studies that in some way contribute to my understanding and which provide insight into the relevant, empirical research that has already been conducted.

Chapter 3 introduces the epistemological and methodological considerations of this study through the exploration of a qualitative, arts-based research methodology, A/r/togoraphy, a summary of study instruments, recruitment procedures, participants and settings, data analysis procedures, and a detailed explanation and rationale of the workshops.

Chapter 4 presents the findings of the study and consists of 3 parts: 1) a review of what happened during the workshops; 2) participant feedback and data elicited from interviews, as well as my own observations; and 3) identification of key themes that emerged in light of theoretical frameworks that I employed to make sense of the data. I also refer to relevant literature in the field to further situate my own empirical insights

into the productive potentiality of performance-based pedagogies for fostering a criticality that is committed to gender transformative practice and self-awareness.

Chapter 5 discusses how these findings function and what they mean in the context of this education and of the research questions. This chapter will share empirical insights gained in this study and the meaning of these findings as it relates to the research questions, original and emerging. As well, a description of unanticipated outcomes will be given. Then I will explore how these findings fit and fill gaps in literature explored in Chapter 3 and how they demonstrate a more nuanced use of *Theatre of the Oppressed* methods. This chapter also addresses any unanswered questions, offers recommendations for future research and broader applications of this work, and lessons learned while conducting this research.

Chapter 6 will conclude the study by summarising the key research findings in relation to the research questions and aims, discussing the value and contribution thereof.

1.2 The Theory

First, it is important to speak to how I ground and make theoretical sense of the three key terms governing this study, **the/your body, embodiment, and performance studies** and **performance pedagogy**. While I introduce these terms generally here, this study is grounded in critical feminist and queer epistemological questions that inform my understanding of gender and embodiment, and I use these tools to bring a critical gender lens to bear on those definitions. As such, Chapter 1 begins with a geographical exploration of the/your body as site of inscription and learning. This process, *embodiment,* is then explored further, and is followed by a review and explication of habitus and the performative to elucidate gendered performativity and gestures. Finally, an introduction to performance studies and performance-based pedagogy that informed the development of the workshops is offered.

It is also important to note clarification between performative(s), performativity, and performance(s). As a practice throughout this dissertation, when I use **performative(s)**, I am referring to the socially normative projection of identity and gender. The term **performativity** relates to Butler's (1998) theory of gender performativity and the term **performance** is used when describing an act of personal or pedagogical resistance to performative norms resistance or pedagogy.

1.2.1 The/Your Body

To explore embodiment and performance, we must first start with the body – after all, before we are anything, we are a body (Boal, 2002). Here, as an essential first step in priming us for an exploration of embodiment, or the dialogue between the/your body and sociocultural locations over time, I demonstrate how the body is understood in this study.

The following explores geographical conceptions of the body, an often invisible and degraded location in learning and knowledge development and separate from rational thought. This is important to the study as it highlights the importance of embracing embodied and corporeal learning as a site of resistance. Consequently, I ask, what is the body - our physical selves, a collection of bones and tissues? But many theorists who tackle this question are left disconcerted (Lohnghurst & Johnston, 2010). Quoting Grosz (1992), Longhurst offers this definition to us as a starting point:

> By body I understand a concrete, material, animate organization of flesh, organs, nerves, muscles, and skeletal structure which are given a unity, cohesiveness, and organization only through their psychical and social inscription as the surface and raw materials of an integrated and cohesive totality. (Longhurst, 2010, p. 98)

The body is quickly becoming an expanding field of inquiry in education and other social sciences, as it "deals with social and spatial conceptions of the human body - often located in the tension between the body as a social and biological phenomenon" (Gregory, 2009, p. 50). This somewhat contemporary interest in the body is seen as a shift in late modernity and as a reaction to major culture shifts and increased freedom of expression. In the academy, the focus on the body represents a "theoretical intervention, rectifying the former deficiency in social theory" (ibid) and rejection of "emotion-body as a barrier to pure rational thought" (Drew, 2014, p. 85).

The Dictionary of Human Geography (2009) offers three themes to explore and conceptualize the body,

1) First, the body is described as "the geography closest in" (p. 51). Because this project is concerned with how interactions between the body and the power dynamics of social and spatial relations create embodied rituals, and because it

relies on the unpacking of those interactions to generate criticality, this

conceptualization is important. This conceptualization of the body includes both

"the generative spatializing of the body and the historical confinement of the body

in abstract space" (p. 51). It focuses on the inscription of power and resistance on

the body that includes discussions of "performativity, body politics and the body

as a site of struggle" (ibid).). In this reading, bodies, like places, are territorialized

and become relational in particular ways: "[b]odies and places, then, are made-up

through the production of their spatial registers, through relations of power.

Bodies and places are woven together through intricate webs of social and spatial

relations that are made by, and make, embodied subjects" (Nast & Pile, 2005).

2) Secondly, as an extension of the first theme, the body is conceptualized as

"central in the process of where dominant cultures dominate certain groups" (p.

51) or *Other* bodies. This conceptualization of the body opens important

conversations about how we *feel* in our bodies and the power relations that inform

those feelings. This conceptualization was important in the development of the

workshops as it encouraged dialogue that not only explored these mythical norms

about what gendered bodies are *supposed* to look like but also examine where

these norms come from. In this conceptualization of the body, emphasis is placed

on how subordinate groups are defined, by privileged groups, by their bodies and

compared to norms that deem them "ugly, loathsome, impure and deviant"

(ibid).). Through this, dominant groups are "imprisoning the Other in his/her

body, [and] are able to take on the position disembodied subjects" (p. 51). For

geographers, this conceptualization illuminates issues of power and social-spatial

exclusion and exposes struggles for "recognition and the appropriation of space" (ibid).

3) Thirdly, the body is conceptualized as a philosophical tool for interrogating and disrupting dualisms. Given this study addressed gender binaries, this reading of the body proved essential, encouraging a (re)connection of body and mind for participants, and making way for an entry point into dismantling dualisms. This also produces important grounds and insight into addressing slippage, or the discrepancy between what people say and what people do within the context of this study. Exploring, and subsequently dismantling, dualisms like mind/body provide geographers with tools to address other dualisms such as subject/object (Gregory, 2009). This "dismantling of dualisms has worked as a means to expose the instability of bodily inscribed identities" (p. 54) and has urged many geographers to adopt an epistemological stance of situated knowledge or embodied knowledge, opposing objective and decontextualized knowledge.

Beyond this, the body has been considered as a "surface to be mapped, a surface of inscriptions, as a boundary between the individual subjects and that which is Other to it, as the container of individual identity, but also a permeable boundary which leaks and bleeds and is penetrable" (McDowell & Sharp, 1997, p. 3). Longhurst (2010) suggests however, that perhaps what is important is not the definition of the body, for, like the body itself, it is unfixed, continuously changing, and adapting. "Sex, gender, race, skin, blood are indeterminate and unstable signifiers of the differences and similarities between bodies… [provoking] questions, not about the real make-up of bodies, but about how bodies are really made-up" (Nast & Pile, 2005, p. 3).

Adrienne Rich's *Notes Toward a Politics of Location* (1984), a piece written for a talk delivered at the First Summer School of Critical Semiotics: Conference of Women, Feminist Identity and Society in the 1980s, offers important reflections here and provides great, and much needed, application for thinking about the body as a location of gendered learning. In a candid exploration of "her world" Rich explains that as a child she viewed her own house as a "tiny fleck on an ever-widening landscape, or as the centre of it all from which the circles expanded into the infinite unknown." She goes on to admit that this "feeling of centre gnaws at me…[asking] at the centre of what?" (p. 212). This process of locating herself physically, emotionally, historically, ideologically, and contextually leads her to understand her body as a corporeal place or "the geography closest in" (p. 212). For Rich, and other radical feminists of her time, the importance of this process of location was "not to transcend this body, but to reclaim it. To reconnect our thinking and speaking with the body of this living human individual, a woman" (p. 213). Ultimately for Rich, and this study, 'beginning' with (locating) the body provides 'grounds' from which we can interrogate how it got there.

Rich goes on to write about the politics of this corporeal location, recalling that the era she was born into located her before she was born by race and after by sex – "when I was carried out of the hospital into the world, I was viewed and treated as female, but also viewed and treated as White – by both Black and White people. I was located by colour and sex" (p. 215). In this recognition that the body has more than one identity she writes, "to locate myself in my body means more than understanding what it has meant to me to have a vulva and clitoris and uterus and breasts. It means recognizing this white skin, the places it has taken me, the places it has not let me go" (p. 215-216).

Rich continues to problematize our understanding of the body, suggesting

> Perhaps we need a moratorium on the saying 'the body'. For it's also possible to abstract 'the' body. When I write 'the body' I see nothing in particular. To write 'my body' plunges me into lived experience, particularity: I see scars, disfigurements, discolorations, damages, losses as well as what pleases me. (p. 215)

In her continued search for the 'centre' and her exploration of intersectionality, Rich is emphasising that to say 'the body' creates blanket assertions, thus concealing our complex subjectivities and their origins, and "lifts me away from what has given me a primary perspective. To say *my body* reduces the temptation to grandiose assumptions" (p. 215). This acknowledgement of our own intersectionality creates space for important reflexivity, allowing the discovery of our own corporeal place and identity and our subversions.

Rich's conceptualization of the body "as the geography closest in" acts as prompt and cue for important questions about the role of the body in creating location, creating identity, and how our bodies locate us. Rich's notes have allowed for an expansion of how we consider identity in the context not only of race, gender, and ability but location as well. For Rich, this corporeal site is a place on a map where she is created and where she is creating, from which she begins to explore change and to create change. Rich claims we must begin "not with a continent or country or a house, but with the geography closest in – the body. Here at least," she continues, "I exist" (p. 212). Rich is pointing to the strength of the body as a site in its ability to consciously and sub-consciously reaffirm (perform) our identity and our *place* in the world. This notion of *place*, where we belong, is an enduring subject for many and the role of the body in understanding and finding place cannot be overlooked (hooks, 2008).

'Our place in the world' – this geographical statement is echoed by Nast and Pile's (2005) claim that "since we have bodies, we must be some place" (p.1) and honours our very existence. "I exist" is a profound and grounding statement as it honours our lived and material lives as a collection of embodied experiences and pushes us to understand the body beyond a physical or biological sense but as a vehicle of both the signifier and signified parts of our subjectivities.

These previous geographical conceptualizations then, allow us to understand the body as an inscribed phenomenon, to think critically about those inscriptions and how we might use performance-based pedagogies to dissect, interrogate and even disrupt gendered inscriptions.

1.2.2   Embodiment: habitus, performatives, and gestures

If the body is a site of intersectional inscriptions, then *embodiment* helps elucidate how those inscriptions came to be. Viewing the body as an inscribed phenomenon creates pathways to this study's understanding of *embodiment* – the embodied results of our interactions with our sociocultural locations over time and the embodied knowledge that is produced through those interactions. In this way, embodiment and embodied knowledge is what our body *knows*, what it *says*– and like all other discourses it has the power to be prolific and repressive (Kumashiro, 2002). It is both knowledge and a way of knowing and consists of overt and subtle nuances.

The theoretical origins of embodiment have been linked to the work of French phenomenological philosopher Maurice Merleau-Ponty who was intrigued by the phenomenology of perception in politics and culture. Merleau-Ponty's ideas are

influenced by the notion that through perception, our 'lived body' emerges, and through the assumption of non-duality (mind and body are not separate) our "state of being… is situated in society, with personal, social, cultural and historical contexts" (Wilde, 2003, p. 171). Merleau-Ponty claimed that our bodies are not simply something 'we have' but rather 'who we are,' and they demonstrate how we know the world through our movement in space, language, and time (Merleau-Ponty, 1962). In this sense, embodied knowledge, or embodiment, is not an abstract theory but rather a "coalescence of systems that simultaneously incorporate political, biological and cultural dimensions (Allegranti, 2011, p. 13), including the "corporeal […] sensual, social, cultural, and ultimately relational" (Perry & Medina, 2011).

Merleau-Ponty's phenomenological understanding of the lived body provides a necessary tool of analysis for understanding how our gender and its performance is mediated through sociocultural interactions. Simone de Beauvior once claimed that "one is not born, but rather becomes, a woman" (Beauvoir, 1949, p. 283), describing the way in which we learn through these interactions to legitimate our identity and fit into the world, that we are in a constant state of 'doing' our identity and never inherently are (Stomquist & Fischman, 2009).

Many of us from a young age are taught how to behave given our perceived gender – if you are a little girl perhaps there is an expectation to act passively, while little boys may be excused for their aggression based on the assumption that they are innately so (Nayak & Kehily, 2013). Little girls learn from a young age how to be little girls, and then learn how to be women based on a set of 'rules' that they had no part in developing and do not

recall agreeing to (Hill-Collins, 1993). Through repeated dialogue with culture, many of these rules are constituted and reinforced in the body – that is,, they become *embodied* – creating sets of embodied knowledges, or rituals, where the body automatically knows how to act, react, and perceive experience (Allegranti, 2011). And so, the body carries within itself knowledge that we consciously and sub-consciously use to reaffirm our identity and our *place* in the world, providing a space for us to express our gender identity. This embodied knowledge, constructed and reinforced by historical, cultural, and ideological norms, protects the social rules of identity, perhaps limiting us from 'acting' in ways that truly represent ourselves. These rules, repeated over time, protect and privilege hegemonic and heteronormative ideals, and oppress 'Other' identities (Kumashiro, 2002). These rules, and our bodies' interaction and experience with these rules, shape how we *act* in the world, and how the world *acts* on us.

While Merleau-Ponty was interested in the lived body and how it moves through the world, Pierre Bourdieu explores the impact of values, thoughts and beliefs on our embodied knowledge and behaviour. Bourdieu termed this category of knowledge as 'habitus' – or the *socialization of the body*. Bourdieu argued that one's habitus consists of structures and

> generative principals of distinct and distinctive practices – [for example] what the worker eats, and especially the way he eats it… his political opinions and the way he expressed them are systematically different from the industrial proprietor's corresponding activities (Bourdieu, 1995, p. 17)

In this sense, Bourdieu argues that our habitus, that is, how we use gesture to perform our thoughts and values, and to represent external descriptors of those values, assists in the formation of our identity. Bourdieu also argues, however, that this embodied translation

of the world is not necessarily a reflection of the world as we see it, but is the application

of *doxa* or the learned, unconscious values and beliefs that inform one's actions within a

given environment (Bourdieu, 1991). These values and beliefs are favoured and

reproduced by specific social hierarchies that privilege dominant ideologies and then

become central to the regulation of social norms that create society and oppression.

Essentially, for Bourdieu, our embodied knowledge is a result of sub-conscious and

constructed values that inform our *modus operandi,* thus reproducing socially dominant

ideals and norms: "social expectations are incorporated into the individual, and the

individual projects those expectations back upon society (and other individuals)" (Young

H. , 2010, p. 20). Young's explanation of habitus or embodied knowledge assists with

unearthing the role of society and culture in the development of embodied subjectivities

and offers space for thinking about embodiment and bodies through an intersectional

lens. Young asserts that

> "in terms of *black habitus* [it] allows us to read the black body as socially constructed and
> continually constructing oneself. If we identify blackness as an idea projected across the
> body, the projection not only gets incorporated within the body but also influences the
> way it views other bodies" (Young H. , 2010, p. 20)

Iris Young (1980) offers an extension of the spatial relational discussion above through

her interrogation of embodiment and gender differences in her paper, "Throwing like a

girl: A Phenomenology of Feminine Body Comportment Motility and Spatiality," where

she explains that "every human existence is defined by its situation" (Young. I. 1980, p.

138). Young is referring to how a woman's situation is the "particular existence of the

female person [and] is no less defined by the historical, cultural, social, and economic

limits of her situation." In describing 'the situation' in which women throw a ball, Young

notes that women, when compared to men, use less of their body to propel the ball, and take up less space when preparing to throw. Young goes on to note that all "sorts of bodily activities which relate to the comportment or orientation of the body as a whole, which entail gross movement, or which require the enlistment of strength and the confrontation of the body's capacities" (p.30) are approached very differently by men and women. Generally, she notes a "a particular style of bodily comportment which is typical of feminine existence, and this style consists of particular modalities of the structures and conditions of the body's existence in the world" (p. 141). What is important here is that Young identifies not a difference of muscular strength or endurance between men and women in their throws, but rather that they tend to use their bodies very differently in approaching the same sporting tasks. Young offers insight into understanding how the gendered body is created through interactions not only with culture, but space, and how these interactions inform our everyday actions.

For example, Young notes that "For many women as they move in sport, a space surrounds them in imagination which we are not free to move beyond; the space available to our movement is a constricted space" (p. 33). This interaction, despite being imaginary, is a result of many complex systems, patriarchal norms and the restriction of movement women have experienced over time. These imaginary restrictions become embodied and create the ritual of "throwing like a girl" along with reluctance and timidity in approaching certain physical tasks; "we lack an entire trust in our bodies to carry us to our aims." (Young I. , 1980, p. 34).

The consequence of this is that "a woman frequently does not trust the capacity of her body to engage itself in physical relation to things. […] she often lives her body as a

burden, which must be dragged and prodded along, and at the same time protected"

(p.36) This dichotomy means that women not only fear for physical safety but fear of

appearing awkward or too strong. Women's actions are embodied responses to the "basic

fact of the woman's social existence as the object of the gaze of another […that a

woman's] bodily existence is self-referred to the extent that the feminine subject posits

her motion as the motion that is looked at" (p.39). This enactment of embodiment, our

habitus, lies at the core of the *performatives* of our identity.

In Austin's "How To Do Things With Words" (1962), we are urged to push back against

the philosophical assumption that a statement can only be used to describe the state of

something or to assert a fact. Austin describes how the uttering of the sentence is a part of

"the doing of an action, which again would not *normally*, be described as 'just' saying

something" (p.5). Here Austin is describing the way, for example, that saying "I do" as

uttered during the marriage ceremony, that stating "I name this ship the Queen Elizabeth"

as uttered when smashing a bottle against the stern that saying 'I give and bequeath my

watch to my brother as occurring in a will are all performative sentences/utterances.

Viewing these utterances as performatives indicates "that the issuing of the utterance is

the performing of an action – it is not normally thought of as just saying something" (p.

6). Similarly, our bodies are not just doing something, like walking, but proffer

performative acts generated by our experiences of embodiment.

Gender is one of the first and most ongoing experiences of embodiment that we navigate.

Judith Butler's "Performative Acts and Gender Constitution: An Essay in

Phenomenology and Feminism" (1988) highlights the way "in which social agents

constitute social reality through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social

sign" (p. 519) and describes how social agents see themselves and others as *objects* rather

than the *subjects* of fundamental, generative actions. Principally,

> the more mundane reproduction of gendered identity takes place through the various ways in which bodies are acted in relationship to the deeply entrenched or sedimented expectations of gendered existence… produced a set of corporeal styles which, in reified form, appear as the natural configuration of bodies into sexes which exist in a binary relation to one another. (p. 524)

Butler's contribution to the understanding of embodiment of gender, or gender

performativity, has been invaluable and is vital to understanding how we might

interrogate our embodied knowledge of gender. To completely unpack all of Butler's

arguments is not the focus of this section, however some significant ideas should be

illuminated now:

- gender is **performative** and is
- materialized though **repetition** thus creating
- an **illusion** of normalized social scripts and acts.
- this illusion creates a **dichotomous** or dualistic understanding of gender identity (man/woman) and a parallel dualistic embodiment of gender norms.

Butler's understanding of gender as constituted socially, as something that is reified

through *performativity*, and that is therefore capable of being constituted *differently*,

examines "what ways gender is constructed through specific corporeal acts, and what

possibilities exist for the cultural transformation of gender through such acts" (p. 521).

Her work is key to this study in that it provides a conceptual bridge for linking

performativity to performance studies. Butler (1988) argues that,

> … gender is in no way a stable identity or locus of agency from which various acts proceed; rather, it is an identity tenuously constituted in time – an identity instituted through a stylized repetition of acts… If the ground of gender identity is the stylized repetition of acts through time, and not a seemingly seamless identity, then the possibilities of gender transformation are to be found in the arbitrary relation between

such acts, in the possibility of a different sort of repeating, in the breaking or subversive repetition of that style. (p. 520)

Here she seeks to highlight the way "in which social agents constitute social reality through language, gesture, and all manner of symbolic social sign" (p. 519) and where social agents are seen as *objects* rather than the *subjects* of fundamental, generative actions. Butler's contribution to the understanding of *performativity* and gender has been invaluable and is vital to understanding how we might interrogate and disrupt our own understanding of gender and embodied social norms.

Butler provides important insight for *how* gender is constituted, but also offers important insight into *why.* For Butler, gender is a performance and strategy of cultural survival where we "materialize [ourselves] in obedience to a historically delimited possibility" (p. 522); it is a "practice of improvisation within a scene of constraint […] one does not 'do' one's gender alone. One is always 'doing' with or for another, even if the other is only imaginary" (Butler, 2004, p. 1). This panoptic practice of self-monitoring — the internalized social censorship and surveillance in which people are imbricated (Foucault, 1976) – creates a corporeal performance, an embodiment, that is repeated and sustained under duress, thus creating gendered bodies as yields of punitive practices.

Stromquist & Fischman (2009) highlight this in their exploration of sex and gender, stating that biology is used as a "signalling system of organising expectations and interactions rather than the fixed cause of differentiation between those identities" (p. 465). Instead, they insist, as Butler does, that a socio-historical dynamic influences and is influenced by social practices: "gender is always in the process of being done, performed and acted" (p. 466), often as a survival strategy. Connell (2005) writes "gender is a way

in which social practice is ordered… [it is] a historical process involving the body, not a fixed set of biological determinants" (p. 71). This belief that gender is essential, is natural "makes it scandalous when people don't follow the pattern" (Connell, 2002, p. 4), and those who fail to do their gender 'correctly' are subject to sanctions – namely, the failure of their survival strategy. "Performativity, as a kind of logic and in relation to discursive effects, is a normative force on systems: inefficiency is not, and will not, be tolerated in efficient systems" (Locke, 2015, p. 248).

This understanding is useful for this study as it provides the conditions for participants to reflect on their own embodied and performative sense of gender, the regulatory norms that govern gender binary systems, and the constraints that they impose. Such conditions of criticality then "hold the potential for a great diversity of masculinities and femininities" and take into account "a multiplicity of gendered identities and expression which are unfixed to the 'sexed' body" (Hines, 2006, p. 50). It is here that we can also include discussions of non-normative sexual practices for interrogating gender performances:: "One is a woman to the extent that she functions as one within a dominant heterosexual frame. Under conditions of normative heterosexuality, policing gender is sometimes used as a way of securing heterosexuality" (p.xi). If normative gender performances uphold normative sexuality (heterosexuality), how does the interrogation of gender catalyze dialogue about sexuality and the policing of our sexualities through strict gender norms and scripts? How do we view sexuality as "vital for understading both the human body and subjectivity" (Salamon, 2010, p. 44) and understand Merleau-Ponty's claim that "a being begins to exist first through desire or love" (Merleau-Ponty, 1962, p. 154)?

While this theorizing of gender is not without criticisms and Butler is aware of the

political dangers of reducing sexuality, gender, and femaleness, to a social script and

performative act, it remains clear that it is "politically important to represent women, but

to do that in a way that does not distort or reify the very collectivity [her] theory is

supposed to emancipate" (Butler, 1988, p. 530). This theorizing is important to the

pedagogical choices and values that underpin this study and allows for a non-prescriptive

approach to the discussions during data collection.

If gender is performative, unfixed and therefore unstable, difficult questions of some

feminist theory that represents the "woman" as subject must be asked:

> The very subject of women is no longer understood in stable or abiding terms. There is a
> great deal of material that not only questions the viability of "the subject" as the ultimate
> candidate for representation or, indeed liberation, but there is very little agreement after
> all on what it is that constitutes, or ought to constitute, the category of women. (Butler,
> 1999, p. 2)

Butler is asking difficult questions of feminist theory that idealizes particular expressions

of gender which may consequently create new forms of hierarchy and marginalization,

suggesting "the qualification of subject must be met before representation" (Butler, 1999,

p. 3) This problematization of the category of woman is imperative for interrogating

hetero and cissexual assumptions embedded in some feminist theory: " feminist theory

that restricts the meaning of gender in the presuppositions of its own practice sets up

exclusionary gender norms within feminism, often with homophobic [and transphobic]

consequences" (Butler, 1999, p. viii). And so, whilst Butlerian perspectives have been

key to the project of dismantling gender binaries and making clear the distinction

between gender and sex, Hines (2006, p. 50) argues that this "negation of difference"

then characterises trans identity "as an ethereal act of gender deconstruction." This

characterization fails to "positively account for the subjective and material realities of transsexual gendered embodiment" (Martino & Cumming-Potvin, 2015, p. 84).

While Butler (2001, p. 622) argues that the performative gesture of a socially intelligible gender is a "presupposition of humanness" and "governs the recognizability of the human," Trans scholars argue that performative theories of gender do not honour the way in which transfolk conceive gender as "an internal, persistent identity that is not in accordance with the biological body" (Cromwell, 1999, p. 48) and assert that "notions of performativity, deconstruction and signification have rendered the transgendered subject an imaginary, fictional and merely metaphorical presence in the service of a larger intellectual project" (Nash, 2010, p. 583).

In response, some trans scholarship calls for a sweeping recorporealization of embodiment, a homecoming to what some call "an unvarnished materiality of bodies" (Prosser, 1998, p. 9). For example, Henry Rubin (2003) argues that "bodies are a crucial element in personal identity formation and perception" and that bodies, including secondary sex characteristics, are integral and central to the recognition of a core gendered self "(p. 11). Rubin pointedly asserts that any contrivance of assumed essentialist subjectivity has been strongly critiqued as a "fiction of our combined cultural imaginations" (p. 13). Nash (2010) continues to describe the consequences of this, stating: "the apparent usurping of bodily sensations and desires to manifestations of linguistic effects denies some trans experiences of the body as present and pre-figurative to an understanding of the self" (p. 586). Nash goes on to explain that "the importance of experience and agency in understanding subjectivity and embodied experiences raises challenges for some feminist and queer geographers conducting research within

poststructuralist approaches who tend to deny the possible efficacy of cognitive human resistance and intervention" (Nash, 2010, p. 585).

In Agency and Embodiment, Noland (2009) shares compelling and, to some extent, resolving ideas here – that bodies produce knowledge at the conjunction of social and psychosomatic feeling through the kinesthetic experiences of *performative gestures*. Gestures, "learned techniques of the body," are "simultaneously a repetitive routine and an improvisational dance where "kinesthetic experiences that exceed communicative or instrumental projects affect the gestures that are made and the meanings they convey" (p.2). That is, "kinesthetic experience, produced by acts of embodied gesturing, places pressure on the conditioning a body receives, encouraging variations in performance that account for larger innovations in cultural practice that cannot otherwise be explained" (p.3&4).

Using the term gesture in thinking about embodiment, Noland proposes and allows for further theoretical and analytical productivity in that the term *gesture* "encourages us to view all movements executed by the human body as situated along a continuum – from the ordinary iteration of a habit to the most spectacular and self-conscious performance of a choreography" (p.6). Gestures can be performative in the service of "aesthetic, expressive, instrumental, or survivalist goals… [manifesting] a wide range of effort qualities…tentative or firm, bound or flowing, lethargic or rushed—that affect their meaning, both for others and for ourselves" (p.8).

Noland (p.2) also notes that when we perform gestures, it is

> possible to sense qualitative distinctions in tonicity, even as we become aware of the constructed and iterative nature of our acts." And it is precisely because our acts are learned and iterable, because cultural conditioning has been inscribed in our muscles and bones, that we are able to experience such distinctions in tonicity at all. Ultimately, it is

because we experience differentiated movement qualities in the course of performing gestures that we are inspired to alter the rhythm, sequence, and meaning of our acts.

Consequently, including theories of performative gestures is productive in a pedagogical sense in that the Acting Out Gender workshops afford "an opportunity for interoceptive or kinesthetic awareness, the intensity of which may cause subjects to alter the very ways they move" (p.4) and thus the rituals they perform.

Noland argues that to experience embodiment as qualitative kinesthetic feedback

> is a matter of cultural performance as well as genetic destiny. In this light, performativity, as a theory of how bodies achieve social recognition (and sensual materiality), should be understood as relevant to more than verbal phenomena. Reiterated corporeal performatives produce a wide range of qualitative interoceptive experiences (as well as gendered, classed, and raced bodies); and it is these experiences that are responsible for inspiring new gestural routines. (p. 6)

Undeniably, the ability to sense these qualitative differences, "to abstract movement from its social frame is itself not natural, but rather a learned skill," and so the Acting Out Gender workshops are meant to provide an introduction, or a jolt of awareness into these differences. Performance-oriented actions, specifically *performative gestures*, allow us to explore this difference critically in the classroom.

Adding conversations about gestures brings us back to the body, reminding us that this study wants to understand the impact of an embodied pedagogy on learning, and through our understanding of performatives and gesturing encourages us to ask: "how does embodying socialized gestures produce an experience of movement—its texture and velocity— that ends up altering the routine, the body that performs the routine, and eventually, perhaps, culture itself?" (Noland, 2009, p. 2). Butler (1988) asserts that when a child is born, they are prescribed a gender based upon their sex anatomy and from there

a set of cultural expectations are also prescribed; Noland asks us to "imagine a slightly different scenario, one in which the gender "female" is ascribed to a human figure not because of what that figure possesses anatomically but because of the way this figure moves" (p. 173).

Following the interrogation of gender as performative and the honouring of material and lived experiences of our bodies, this study seeks to explore the ways in which gender performatives are, or can be, "undone" (Butler, 2004), and how we can "undo restrictively normative conceptions of sexual and gendered life" (p. 1). But a refocusing on gestures or gestural routines allow us to rethink "possibilities for experimentation, refinement, and—in a cultural frame— subversion" (p.175), and it provides an important theoretical and kinesthetic space to think about how performance-based pedagogies can not only provide insight into the performativity of gender but deliver us space to critically explore gender performativity in educational contexts. These subversive acts, these performances, are imperative to the development of the workshops as they explore how participants could perform gender differently and what the rewards, sanctions or tensions might be in doing so. (Our) performances matter, they have power, they tell stories, they resist. And these performances are worth interrogating.

1.2.3   Performance Studies

Beyond its understanding of gender as performatively constructed, this study relied on Performance Studies (PS) as a lens through which we can further interrogate, observe, and understand identity-as-performance and thereby examine the body's capacity to take agency and ownership over its cultural performances. PS provides a "happy alternative

[…] to expand our vision of what performance is, to study it not only as art but as a means of understanding historical, social and cultural processes" (Schechner, 2016, p. 8).

The following section will briefly introduce performance studies as a discipline and then as a pedagogical tool of analysis. By deploying PS as a pedagogy, we have access to important insights into gender performances (and all cultural performances) and how viewing gender through a performance lens assists us in disecting and interrogating its construction. Further to this, using PS as a pedagogy provides space to explore subversions and how we might embody criticality, particularly as it relates to addressing the constraints of gender binary systems, and embracing more gender expansive ontological understandings. First, then: what *is* performance studies?

Schechner (1998) explains that "the underlying notion [of performance studies] is that any action that is framed, presented, highlighted, or displayed is a performance" (p. 3). In this sense, performance is a contested concept in that it is used by various disciplines to describe a wide range of activities and exists in an environment of "sophisticated disagreement" (Carlson, 1996, p. 1), inviting diversity, subjectivity and critical applications. Schechner (2011) echoes this claim, stating that "the one overriding and underlying assumption of performance studies is that the field is open. There is no finality to performance studies, either theoretically or operationally. There are many voices, themes, opinions, methods, and subjects" (p. 1). He goes on to note, however, that the flexible nature of performance studies does not "exclude it having focus rather that, theoretically, performance studies is adaptable and open, but practically, it has developed in a specific way" (ibid).

Citron, Aronson-Lehavi, & Zerbib (2014) regard performance studies' ambiguous definition as advantagous, suggesting performance studies rests at the crossroads of anthropology and theatre studies and is in constant motion, "advancing, expanding and crossing disciplinary boundaries, spilling over to the interfaces and escaping rigid disciplinary definitions" (p. 1). Performance studies then can create a critical and creative site for cultural experiments, promote an inclusive frame of mind, provide practices that uncover the unexpected and can act as a testing ground for extending current research – "performance studies starts where most limited-domain disciplines end" (Schechner, 2013, p. 3). As an artist, researcher and educator, who seeks to extend and venture beyond our traditional, and often disembodied ways of learning and educating, who is committed to creating a study that seeks to creatively and critically explore gender, performance studies provides me with an ideal space for extending our preconceived and scripted notions of gender and identity.

If PS is, even in its contested and ambiguous form, the study of performance, what constitutes a performance and how does Performance Studies assist this project in interrogating gender construction, its embodiment and subversion?

> "Performance," on the one level, constitutes the object/process of analysis in performance studies, that is, the many practices and events—dance, theatre, ritual, political rallies, funerals—that involve theatrical, rehearsed, or conventional/event appropriate behaviors. On another level, performance also constitutes the methodological lens that enables scholars to analyze events as performance. Civic obedience, resistance, citizenship, gender, ethnicity, and sexual identity, for example, are rehearsed and performed daily in the public sphere. (Taylor, 2003)

In a review of Schechner's introduction to "Theatre and Social Sciences", Carlson (1996) suggests examples of what performance can and indeed does refer to:

1. Performance in everyday life, including gatherings
2. Structure of sports, ritual, play and public/political behaviour

3. Analysis of various modes of communication (other than written); semiotics
4. Connections between human and animal behaviour patterns with an emphasis on play and ritualized behaviour
5. Psychotherapy – person to person interaction, acting out, and body awareness
6. Ethnography and prehistory
7. Theories of behaviour

In sum, performance studies offer much to the academy both as a study of performances and practices and events, such as dance, ritual, rallies or funerals, and as a pedagogical tool for interrogating performances of identity, resistance and citizenship. Situated within and emerging from the intersection of these conceptualizations is performance-based pedagogy, to explore the embodiment of our everyday, gendered performances, and to creatively experiment with performance, embodiment and to rehearse for transformation in a safe yet critical way.

If embodiment asks us to understand the body as *your* body, then performance studies helps us understand how your body comes to be via a series of social or cultural acts. Next, I draw our attention to an instructive discussion of how Performance is used as a framework and pedagogical tool.

1.2.4   Performance-Based Pedagogy

> We need a performance studies paradigm capable of moving through action research, and case studies to queer studies, from the modern to the postmodern, the global to the local, from the real to the hyperreal, to the liminal in-between performance spaces of culture, politics and pedagogy (Ellis 2008; Garoian and Gaudelius 2008; Kaufman 2001). This performance paradigm travels from theories of critical pedagogy to views of performance as intervention, interruption and resistance. It understands performance as a form of inquiry; it views performance as a form of activism, as critique and as critical citizenship. It seeks a form of performative praxis that inspires and empowers persons to act on their utopian impulses. These moments are etched in history and popular memory. (Denzin N. , 2009, p. 257)

A performance studies framework as a tool for exploring resistance and the performance of resistance is illuminated in Eilerass' "Witches, bitches and fluids: girl bands

performing ugliness as resistance" (1997). Eilerass explores the use of 'ugliness' by girl

bands as an "intentional deviation from 'nice, gentle and pretty' ways of looking, talking,

behaving and visualizing (p.122). Specifically, she explores the sites of "ugliness" in girl

band performances: "album cover art, image, voice, sound, language, lyrics, stage antics,

sexuality, and the body" (ibid) and how these girl bands subvert expected feminine

performances through subversive gender performatives or exhibit 'antidecorum' acts.

Eilerass illuminates the juxtaposition of "conventional female prettiness with violent

destructive images" (p. 124). This performance is accomplished through the destruction

or maiming of what are typically feminine looks or looks that are usually reserved for

women. For example, lipstick and eyeliner are generally thought of as feminine products,

but the girl (rock) bands Eilerass studies disrupt this linkage by smearing their lipstick

and eyeliner to look destroyed, rugged and therefore unfeminine – they use their lipstick

in unexpected and "ugly" forms of resistance.

Eilerass also examines the ways in which girl rock bands use their voice and language as

a laboratory, citing examples such as the use of screaming as an act of "ugly" and noting

that, for some, it acts as a "cathartic release from childhood" (p. 125). When women

have been socialized to doubt the authority of their voices (or to soften or silence all

together), screaming becomes politically significant, an act of resistance to the

expectation that women and girls are to be quiet and passive. Using a performance studies

lens to view the 'ugly' voice as a "tool for cathartic expression and a means to articulate

the 'self' while acknowledging it as a site of fiction, contest, incoherence, social

inscription and performativity" (p. 125).

Viewing girl rock bands through a performance studies lens allows us to investigate the interplay these bands engage in among feminine and masculine, passive and aggressive etc., creating confusion and discomfort for new or unassuming audiences: "fluidity, ambiguity, and hybridity are threatening because they represent the possibility of an in-between, of contamination and obfuscation of not only personal but also epistemological boundaries" (p. 137). This final point underscores how notions of hybridity and liminality are useful, and imperative, for creating performance-based methods for the exploration and interrogation of gender. Through theatre games and activities students might explore why a man who moves in an effeminate manner appears unsettling, distasteful, or unaesthetic, or that a performer who transitions between male and female, without notice or prompts, creates confusion. Performance-based pedagogies allow us to question why this is regarded as unattractive, why we are uncomfortable with the effeminate male or confused by an identity that does not present as exclusively male or female, and they illuminate what it might mean for men who perform as feminine off the stage.

A performance studies lens offers an important pedagogical tool and creates spaces for reflecting on certain norms and regulatory systems governing the legitimacy and legibility of gender; bringing the performance studies lens into the classroom offers students those important pedagogical tools. Performance studies has included a far-reaching focus on cultural behaviours including entertainment, performance art, speeches, rituals, religious ceremonies and other approaches to cultural expressions, but it also, equally, is concerned with "performativity as a lens for viewing the construction of

identity and the performance of self in everyday life" (Schweitzer & Levin, 2017, p. 8). In this way performance studies is an important framework for uncovering how performativity operates as a tool in the service of normative gendered embodiment and it lets us interrogate how performativity works in practice. Its critical focus on performance, broadly construed, lets us use performance in places other than a stage; PS shapes performance as a mobile critical paradigm (Gallagher & Freeman, 2018) for investigating how performativity works in the service of normativity, and on our bodies.

1.3   Conclusion

The theory that guides this study examines the meaning of the body and the inscriptions the body creates, while looking to a performance studies framework to better understand how we can not only engage these practices in a critical and embodied way but also uncover the agency and resistance in our bodies and the gestures it performs.

The spatial-relational conceptualizations of the body I offer above can assist in expanding our ideas and uses of the body beyond a collection of flesh and bones. Instead, this geographical reading of the body highlights the importance of location and how interaction with location, over time, creates embodied rituals, both pleasurable and destructive. This examination of embodiment lays important and necessary ground for understanding how our bodies become gendered through a repetition of prescribed and stylized acts, but it also provides space for interrogating and positioning gender performances at the junction of the social and psychosomatic. In doing this, we are left with space to consider not only the role of speech and linguistic acts in making gender

socially intelligible, but also of the role gestural acts play in reaffirming us as agentic and as capable of 'undoing gender'.

In the next chapter, foregrounded by a brief theoretical overview and reflection on power, I offer a continued exploration of performance-based pedagogies as I discuss *Theatre of the Oppressed* and its historical roots. Following this, I offer a review of available literature that highlights existing empirical research and practitioner reports that deal specifically with embodied and performance-based pedagogies.

Chapter 2

2   Literature Review

2.1   Introduction

Given that the aim of this project is to understand the contribution of performance-based pedagogies in students' critical and embodied explorations of gender, this chapter begins with a brief reflection on *power* followed by a focused literature review highlighting existing empirical research that deals specifically with embodied and performance-based pedagogies, with a focus on TO, that explore social justice education broadly. Beginning with an overview of *Theatre of the Oppressed* and its development, this chapter will then briefly present some of the ways in which TO has been used and taken up in various contexts. I also explore the various methodological approaches and choices used in TO-based studies and their implications and review some of the significant studies that deploy TO in post-secondary contexts.

2.1.2 Reflection on Power

Theatre of the Oppressed, at its core, is exploration of power and the literature reviewed below explores this topic in a variety of ways. Boal speaks about how "power relations might shape what a spectator says or thinks, he zeroes in on where a body can or cannot move in a theatre—and how those norms articulate power" (Howe, 2019, p. 76). As such, I now offer a brief reflection that demonstrates how this study understands the concept of power.

Power as a concept is often regarded as "as something to be possessed, access to resources, particularly economic resources and/or in terms of domination and control." (Deshotels & Forsyth, 2021, p. 2). However, greatly influential in much of Butler's and other feminist scholars' analysis of power, Michel Foucault offers a different examination of power and an entry point into how this study understands power. For Foucault, power is not something one can posses but something that we do or perform and was interested in how power operated in everyday interactions between people and institutions. Foucault was "concerned less with oppressive aspect of power, but more with the resistance of those who power is exerted upon.". This theorizing of power creates space for imagining a different performance of power and for realizing goals of feminist theories of power: to understand and challenge systems of domination, not to reinforce or relocate them; and to find a "different way to conceptualize power that does not rely on domination and control but explores the possibility of power with others" (Ibid). Miller (1992), for example, suggests that "there is enormous validity in women's not wanting to use power as it is presently conceived and used. Rather, women may want to be powerful in ways that simultaneously enhance, rather than diminish, the power of others" (p. 247–248).

For Mary Parker Follet (1942), this goal creates an important distinction between 'power over' and power with' arguing that 'power with' is a "form of reciprocity between members of groups and thus a collective ability" (Deshotels & Forsyth, 2021, p. 3) and 'power over' seeks domination. It is this reflection of power that this study sits within, where a dismantling and dissection of how power is performed and enacted, and how our embodied subjectivities are implicated in that performance are central to the exploration of gendered power dynamics and their embodiment. This reflection of power, and this

study is necessarily committed to a project of collective meaning making not one that

redistributes power, leaving oppressive structures in place and intact, but imagines

possibilities of resistance.

2.2 Brief History of Theatre of the Oppressed

The intention here is not to fully illustrate the literature that covers TO or performance-

based pedagogies, as this field is vast and covers a variety of issues, research questions

and theoretical approaches that are not relevant to the focus of this study. Nevertheless, I

provide a brief overview of these methods as it clarifies TO and its development in

understanding the potential for its use in exploring gender performances.

2.2.1 Freire

Central to performance-based pedagogy (PBP), participatory theatre, and *Theatre of the*

Oppressed, is Paulo Freire, who is noted for his theoretical and critical pedagogical

contribution to underpinning principles of various forms of participatory theatre

(Epskamp, 2006). Freire greatly influenced PBP through his theories of education,

community development and the emancipation of the oppressed, along with the assertion

that dialogue would inevitably lead to what he termed conscientization – i.e. the

development of critical consciousness – and be followed by action (Freire, 2000).

Freire utilized the Catholic Action Method (Bartlett, 2008) where participants were

encouraged to see, to analyze, and to act. This method revealed that "when people began

to talk about their problems in their community, and began to plan some action about

these problems, they began to free themselves from their fatalism and internal oppression" (Martinez, 2008, p. 2). From this experience, Freire saw that for individuals to represent a proactive outlook they needed to shift their position in society from an object (someone who is acted upon) to a subject (someone who acts). In this sense, Freire emphasizes the political nature of all educational systems and activities, and that education is never neutral (Mayo, 1997).

Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* (2000) is a significant contribution to educational practices and pedagogical thought and can be structured within three steps: 1) identify the oppression or problem; 2) problem-pose or ask 'why is this happening?' or 'what are the root causes of this problem?'; and finally 3) create an action plan for change.

This process of 'conscientizacao' or conscientization was central to Freire's methods, allowing individuals to question both the historical and social situation they currently experience, to read the world, to identify limitations placed on them, to name the conditions of their lives and prepare them to take action (Freire, 1994). Through this work, Freire criticizes traditional education systems for inaction and immobilization and argues that the role of the educator is to be progressive and unveil opportunities for hope to break this cycle (Freire, 1994). Myles Horton, a literacy educator and long-time supporter of the US civil rights movement, argued for such radical missions within education, warning that Freire's practices "cannot be reduced to mere methodology; to make his system work you must have radical philosophy" (Howard L. A., 2004).

However, not all views of Freirian methods are favourable and some critics argue that his texts are highly theoretical, devoid of practical activities or specificity around the enactment of techniques that lead to transforming conditions of oppression (Bartlett, 2008). A further contradiction is also noted by Smith (1997, 2002) who argues that Freire's approach, although meant to be informal and without institutional barriers, is highly curriculum-based and therefore is saturated with predefined outcomes and concerns, rather than the collective, liberatory space Freire depicts. I would add to this collection of criticisms a response to Friere's contention that 'without action, change is impossible' as it rejects critical thinking as a source of agency and empowerment.

2.2.2   Boal

Armed with Freire's writings, Brazilian drama theorist and activist Augusto Boal was inspired to investigate participatory theatre, where he could concentrate on "stimulating active participation of audience members and supporting them in [community] awareness training and problem solving" (Epskamp, 2006, p. 9). As the theatre director at the Arena Stage in Sao Paulo (1956-1971), Boal was provoked by the political and social environment to explore a range of theatrical approaches to emancipation. This exploration deepened with the military coups in 1964 and 1968, causing him to align his theatre with more progressive politics (Schutzman, 2006). His involvement and support for such political activism ultimately resulted in his imprisonment and eventual exile from Brazil.

These experiences formed the basis for his celebrated and internationally recognized work, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979); a pioneering framework for many forms of PBPs

(Babbage, 2004), including this study. As an actor and director, and confronted by inequities and political oppression in Brazil, Boal dedicated his work to "offer tools for liberation by using theatre methods to examine social injustice, power relations and oppression, and to experiment with problem-solving on societal, group and individual levels" (Osterlund, 2008, p. 72). For Boal, *Theatre of the Oppressed* (1979) was a weapon for oppressed people to use toward changing their social reality – theatre for the people, by the people, a "rehearsal for revolution" (p.155).

In addition to challenging power relations, Boal sought to break down community barriers and conventions of traditional theatre that have served as an elitist mechanism for creating division in society and separating actor from audience (Conrad, 2004). Boal believed that destroying this division or 'breaking the fourth wall' can be achieved by transitioning the audience from spectators to 'spect-actors' and allowing them to take on the role of the protagonist (Howard L. A., 2004). Osterland (2008) emphasises that this role is especially crucial to what happens after a performance or "what a group of people with a common social problem or conflict can effectuate in their real lives through the interaction and experiences of trying out different solution[s] within the form of theatre" (p. 73). In this fascinating expression of socio-cultural animation Boal writes of theatre as the art of looking at ourselves:

> The *Theatre of the Oppressed* is *theatre* in this most archaic application of the word. In this usage, all human beings are Actors (they act!) and Spectators (they observe!). They are Spect-Actors... Everything that actors do, we do throughout our lives, always and everywhere. Actors talk, move, dress to suit the setting, express ideas, reveal passions - just as we do in our everyday lives. The only difference is that actors are conscious that they are using the language of theatre, and are thus better able to turn it to their advantage, whereas the woman and man in the street do not know that they are speaking theatre.   (Boal, 1979, p. xxx).

Although Boal has been named as the father of performance-based pedagogies (Smith, 1997, 2002),, TO has experienced substantial critique in the last 30 years, primarily from feminist (Fisher 1993; Armstrong 2005) scholars for his focus on individual needs, and lack of intersectional analysis "enabling the individual to survive a little longer within an oppressive structure" (Davis & O'Sullivan, 2000). Davis and O'Sullivan go on to argue that Boal poorly founded his theory in Marxist, revolutionary ideology from the beginning, allowing its erosion over time and under-utilizing TO as a collective tool for political organizing. This viewpoint is echoed in Mutnick's (2006) discussion of praxis. While Mutnick sees Boalian and Freireian principals as revolutionary in their commitment to fighting inequalities, she argues they are not reformist, stating that "they do not aim to convert students to any particular organization or political philosophy" (p.43). Schutzman (1990) adds to this criticism, claiming that Boal's 'third world' aesthetic of resistance is impractical to impose on a 'first world' aesthetic of self-help; Boal's *Theatre of the Oppressed* is therefore context specific. She goes on to note that "although North and Latin America share an intimate history, they each represent opposing positions within it… [where] its political meaning falls through the cracks of intercontinental translation" (p.12). Snyder-Young (2011) extends this critique noting the role of the facilitator or joker in TO and how their position, often of privilege, guides participants to their own, colonized version of justice. She writes, "while Theatre of the Oppressed is usually utilised in support of politically progressive agendas, the work participants initiate and the choices they make do not automatically orient towards social justice" (Snyder-Young, 2011, p. 29).

Boal was aware of his critics and while he recognized the proposed flaws in translating techniques across contexts, he encouraged practitioners not to view TO as a totalizing system, but rather a toolbox of flexible and versatile tools to draw upon and choose only those that will be both appropriate and supportive to their context (Green, 2001). Boal suggested that

> …people have to adapt the method to their own culture, their own language, their own desires and needs. T. O. is not a Bible, nor a recipe book: it is a method to be used by people, and the people are more important than the method.(Boal, 1998, p. 128)

Other criticisms stem from its popularity. Kershaw (1992) describes political theatre as a dead practice, claiming that the commodification of theatre for change left it "void of radical impulses" (p.42). He asks, "does giving *everyone* access to a Theater of the Oppressed so dilute the political meaning of oppression that it becomes a useless concept?" (Kershaw, 1992, p. 42). *Theatre of the Oppressed* has been practised in 57 countries (Woodson, 2012) and has moved from small community workshops with peasants and the illiterate to elite colleges and high-priced master classes, asking, does this popularity threaten to sap its potency as a tool for cultural and political interventions? For these criticisms to be properly addressed, Prentki (2008) asserts that "sustainability is closely bound up with mass critical consciousness" (p.120) and as such, TO and all its forms need to be practiced in a much greater quantity and frequency to achieve the mass consciousness that is needed to create real social change.

I too, through my own exploration of TO, have discovered critical flaws and issues with Boal's methods, particularly with Forum Theatre and have opted to omit this portion of TO from this study. This decision is in part due to the way I have the witnessed Forum Theatre's outcomes appear as project of victim blaming and places onus on the oppressed to create change. Often a Forum Theatre piece doesn't take into account lived experience

and embodiment within particular contexts – nor does it acknowledge even if you have a similar lived experience, you cannot replace their character on stage.

> A great deal of talk about "the problem of speaking for others" and the ethics and responsibility involved when performing personal narratives, especially of Subjects whose identities and cultural practices are underrepresented and contested.[…] "putting on the flesh" of an Other is ultimately an act of crass appropriation, self-indulgence, and distortion. Therefore all such performances, reflective or not, are inauthentic and exploitative. (Madsion Soyini, 1998, p. 276)

For example, I once observed a forum theatre piece in which a young Black woman, the protagonist, was experiencing difficulty with one of her white male professors. When the time came to replay the piece and invite spect-actors to replace characters, a young white male shouted "stop!" and asked to replace the young woman. The solution he offered to her character came from a place of white, heterosexual, male privilege and he did not see how the options and solutions he offered where not available to her as a young Black woman. What he did then, was suggest that her own oppression was in her hands, and she simply needed to act differently to see a different outcome. This not only placed the blame and therefore the onus of change on the woman but did not consider that her own lived experience, and her own socialization and embodiment as a Black woman prohibited her to navigate the scenario in any other way than the manner that she did.

This is an important critique of TO and of Boal that further supports the need to frontload the exploration of the body, embodiment and subjectivity in this study's workshops (Subjectivity of the Oppressed?) – without a critical exploration of these themes, TO becomes a project of role playing and does not support students' interrogation of their embodied, gendered subjectivities and a meaningful exploration of their capacity for resistance. Boal doesn't address how material reality is unearthed and identified and

reflects his own positionality as a straight, cisgendered male and the limitations it placed on enacting TO.

Despite this and other critiques, TO can be employed as a creative living inquiry, one that is centred on dialogic activities and exploration and learning. When the exploration of the body and embodiment are considered, TO encourages students to view the world through multiple lenses, to employ critical analysis and to undertake constant reflection and reflexivity. Consequently, this study uses and adapts two specific TO approaches, Image Theatre and the Rainbow of Desire, which I dicuss below.
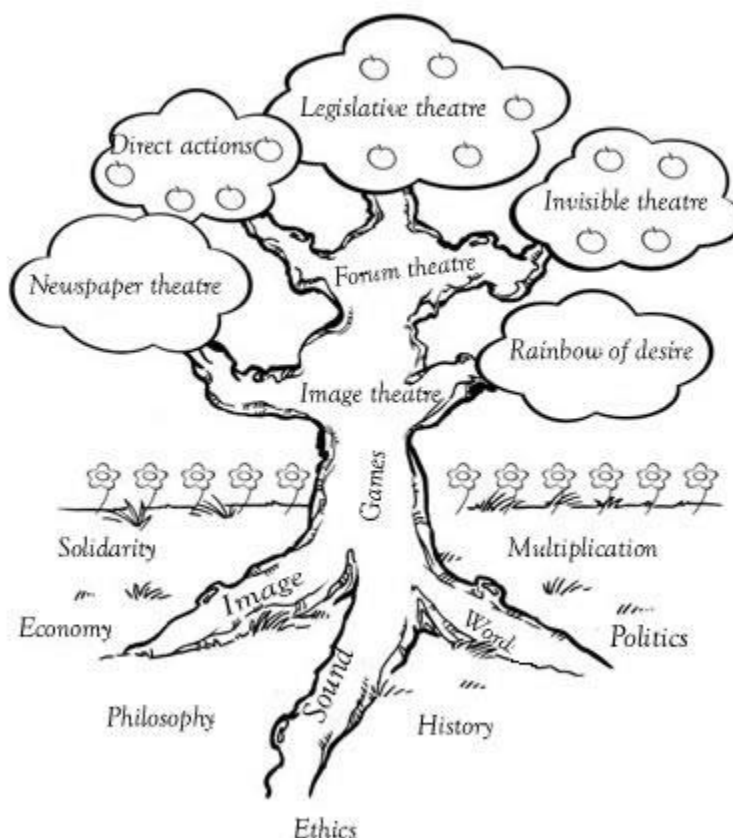
(ImaginAction, 2017)

Figure 1 Theatre of the Oppressed Tree

2.2.2.1   Image Theatre

During Boal's exile, he was invited to participate in a national literacy campaign in Peru

and it was there he created Image Theatre (Boal, 1992; 2002), where participants could

focus on a "physical form of aesthetic communication, not verbal mastery," facilitating

an exploration of their bodies and alternative ways of controlling it (Schutzman, 2006, p.

3). Image Theatre allows participants, through facilitated exercises, to explore their mind

and body's response to an oppression or idea and allows for many adaptations and

opportunities to tailor the experience to the needs and abilities of the participants (Martin,

2006). However, the fundamental components are consistent: participants sculpt their

own or each other's bodies to express attitudes or feelings toward an internal or external

oppression or unconscious thought (Boal, 2002). These physical responses are then

brought to life or 'dynamized' by adding sound or movement, providing an opportunity

to explore additional meaning behind the physical reactions.

Image Theatre is popular for groups of non-actors because there are no lines to rehearse

and no threat of being forced to 'act' in front of each other. In addition to this, Image

Theatre provides opportunities to practice the separation of objective and subjective

analysis (Thompson & Schechner, 2004); Boal believed that when viewing images,

participants are encouraged to recognize what one sees and what one assumes based on

how one processes what they see. Ultimately, this interrupts the automatic response to

watch, and attempts to build an understanding of the ways situations viewed on stage, and

thus in real life, can be (re)imagined or seen (ibid.). This fundamental form of TO is

central to the AOG workshops and is used throughout as a tool for exploring

embodiment, performatives, and gestures as they relate to gender subjectivity.

2.2.2.2   Rainbow of Desire

Rainbow of Desire is a collection of techniques and theatrical activities designed to

"harness the power of the 'aesthetic space'" (the stage) to examine individual,

internalized oppressions and place them in a larger context (Jackson A. , 1994). To do

this, Boal suggests that we need to address the "cops in our heads" (Boal, 1995), the

internal oppressor – the negative thoughts and the messages we send ourselves. The

Rainbow of Desire investigates where these 'cops' came from, why they are there,

whether they are also in others' heads and what are we going to do about them (ibid.) The

Rainbow of Desire technique begins with a participant sharing a real-life situation that is

then improvised – cast and directed – by the real-life protagonist (who will play

themselves). This is used as an introduction to the exploration, through image theatre, of

what the "cops in our head are doing," and what their faces and bodies might be saying.

These images are then "dynamized," bringing them to life, through improvisation, while

the audience observes the results objectively (Jackson A. , 1994) These observations are

then collected and discussed: "there is no misreading, only multiple readings, and the

readings most wildly at odds with each other are often the most fruitful and revealing".

(Boal, 1995, p. xx)

Boal developed RoD while still in exile in Europe with hopes of gaining insight into a

new context and therefore into new forms of oppression worth exploring. Boal sought to

introduce his *Theatre of the Oppressed* techniques to Europeans but was frustrated to learn, through workshops and programmes, that loneliness, alienation and depression were the oppressions Europeans were facing, not the life-threatening, political violence that was being experienced in Latin America (Schutzman, 2006). For Boal, TO was intended to be a rehearsal for revolution, but when geography and circumstances change, and the work is taken up in venues of privileged and less obviously oppressed communities, one may ask, what revolution' and what does it look like?

It was through his exploration of 'internal oppression' and a deeper understanding of the resulting pain that Boal developed the Rainbow of Desire, a blend of theatre and therapy (Boal, 1995). Rainbow of Desire provides a space where one can investigate the complex, internal struggles that eventually manifest as behaviour and become detrimental to us and to the people around us (ibid.). This approach provides for me a personal, creative and reflective tool for interrogating gender performances and scripts, their origins, their impact, and their enforcement.

With this important background in tow, I now provide a review of studies that mobilized TO and Boalian methods as a means by which to situate my own study and its contribution to the field.

2.3   A review of TO literature in Post-Secondary and Teacher Education Settings

Studies included in this section are from recent (2005-present) scholarly works and facilitator reflections or commentaries that focused on studies deploying TO in post-secondary or teacher education settings. Attention is given to studies that specifically

address questions related to self awareness and identity, that contribute to my

understanding of embodied learning and that provide insight into the relevant research

that has already been conducted. The inclusion of articles that present facilitator

reflections or commentaries are important in that while they do not generate empirical

data per se, the practitioner wisdom and experiences of facilitators are indeed evidence

and crucial to understanding the use and impact of TO-based approaches to learning.

My review of available literature reveals that TO and TO-inspired methods have been

used in classrooms of all kinds – that no topic has been left untouched in some way by

these methods. For example, there is a body of work that employs TO to address issues

related to body image (Howard L. A., 2004), bystander intervention approaches (Ahrens

et al., 2011; Lynch & Fleming, 2005), bullying (Bhukhanwala, 2014), child protection

(Spratt, 2000), environmental justice (Sullivan, 2008), HIV/AIDS (Chinyowa, 2011),

racism (Sanders, 2004), and women's emancipation and feminism (Saeed, 2015).

While there is indeed literature that demonstrates how TO and performance-based

pedagogies are useful tools for educators broadly, there is little evidence or exploration

specifically of *why* these tools have been useful or what conditions or processes are

enacted using TO. Furthermore, no study to date has explored gender construction and

embodiment with teacher candidates or undergraduate students using TO. In undertaking

this review, I establish that my research contributes to a better understanding of *how* TO-

inspired methods work as a pedagogical, performative approach to social justice

education and, specifically, as a space to embody and inhabit nuance as we investigate

critical questions of gender and embodiment with these student groups. What the

literature also does not demonstrate explicitly is how TO and other PBPs might respond

to the problem I see in my professional work: *slippage*. Why do students demonstrate strong anti-oppressive language and values but fail to embody it? How might PBPs be situated as a response to this pedagogical challenge?

2.3.1 TO in Teacher Education

Recognizing that "the student body is becoming increasingly diverse, [and] the teacher workforce continues to be white, female, and middle class" (p. 611), Bhukhanwalaa et al (2017) suggest there needs to be a stronger commitment to providing opportunities for teachers' exploration of their own critical self reflection of their held perceptions, biases, and assumptions to prepare them for working with and in diverse or marginalized communities. Consequently, the literature examined below includes studies that deployed TO-methods in teacher education programs or classes and teacher professional development that broadly explores issues of social justice education and diversity with teacher candidates.

Offering reflections as a commentary on their use of TO in teacher education classrooms, Desai (2017) is concerned with educational policies that encourage 'teaching to the test' and instead advocates to prepare teachers "who engage students in critical consciousness" (Freire, 2000), challenge neo-liberal policies and develop a humanistic, liberatory practice of teaching (p. 230). The researcher shares reflections on how TO might work to respond to these concerns and to guide "critical self-reflection for preservice teachers so that they are aware of their biases, privileges, and positions of power, as well as being cognizant of how these school reforms detrimentally impact poor communities of color" (p. 229). Through the inclusion of Forum Theatre in the multicultural educator classroom, Desai notes how a TO approach "pushed students to ask critically reflective questions…

[spurring] critical dialogue" (p. 232) about immigration and other social issues that often come up in multicultural education classrooms.

Preparing teacher candidates for encounters with diverse student populations was also a concern for Duffy and Powers (2018) whose research employed TO techniques in combination with training on Culturally Responsive Pedagogies (CRP), "a student-centered approach to teaching in which the students' unique cultural strengths are identified and nurtured to promote student achievement and a sense of well-being about the student's cultural place in the world" (p. 1). With intentions to not only impact pre-service teachers' perceptions of themselves as future teachers, but of the students they will teach, the authors used TO to provide teacher candidates "embodied experiences to understand CRP and encounter with 'the other'" (p. 45).

Framed as an Arts Based Education Research Methodology (ABER) study, the above study worked with twenty pre-service teachers who were enrolled in a culturally relevant pedagogy course. Using multiple data collection strategies, including pre and post surveys, the authors relied on reflective journaling, video analysis, field notes, and class and reflective dialogues between student participants and instructors to "explore how, if at all, TO can inspire pre-service teachers to critically reconsider their notions of 'difference' and their dispositions toward difference in relation to their future students" (p. 50). The major findings of this study gathered around two themes: (1) critical reflection to prepare for culturally relevant teaching – that is, participants, through TO methods, were able to make nascent connections between culture and culturally relevant pedagogy; and (2) questioning the taken-for-granted and seeing through other people's eyes. The authors note that for this critical reflection "to be a portal into practice, one

must question established beliefs and perspectives" (p.55). Powers & Duffy, like myself, see arts-based research as an approach that can enact such an analysis and approach to creating critical and reflexive environments. They suggest that arts-based research should cast "contents of experience into a form with the potential for challenging (sometimes deeply held) beliefs and values" (p.56).

The authors found that both the verbal responses of participants and the visual images they created were considered "valuable, raw data, but that it was the careful analysis of these methods that were important." They note that the visual images (photographs and video) captured in theater-based practice is integral to analysis, illuminating what happened and similarly, what did not: "it is as important to look at what is contained within the image as it is to look at what is left out. It is as necessary to listen to the dialogue that is spoken as it is to hear the silences" (p.64). While I found this particularly helpful in my own data analysis, the authors did not a provide clear and structured account of how they analyzed the data in looking for those 'silences', nor did they hypothesize what these silences may have meant.

Unlike other TO-based studies, these authors included pre and post surveys. This mixed method approach was only used by one other study included in this review (Olivera Moreno, 2018). Placier et al (2005) suggest this is in part due to the 'artistic wariness' and inconsistent and inconclusive quantitative studies in educational drama. While I too considered mixed methods as an equitable approach to research and to "flatten hierarchies" of methodological spaces (Garnette, et al., 2019), the authors did not elaborate on what quantitative data they collected nor how they used that to compare and speak back to their qualitative data. Furthermore, as noted by Conrad (1998),

> Both meta-analyses are limited by the paucity of empirical studies to support claims of creative drama advocates, the failure of researchers to document characteristics of measuring instruments, such as reliability and validity, and the possible practice by editors and reviewers of using statistical significance as a criterion for selecting manuscripts. If drama educators are to make a case for drama by measuring its effects on other skills, they must become more sophisticated. Sloppy studies may have characterized the field twenty years ago, but now researchers need more. (p. 210–211)

This brings up important questions in research design for arts-based and drama-based studies – does inconsistency and inconclusive findings come from poor research or the struggle of measuring the effects of drama? "Wouldn't it be great if we could hook up all our audience members to those elaborate machines, they use in hospitals to monitor people's vital signs?! (Bowles, 1997, p. 154).

In a related but separate study, Powers & Duffy (2016) illuminated how TO offers "promising opportunities to embody Crenshaw's notion of intersectional identities and Purdie-Vaughns and Eibach's concept of Invisible Intersectionality" (p. 62) through small but meaningful openings. Echoing Freire's (1998) ideas that the path to conscientization is made of small steps rather than grand gestures, this study sought to open up spaces for personal reflection, responsiveness and possibilities," specifically asking: Can preservice teachers engage in TO techniques to recognize "subordinated positionalities in themselves and "the other" to interrupt the cycle of socialization?" (p. 63). This more nuanced and focused use of TO is important to my own study as it employs TO techniques as tools for unearthing important considerations of our embodied subjectivities.

Working with early childhood education majors enrolled in the required course "Culturally Relevant Pedagogy in Early Childhood Classrooms," the authors, through a series of 75-minute sessions as part of the course, engaged 26 female students aged 19-

28 to determine whether TO creates an awareness of intersectional positionality—in relation to the *prototype*". The authors deployed an Arts-Based Educational Research (ABER) Methodology and relied on qualitative interviews, open-response surveys, video analysis, written reflection, image theater, forum work, and in-class discussions to capture data about the students' experiences and where "preservice teachers could identify their current constructions of invisible intersectionality and how they manifest themselves within their classrooms" (p. 64). The important addition and consideration here are the use of TO methods, image theatre and forum theatre, as data collection strategies and helped inform this study's approach to analysis. Their descriptive account of this analysis was incredibly useful.

Using multiple techniques and layers to analyse the data, the authors note that "each read through the data multiple times independently to ensure that we were familiar with it and that we had a grasp on what the data suggested. Initial codes included student voice, cultural competence, emerging insights, socio/cultural relevance, and self-expression/innovative practice" (p. 64). Then the authors began with "descriptive, emotion, motif, narrative, and verbal exchange coding" and engaged in an additional level of "collaborative coding by discussing which codes were most relevant and appropriate to the data and research questions" (ibid). Following this, the authors used "focused and axial coding to unify the diverse data" so as to place categories onto the students' "representations of their experiences across domains generated by the data" (ibid) and to uncover any patterns and inconsistencies. The use of multiple layers of coding is important within an ABER study and allows for a verification that the study met theoretical saturation (ie: no new codes were generated from further analysis). Via

this process, the authors uncovered four themes: (a) small openings: the visibility of intersectional identities, (b) varied levels of learning, (c) creating a "safe enough" space, and (d) practical aspects of implementing TO.

Again, while this study was useful in that it offered a more nuanced use of TO to explore subjectivities, the authors did not appear to use the embodied approached to explore embodiment itself; that is, the authors did not dig deeper and explore how culture is made and expressed in and through the body, and the implications this creates for educators. Furthermore, while the study did provide some details about the sessions themselves, the authors did not explore how the themes they uncovered may have developed and what processes or environments were created through the use of TO methods, nor did they speak to how TO methods, and PBPs more broadly, are pedagogical tools that not only offer a "safe enough space" to explore difficult, social justice questions, but how these tools provide opportunities for teachers to teach in equitable and more social justice-oriented ways.

Addressing this very issue in a 3-year project, Beltramo, Stillman, & Struthers Ahmed (2020), with 15 teacher educators, examined the potential of "Boalian Theater and Freirean culture circles to facilitate learning among justice-oriented teacher educators" (p. 26). Beyond this, and in response to pervasive educational inequities for marginalized students, these researchers highlight on the basis of their study that it is no longer enough to be adding equity and social justice topics to the syllabus. Rather "it is imperative that teachers are well prepared to teach in equity- and justice-oriented ways" (p. 25). In fact Beltramo, Stillman & Struthers Ahmed argue that using *rehearsals* situated within two critical pedagogical approaches –Freirean Culture Circles (Freire, 1989) and Boalian

Theater of the Oppressed (Boal, 1979) – open "opportunities for novice teacher educators to critically experiment with and reflect on potentially transformative teacher educator pedagogies/practices, particularly in relation to complex, difficult-to-navigate social justice situations" (p. 26).

To do this, Beltramo et al suggest changes to Teacher Education that "advance the identification and uptake of core practices" (p. 26) that include, for example, eliciting student thinking and responding to student ideas. The authors suggest that practice-based approaches have proven useful to this effect. Relying on *rehearsals* and TO-based activities, the researchers focused on combating educators' deficit-based perspectives, words, and behaviors, noting "The difficulty of having critical conversations in practice if/when teachers have not unpacked their own biases, assumptions, knowledge, and beliefs (surrounding students, families, and communities)" (p.29).

Beltramo, Stillman, & Struthers Ahmed (2020) offered a very different approach to their research in that it was conducted over the course of three years, with a 'collective' (usually 10–12 people) who met monthly for about 2.5 hours to discuss and "re-enact equity-related dilemmas encountered in our work as teacher educators, as well as rehearse possible responses to such conflicts" (p. 31). From there, the researchers reviewed three years of ethnographic field notes and videos, transcripts of their dialogues and their rehearsals, and written reflections. This extensive research concluded with deep, ethnographic interviews (1.5–2 hours), where members discussed the "meaning they made around the dialogs and rehearsals within our meetings" (ibid).

The authors describe the data analysis as akin to culture circles in that they engaged in a dialogical process, with multiple passes to inductively find "patterns regarding seeds,

topics, and processes," then deductively "noting instances where aspects of critical pedagogy and sociocultural learning surfaced" (p.31). This opportunity to analyse data collectively was an important consideration and allowed for an exploration of how the researchers' own subjectivities shaped the study and analyses.

As such, the researchers note that their own subjectivities were foregrounded, as often seen in critical traditions, as was the "emotional resonance of findings emerging from the data." This, they assert, was an important opportunity to value and recognise "both the personal and political nature of the work and data and opened spaces for honest reactions that spoke to individual subjectivities" (p. 31). While this approach does indeed seem useful for teacher educators in that they examine their emotional reactions to data as a form of consciousness raising, they did not note how they understood and made sense of that emotional resonance of findings and what they did with that discovery, nor do they suggest how sociocultural or spatial relational considerations influence this emotional resonance.

In a 2017 study, Caldas investigated the deployment of TO techniques to better understand the experiences of preservice Bilingual teachers in negotiating "the figured" world of Bilingual education and to examine how Bilingual teachers position themselves in "relation to conflicting discourses in the field through re-enactments using Theater of the Oppressed" (p. 192). The study took place in a preservice Bilingual teacher education classroom at a public university where twenty-one preservice Bilingual teachers agreed to participate. Of the 21 participants, 20 were Mexican American or Latino/a and one was a non-Hispanic White. A total of 19 out of the 21 participants were female.

To address this study's research questions, data was collected from a set of video-taped

discussions and performances, participant reflections after the performances and the

researchers' "retrospective self-reflective journal" (p. 193). A critical discourse analysis

(CDA) was conducted of the video-recorded discussion and performances and an analytic

approach, which involved utilizing Bakhtinian intertextuality, was used to better

understand and analyze how "preservice Bilingual teachers shifted the discourse, moving

from discussing issues pertaining to Bilingual education, such as race and immigration,

from the outside to the middle, situating themselves as protagonists of the conflict" (p.

190). The use of CDA to "connect language use with power relations and hegemony"

supported the researcher in accessing moments other studies missed – opportunities to

better understand how power relations and social structures influence our performances

and subjectivities. Citing Fairclough (2001), Caldas highlights the importance of

analysing data with CDA as its purpose is to

> systematically explore often opaque relationships of causality and determination between
> (a) discursive practices, events and texts, and (b) wider social and cultural structures,
> relations and processes; to investigate how such practices, events and texts arise out of
> and are ideologically shaped by relations of power and struggles over power. (Fairclough,
> 1995, p. 132 as cited in Caldas, 2017)

While I do not use CDA in my own study, this use of CDA is extremely valuable in the

consideration of my own workshop development as it encouraged me to find planful and

intentional ways to adapt activities to connect gender performatives to social structures

and the power relations within them.

While Caldas did use warm-ups and other TO activities, only the Forum Theatre piece

was analysed as data. I intend to squeeze as much learning of out each activity and

engagement as I can and believe the researcher missed important and nuanced entry

points into discussing embodiment and difference and failed to use these techniques to their full potential. Furthermore, Caldas did not share her process or adaptations of TO activities, nor did she provide insight as to how these pre-service teachers would move their experiences and learning into practice when in the 'real life' classroom. And, like others noted above, Caldas did not highlight the pedagogical capacity of TO and PBPs in that TO itself offers a different way to learn, an alternate way to think about knowledge and a way of incorporating the body and embodiment into learning spaces.

Bhukhanwalaa, Deana, & Troyerb (2017) integrated TO methods as a pedagogical approach to transformative learning (Meizrow & Talor, 2009), an adult learning theory grounded in the principle that "adults learn from personal experiences and undergo a transformation when they experience a paradigm shift or a change in their frame of reference" (p. 614). Facilitated by two teacher educators, this qualitative study sought to examine how arts-based approaches facilitate transformative learning in a student teaching seminar. Comprised of six, two-hour sessions, 34 student teachers participated over 5 semesters using TO and other arts-based activities to "process dilemmas they faced in their student teaching contexts" (p. 611). Data was collected through video recordings, photographs, journal reflection, participant artwork and focus group interviews and was analysed by employing a line-by-line coding strategy to highlight critical moments.

The researchers assert that the very use of TO and PBPs can thrust students into a new place of learning and consciousness, that the very act of engaging in TO is a form of resistance to traditional pedagogies and teaching practices. The researchers viewed the

use of TO as an alternative to historically privileged sources of knowing and learning, such as rational thought and cognitive engagement. Instead, they suggest that

> [Eastern philosophy] perceives body as a legitimate path to knowing. Embodied knowing that includes tacit thoughts and feelings can be made explicit when we engage in processes (such as arts, yoga, meditation, etc.) that allow time to pause, connect, and reflect on our embodied experiences […] Authentic engagement with embodied practices offers an aesthetic space for us to tap into embodied emotions and embodied knowing – which concerns knowledge that may not be yet present in our conscious mind. (p. 613)

The participants in this study reported that having the opportunity to use their bodies and to create theatrical or artistic expression of their experiences led to critical reflections, new insights and "powerful shifts in their frame of reference". These same participants went on to note that when this happened, they "experienced profound and empowering moments that led them to take actions toward transforming their thoughts, perceptions, feelings, and actions, and that created a more inclusive, democratic, and humane environment within their *current* context" (p. 618). That is, participant engagement in embodied methods supported not only their critical reflections but their actions in the 'real world'. Having the opportunity to embody and inhabit a dilemma necessarily encourages participants to think about how they can embody or inhabit that dilemma *differently*, preparing them for the classroom and providing spaces where responses and possible solutions to classroom and teaching dilemmas are felt in the body.

While this study has a lot to offer and the inclusion and celebration of embodiment is noted, the researchers did not further explore, beyond embodiment, how TO and arts-based methods created transformation and how participants' individual subjectivities influence their experiences, interaction and creative outputs.

While many of the teacher education studies I examine above used TO to 'educate' pre-service teachers about their own awareness, only a few relied on TO methods as a Professional Development (PD) opportunity. Cahnmann-Taylor & Souto-Manning (2010), in their book *Teachers Act Up!*, assert that for teachers to create meaningful and positive change in the lives of their students, they must first create that change in their own lives. The book, organized as a professional development resource, merges critical pedagogy scholarship with TO in order to explore various scenarios and difficult conversations teachers may have with students, parents, administrators, and colleagues. This explicit attempt at organizing theory and pedagogical approaches to issues teachers either face or explore in the classroom is a welcome contribution to the field and informed my own thinking about the sort of research that was needed. Not only focusing on using TO to teach pre-service teachers but teaching pre-service teachers to use and adapt TO in their respective fields, presents an opportunity to move TO and performance-based pedagogies out of the drama classroom and include it in science, health and other disciplinary contexts.

In another reflective commentary on TO as PD, Foster-Shaner, Sondel, Generette, & King (2019), offer TO workshops to educators (new and experienced) to not only build their understanding of and response to "how power and privilege operate in educational systems" (p. 352) but to provide skills and useful tools for educators to "continue these conversations and dismantle systems of oppression in their places of practice" (ibid). These tools focused on supporting educators in exploring three main areas:

> the ways in which the exercises enable embodied experiences and analysis of systems and our individual locations within them; the importance of learning in community; and the use of play and joyful, creative risk-taking to discuss and reflect on serious topics related to systemic oppression.

With these three elements clearly defined, the authors were intentional about including each element into all the exercises that were selected into this workshop and used them as a set of values or grounding ideas that "continually inform[ed] the tone and impact of our facilitation" (p. 352). Relying on these elements, or values, ensured the workshops moved beyond a facilitated discussion of oppression, but honoured and utilized the lived experiences and wisdom of the participants to "envision tangible and actionable changes that we can make in our communities and other places of practice to overcome oppression" (ibid). This approach to collective learning and meaning-making was inspirational and the authors modeled tangible ways to include collective meaning-making into my own study with respect to developing AOG workshops.

TO as PD is an important consideration for my own study, as my preliminary data suggested that pre-service teachers were hesitant to become involved and devote their time to awareness raising which they did not immediately equate with supporting their professional development. This draws attention to the need for further research on how TO can be employed to enhance professional learning for teacher candidates, where pre-service teachers may explore embodied pedagogies while learning practical skills to apply in their respective classrooms.

2.3.2 TO with undergrads

The literature examined below includes studies that deployed TO-methods with undergraduate students in order broadly to explore issues of social justice education and diversity.

In a post-secondary Social Work studies course, Glieser (2017) reflects on his use of TO to "heighten students' self-awareness and awareness of the other [and as] an adjunct to

information about Brueggemann's (2005) model of community organizing" (p. 348).

While this reflection was not part of an empirical study, the facilitators' experiences are

important to capture here. Relying on Image Theater activities in a social work macro and

micro practice classroom, Glieser sought to highlight perception and bias. In this way,

using Boal's Image Theatre and more specifically an activity called Complete the Image,

this researcher illuminates that we all enter a classroom, or any setting, with our

biographies in tow, and that our diverse biographies may change what we *see*: we all may

be looking at the same image but see very different things. Glieser also highlights how

changing the pedagogical approach to a theme or topic can disrupt our preconceptions;

sculpting a problem (Image Theatre) rather than simply discussing it moves its issue out

of the realm of the intellect, providing the potential to trigger new thinking and deeper

dialogue. Citing Greene (1995), Glieser asserts that when students are engaged in a

dialogic exchange, they are more likely to take ownership and actively participate in

interrogating the taken-for-granted.

> I asked students in my macro practice course to sculpt poverty. A student predictably
> created a group of individuals in need: a single-parent family without food, a homeless
> person, and so forth. When challenged to transform the real into the ideal, one student
> suggested that two characters be married, thereby pooling their resources to meet their
> resource needs. This choice opened up a thought-provoking dialogue related to the
> phenomenon of single parenting. Is marriage an answer to poverty from policy and
> practice perspectives? (Glieser, 2017, p. 350)

This descriptive account of process and examples of conversation prompts in Glieser's

study were extremely supportive; other studies failed to name and explore their processes

beyond a broad and vague description. Glieser guides the reader through his articulation

of Boal's concepts while demonstrating the various ways he enacted them and provided

rationale for their use. For example, Glieser explains the importance of beginning with

supporting students in connecting to their bodies and "knowing their own bodies":

> Beginning social work students can benefit from knowing their own bodies. The educator can emphasize how the social worker who comes with the agenda of helping the other through micro or community action work presupposes a coercive, potentially alienating, stance. An apt exercise to begin with, then, is the Cross and the Circle (Boal, 2002). In this simple exercise, the leader asks participants to draw a circle with their right hand, then stop and draw a cross with their left hand. The leader then instructs participants to do both at the same time. The difficulty in accomplishing this seemingly easy task makes a simple, yet profound point: As practitioners, students must be aware of the baggage they bring to a social work encounter that has the potential to limit their effectiveness. Such limitations and impossibilities may be tied to social identity, ability status, or both. (p. 348)

Glieser's ability to connect his social work theory and curricular goals to Boal's

techniques demonstrated the ways that TO can be deployed as embodied pedagogy and as

a tool for exploring one's own embodied biases and assumptions. Glieser's approach and

intentional mapping of TO onto theory and learning goals acted as an important guide in

the AOG workshop development and encouraged me to map my own theoretical

framework more explicitly to each exercise and game.

What my review found problematic, however, was the way Glieser used Forum Theatre,

a TO method whereby a scene regarding a social issue is presented and the audience

members (spect-actors) are then able to replace actors on stage to try out different

solutions or approaches to the issue. While some Forum Theatre projects have proven to

be useful in tackling issues with students, asking audience members to 'replace' actors

fails to account for the identities and biographies of the actors and spect-actors while

suggesting that all options are available to everyone. It may be insensitive for a spect-

actor to jump into the shoes of the protagonist if they have no personal experiences with

the oppression felt by the actor. Glieser missed an important opportunity to show how

some options for resolution or empowerment are available to some and not to others, and why this matters.

Glieser also explains his use of the Actual to Ideal activity, wherein "participants create images that illustrate the reality of oppression and the ideal they envision that would replace that reality, thereby eliciting a discussion of strategies of transition from the present to the hoped-for future" (p. 350). While this exercise is generally quite powerful, he missed an opportunity, a step, in getting closer to the issue. For example, before the sculpting of the 'ideal', the participants could have been asked to sculpt the 'origin' or the catalyst for this 'actual' image to better understand and explore what the 'ideal' image might look like or represent. My reading of such literature was pivotal and central to how I conceived and consequently developed the AOG workshops that formed the basis for my own research study.

2.4   Other Classrooms

I would now like to offer an examination of studies that were relevant and useful but sat outside teacher or post-secondary classrooms. The first study, Clark (2009), while not explicitly set in a post-secondary context, illuminates the use of TO as a research method and highlights the ways we can reimagine performance as a pedagogy to explore girls' subjectivities *and* as a method of data collection.

The second study, conducted by a widely cited researcher (Bhukhanwala, 2014), is situated within a middle school setting, but is useful in highlighting how TO can be used to focus on a specific theme or topic. Instead of a broad approach to awareness raising and bias discovery, this author uses bullying as their focus and demonstrates how TO can be a useful tool for discussion around a specific topic.

In a South African school, researcher, teacher and artist Jude Clark (2009) engaged students using TO as an alternative research method, as an approach to collective memory work and as an empowerment tool in working with girls. Focusing on TO as a research method, and as an interrogation of conventional qualitative research methods, Clark sought to uncover the "representations of girls' subjectivity and social relations that are often eluded in interviews and focus groups" (p.49) and to use notions of narrative and performativity to enact collective memory work. This study then, like my own, seeks to uncover the perceived hierarchy in data collection and analysis methods, to dismantle the notion that "somehow, words are seen as being more accessible to accurate interpretation or open to analysis than other forms of text (e.g. photographs, visual art, performance)" (p. 51). Clark goes on to argue that the "multifaceted complexity of social norms is also demonstrated - and can be more effectively represented in dramatization than in one-dimensional interviews or discussions" (ibid). Her approaches and justification for using PBPs highlights the way in which researchers can, and indeed do, gather important data that can only be uncovered through performative, embodied means.

Through this study, Clark highlights how TO techniques provide an "alternative language for people to discuss, analyse, and resolve oppressions, a language that acknowledges creativity and the expressivity of the body" (p.52) and how TO can be used as a strategy for consciousness-raising as well as critical pedagogy.

> Performance provides individuals with an experiential, communicative tool to express what might otherwise be inexpressible. When their peers are performing on stage, a young person can see themselves and their issues portrayed. They can understand that their collective stories are important. They see that they are not alone in their struggles. (p. 57)

For Clark, using TO techniques to better understand the experiences of girls allowed her

and her participants to make linkages between those experiences and the constructs that

produce 'girls' as subjects: "how we understand the experiences of girls is linked to the

social context in which they live and to how girls themselves represent and narrate their

subjective experiences" (p. 50). Clark believes that this understanding would allow the

participants to highlight issues that they face as 'girl' subjects and create a safe and

creative space for discussing these issues and for exploring ways to disrupt the very

contexts that make them so pervasive. For example, the group of students created a

Forum play they called "The Bus" that involved a scenario where a girl boards an empty

bus and, after a few stops, a new passenger, a slightly older male, is picked up. "He 'eyes'

her and sits next to her and begins to harass her. Apart from these broad plot lines,

participants were free to explore any methods for dealing with this issue" (p.56). The

students then began practicing possible strategies of negotiating their relative

powerlessness to increase agency. Clark highlights the difference between the strategies

the boys developed and those developed by the girls: the girls' "response was one of

passive resistance, turning head and body away, staring out of the window ignoring him"

(p.60) while the boys' approach was more assertive and aggressive. The boys' approach

was quickly criticized by the girls who highlighted the limitations of their agency and the

unrealistic expectation for girls to 'fight back' – they immediately pointed out the

consequence of "being beaten up by the man" (ibid) should they do so. Clark notes how

this perceived limited agency of the girls was a key dialogic moment that allowed the

participants to explore the constraints of girls' agency and the social environments and

discourses that create them. She also notes, however, that this moment signaled a point in

which the girls became "conscious of their resilience [… and began] to find a balance between their silence and voice. In this sense, the methodology is also valuable as a tool of critical pedagogy" (p. 62).

Lastly, Clark employs TO as an approach to collective memory work, a way to connect "everyday experiences of individual girls and women and their thoughts, feelings, sensations with the dominant, socially acceptable structures" (p.62). This use of TO allows participants to interrogate the act of socialization and identity formation as a "passive imprinting procedure," providing space to recognize the ways in which "their particular stories are social and cultural productions and intersect and overlap with the stories of others" (ibid). This application of TO demonstrates the ways in which we can use PBPs to dissect gender performances as a collective experience, as social processes that are interwoven within historical and structural realities.

In a 2014 edition of the Middle School Journal, educator Foram Bhukhanwala writes about her experiences in bringing TO to an after-school program in a middle school in the southeastern United States. The article, "Theater of the oppressed in an after-school program: Middle school students' perspectives on bullying and prevention," "examines students' participation in Boalian theater activities to role-play, rehearse, and develop strategies to use when bullied or witnessing bullying" (Bhukhanwala, 2014, p. 3). Bhukhanwala begins by asking "how I could facilitate Theater of the Oppressed activities to help middle school students make sense of bullying?" (p. 4). The answer, for her, must begin with empathy and she highlights the ways in which PBP, and specifically TO, can aid in students' development of perception and compassion, explaining how "aesthetic

spaces allow students and teachers to imagine… [and that] imagination is a way of engaging in empathy and perspective-taking" (p.4). PBPs here encourage practices that enact processes of "becoming a friend of someone else's mind" (Green, 2001, p. 38). Bhukhanwala notes that "Boal (2003) argues that when participants empathize, they begin to bridge the distance between self and others. They also begin to experience the "other" as human—as human as themselves" (p. 5).

Bhukhanwala's study suggests that TO is useful in "generating strategies for [bullying] intervention" (p.9) and in raising awareness of the negative consequences it can have on students. She suggests that "when students are engaged in a dialogic exchange they are more likely to take ownership and actively participate in interrogating the taken-for granted; they are also more likely to create different visions of their social, cognitive, and physical life worlds" (p.10).

This study began each session with warm-up activities and games and used Image Theatre to begin the exploration of bullying and how it 'plays out' in students' everyday, mundane navigation of school and school spaces.

> In Image Theater the participants are given a prompt and invited to create a frozen image by molding their body as if they were clay. The participants are then invited to name their image and reflect on the images created (Boal, 2003). In our context, we invited the students to form images to convey their perceptions of school. The prompts we used were as follows:
>
> • "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, 9 am)."
>
> • "Create an image of what you do at _____ (place) in school (for example, the hallway)." (p.7)

This example of Image Theatre highlights the way in which bullying is enacted, and the students' embodied responses to bullying. Each image provided space for personal and social unpacking of student experiences with bullying and how 'good' and 'bad' days *looked* and *felt* for students.

This study's use of Image Theatre highlights the value of Performance Studies as a lens for interrogation of embodied performances. Bhukhanwala shares that when students were asked to create *images of a good day in school,* the images were "open, expansive postures, maintaining eye contact, and smiles" (p.8) while the *images of a bad day in school*, in contrast, "were constrictive and stiff, with their hands drawn in toward their body, their heads looking down or away, their eyes averted, and little or no smile" (ibid).

In this sense, Image Theatre provided space for students to share their embodied experiences in school, "bringing to life their tacit thoughts and feelings." Boal argues that oppression is embodied; an oppression like bullying or gender regulation is experienced intellectually, physically, and emotionally. As such, to interrogate bullying, or gender, it is necessary to create embodied experiences. Using Image Theatre creates images that can act as a mediator between the unconscious and the conscious to reveal, and release, embodied thoughts and feelings held about an issue. Consequently, Bhukhanwala believes that "images become vehicles for communicating significant human experiences and actively involving the students in naming school experiences that evoke positive and negative feelings" (p.8).

Following this, Bhukhanwala used Forum Theatre to generate a short play that illuminated the "dilemmas they faced in their school with bullying" (p. 7) and re-enacted the situations through role play. Following each enactment of the play, the students were

asked to debrief about the power relations among characters, the thoughts, and feelings of the protagonist/antagonist, how the play ends, and possible alternative ending that may have led to a different outcome – "an outcome that could be more humane, democratic, and would establish an open channel of communication" (p. 7). Highlighting the goals of Forum Theatre, Bhukhanwala explains how PBPs can "generate many possible solutions and engage the participants in critical thinking," and how TO's processes are "to be dialectical, where multiple perspectives are considered" (ibid).

This study was extremely useful in illuminating the profound ways in which TO and PBPs can encourage embodied criticality, explore difficult and oppressive situations faced by young people and create safe(r) spaces to enact transformation, subversion and solutions. Furthermore, the use of Image Theatre facilitated conversation across difference and collective meaning making around bullying, building empathy and safe opportunities to embody someone else's experience.

2.5   Conclusion

The review of literature undertaken in this chapter, which spans TO in both Teacher Education studies and Post-Secondary Education studies, has demonstrated that TO and performance-based pedagogies are consistently useful tools for educators broadly, but that existing studies offer little evidence or exploration of *why* these tools have been useful or what specific conditions or processes are enacted through the use of TO. What is missing from many of these studies is an examination of how our performances are constructed and reiterated, something a performance studies lens, and a focus on embodied performatives, can bring. Instead, the focus in many of these studies is on following a Boalian script, which tends to divert study attention from the constructionist

underpinnings of embodied subjectivities and performances. In this context, my research helps to move the field forward as it deploys a Butlerian, gestural and performance studies-based analysis of embodied identities and their interaction with the world.

Further, no study to date has explored gender construction and embodiment with teacher candidates or undergraduate students using TO. As such, my research contributes to better understanding how TO-inspired methods work as a pedagogical, performative approach to social justice education and, specifically, as a space to embody and inhabit nuanced and critical questions about gender and embodiment with these student groups. My study extends much of the above work by explicitly asking how TO and other PBPs might respond to and address the problem I see in my professional work: *slippage* students demonstrating strong anti-oppressive language and values but failing to inhabit it and how PBPs might be situated as a response to this pedagogical challenge.

Accessing and understanding the impact of education is often done with tests and curricula, leading many educators to "teach to the test" (Firestone, Monfils, & Schorr, 2004). There has not been a great deal of work dedicated to understanding the impact of performance-based and embodied pedagogies across disciplinary curricula, likely due to their arts-based foundations. While little data exists by way of understanding impact and change as a result of PBPs, Etherton and Prentki (2006) suggest it may be easier, as a start, to assess how awareness is raised than to assess material changes that result from that awareness being raised. To do this, Francis (2011) suggests beginning by classifying the intention of the workshop into one (or more) of these three drama strategies: drama as didactic, drama as spectacle, and drama as process. In drama as didactic, like Freire's (2000) banking system of education, the intention is to convey a specific message. When

engaging in drama as a spectacle, the purpose may also be to convey a message, but ultimately the intention is entertainment. In drama as a process, "the intention is to work with people to create discussion and foster participation" (Olivera Moreno, 2018). Drama as a process is well aligned with this study's goals and with the underpinning values of TO; as such my study does not culminate in an aesthetic performance or drama as a spectacle or as didactic. This important consideration was useful in determining methods and approaches to data collection, and also allowed for insight into how the data would be analyzed and ultimately understood not as a generalizable set but as a collective and individual process. These considerations are now explored and explained further in the next Chapter, Methodology.

Chapter 3

3 Methodology

This study set out to answer the questions: Are TO-based PBP tools viable for interrogating questions of embodiment, gender and subjectivity? If so, how? Finally, does this 'how' speak to the emerging questions that are concerned with the pedagogical challenge of slippage, or the gap between linguistic and lived experiences of gender? The theoretical offerings of Chapter 1 inform my decisions about research design, methodology and methods employed and how to go about answering these queries, ensuring this study is enaged in "theoretically informed empiricism" (Anyon, 2008, p. 2). The exploration of the body and embodiment I foregrounded in chapter 1 provided important views on knowledge (epistemology) as a phenomenom constructed through social, cultural and historical influences which is then embodied by individuals and mediated by power relations (Kincheloe, McLaren, & Steinberg, 2013). The mediated outputs of this knowledge were then related to Butler's understanding of performatives that reinforce dangerous and binaristic notions of gender and identity. Because participants entered my study with their own embodied biographies (mediated performances of self) in tow, and because my study takes place within a creative process (the workshops), I employ a qualitative, arts-based research methodology. Specifically, this study relied on my observations of and reflections about the workshops, semi-structured inteviews with participants, and other forms of participant feedback to gather data and begin answering the research questions.

This section will overview the research design, including my rationale for using qualitative, arts-based methodologies, will summarize the study instruments, recruitment procedures, participants and settings, and will then offer a detailed explanation and rationale of the workshop procedures followed. Approach to analysis of the data as well as a discussion of ethical considerations, and study limitations, are also included here.

3.1   Research Design

The purpose of a methods chapter is to provide a justification for the methods employed in the execution of the study (Burke & Jimenez Soffa, 2018). The research questions, then, ought to inform how we go about answering the questions (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008). Methodology does not merely explain the decision to interview participants instead of conducting a survey. There are, in fact, substantial questions to answer about the philosophical space this study is located within and the kind of accountability and fidelity that this study, particularly its methodology, has to that location (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). Indeed, there are, and ought to be, implications in developing a research design, as the methods we choose "no less than knowledge, are dependant on context" (Patton, 2002, p. 13). For example, I cannot celebrate embodied performances as valid and purposeful sources of data and then rely solely on a verbal or textual account of this process. The philosophical space within this study is located and grounded in certain epistemological and ontological assumptions – assumptions that must be navigated and interrogated before *choosing* how one intends to answer one's research questions.

These assumptions shape the execution of methodology. The questions this study asks inherently demonstrate bias, a certain privileging of knowledge, truth and voice, likely to

the exclusion of others; the ways in which I attempt to find answers to my questions, the ways in which I analyse the answers, and the ways in which I choose to share those answers all matter and play an important role in shaping the philosophical and paradigmatic space this study is located within (Anyon, 2008; Bal & Chaberski, 2021; Creswell, 2007; Patton, M.Q. 2002).

Qualitative Research

Studies that employ qualitative research in the social sciences utilize a broad range of flexible and diverse data collection methods that "crosscuts disciplines, fields and subject matters" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 3). Patton (2002) explains that qualitative methods "facilitate study of issues in depth and detail [and that] approaching field work without being constrained by predetermined categories of analysis contributes to the depth, openness, and detail of qualitative inquiry" (p. 14). Access to diverse methods and spaces, and a commitment to fluidity, allowed this study to honor that each participant will need to tell their story in different ways and that therefore opening more than one line of communication to tell their story was important. This study was not about counting how many people 'liked' the workshops, but rather about understanding how they experienced the workshops and what impacts that experience might ultimately generate for them.

While qualitative studies can be employed to get at the messiness of embodied lived experiences, they are not messy, rigourless approaches (Patton, 2002). They simply 'count' different things from quantitative methods-based studies, often exposing that *Other* things also count. Differentiating qualitative from quantitative methods,

Rasmussen et al. (2006) explains that qualitative methods of research are non-numerical,

and therefore do not focus on quantities or counting of data. Instead,

> qualitative frameworks 'focus on the significance that derives from the data…
[and] are typically used for exploratory studies… [and importance is placed on] less
tangible precursors of behavior such as attitudes, feelings and motives. (Ibid (ibid, p.93)

I am interested in understanding how participants understand their embodied, gendered

self and how locating learning within the body impacts that understanding. To do this it

was important to have access to varied and flexible collection methods. Comprised of a

varied range of data collection methods, qualitative studies aim to "understand the

subject, not to measure it" (Rasmussen, Ostergaard, & Beckman, 2006, p. 93); to

accomplish this, qualitative studies often rely on observation, in-depth interviews, focus

groups, ethnography, case study or participative studies (Marczyk, DeMatteo, &

Festinger, 2005). These methods allow for an individualised, rather than generalized,

review of the data and "capture both the cognitive and emotional aspects from the

respondent" (Rasmussen, Ostergaard, & Beckman, 2006, p. 94). This approach allows the

researcher and the participants to take up space in various philosophical traditions,

explore new ideas and let the research unfold in an organic way. Denzin and Lincoln

(2008) suggest that this creates a Bricolage, a quilt, where the researcher is a bricoleur, or

quilt maker, and "uses the aesthetic and material of his or her craft, deploying whatever

strategies, methods and empirical materials are at hand… if the research needs to invent,

or piece together, new tools or techniques, he or she will do so" (p. 5). This process, they

claim, "creates and brings psychological and emotional unity – a pattern – to an

interpretive experience" (p. 7).

Given that this study explores embodiment, and that each body involved in this study will have their own experiences and performances, using a qualitative design allows for analysis of individual performances rather than performances in general: "objective reality can never be captured. We only know a thing through its representations" (Denzin & Lincoln, 2008, p. 7). Qualitative studies also provide meaningful access to methods and tools outside the typical research toolbox, and they validate other ways of doing research, including arts-based inquires (Patton, 1990).

3.1.1 Arts-based research

Arts-based research (ABR) practices are a set of methodological tools used by qualitative researchers across disciplines. While I employed ABR during the workshop portion of my data collection phase, ABR can be used during all phases of social research, including data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation (McNiff, 1998). These emerging tools adapt the tenets of the creative arts to address social research questions in holistic and engaged ways in which theory and practice are intertwined. ABR methods draw on literary writing, music, performance, dance, visual art, film, and other mediums. Representational forms include, but are not limited to, short narratives, novels, experimental writing forms, poems, collages, paintings, drawings, performance scripts, theater performances, dances, documentaries, and songs.

Eisner (2006) identifies two criteria to determine whether a methodology qualifies as arts-based: first, it "is meant to enhance perspectives pertaining to certain human activities… [and relies on]…aesthetic qualities or design elements that infuse the inquiry process and the research 'text'" (p. 95). ABR exists in this space between the arts and scientific inquiry and provides a "multimodal means of representation, [and] the data

collected provide rich insights into the complexities of identity and oppression" through a post-structural lens (Powers & Duffy, 2016).

Slattery (2001) writes of "exploring post-structural notions of the self in educational contexts through arts-based projects that foreground the excavation of the unconscious…provide[ing] an alternative form of representation for fresh new understandings" (p. 380, 381). This genre of methods, then, supports this study's exploration of embodied criticality, providing space and access for participants to tell and explore their stories in diverse ways and to expand their own awareness. In the process, participants are also expanding the qualitative paradigm. McNiff (1998) explains:

> [a]rt-based research can be defined as the systematic use of the artistic process, the actual making of artistic expressions in all of the different forms of the arts, as a primary way of understanding and examining experience by both researchers and the people that they involve in their studies. (p. 29)

Arts-based methods, then, provide an opportunity to disrupt, and even to challenge, traditional pedagogies and traditional qualitative research modalities, and are key in answering this study's goal of fostering creative and critical engagement around gender scripts, as well as opening spaces for resistance. In this sense, ABR allows researchers who are seeking to create work that is accessible to move "beyond the prohibitive jargon and limiting structures that characterize much traditional research practice" (Leavy, 2015, p. ix). Leavy goes on to suggest that, as a result, ABR is "not only more collaborative and egalitarian, but also actively beneficial to the research participant" (p.178). In speaking about the use of theatre in research, Marín (2007) states:

> This methodology effectively combines the artistic elements of theatre techniques with the rigor of qualitative research methods to provide a safe space in which participants involved can offer their responses in a creative form and feel more comfortable participating in educational research. The participants respond as if

they are participating in an interactive theatre workshop, not like they are being
examined under a microscope. (p. 82)

This study employed ABR through the analysis of the creative and aesthetic outputs of

the workshops – the images and performances that were created throughout the

workshops – and by asking participants to engage in an embodied, creative process, one

that relied on theatrical methods to explore personal and complex ideas of gender and

identity. As such, the workshops, collectively titled *Acting Out Gender*, were both an

arts-based method of data collection and a topic of inquiry, creating a bricoleur of art,

research, and teaching, or a/r/t/ography.

3.1.1.1 A/R/Tography

A/r/tographical work is a specific category of ABR practices within education

research. A/r/t is a metaphor for **a**rtist–**r**esearcher–**t**eacher, where these three roles are

integrated, creating a space where practitioners occupy "in-between" spaces as they

merge "knowing, doing, and making" (Pinar W. , 2004, p. 9). A/r/tography is one of

many new promising forms of inquiry that explore the arts as a way of *re-searching* the

world to enrich understanding and, beyond this, to celebrate and experiment with the

educative potential of teaching and learning as acts of inquiry (Irwin & Springgay, 2008).

To animate a/r/togtaphy "is to inquire into a phenomenon through an ongoing process of

artmaking and writing while acknowledging one's role as artist (a), researcher (r), teacher

(t)" (Irwin R. L., 2004, p. 1), viewing both the roles occupied and the phenomena

explored to be ever changing, in constant motion. In a practical summary:

> [a]/r/tography employs all forms of qualitative research data collection
> (interviews, observations, document collection, field diaries etc.), yet it also
> involves the processes of artistic engagement (creating art forms in response to
> collaboration, or as evocation or provocation). Using data from a range of vantage

points, knowledge is created in a never-ending state of becoming. Thus, a/r/tographers are committed to their living inquiry in and through time, regardless of current research questions (ibid).

Referring to a/r/tographical research as a localized and evolving methodology, Sinner and

colleagues (2006) posit this methodology as a "hybrid, practice-based form of

methodology" (p. 124) that is necessarily about both the self and the social. They write:

> a/r/tographical work is rendered through the methodological concepts of contiguity, living inquiry, openings, metaphor/metonymy, reverberations, and excess which are enacted and presented/performed when a relational aesthetic inquiry condition is envisioned as embodied understandings and exchanges between art and text, and between and among the broadly conceived identities of artist/researcher/teacher (p. 124).

Irwin and Springgay (2008) locate a/r/tography in Deleuze and Guattari's ideas of the

rhizomatic – "an interstitial space, open and vulnerable where meanings and

understandings are interrogated and ruptured" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 106). Grosz

(2001) explains that this type of liminal and temporal space, and the resulting movement

from one space to another, enables criticality and reflexivity (expropriation of the self and

giving an account of oneself). From this, a/r/tography, like the rhizome, enacts a

conversion of abstract theory, as detached and distinct from practice, into a critical

exchange that is "reflective, responsive, and relational, which is continuously in a state of

reconstruction and becoming something else" (Irwin & Springgay, 2008, p. 8). As such,

a/r/tography becomes an embodied, living space of inquiry (Meskimmon, 2003). Through

its vacillation between theory and practice, a/r/tography "constructs research and

knowledge as acts of *complication*" (Springgay, Irwin, & Kind, 2008, p. 4) and

"prompt[s] disruption of dueling binaries, conceptions of identity and the rush to

certainty" (Irwin R. , 2013). This creation of a disorienting space for participants can, and

ought to be, productive (Meizrow & Talor, 2009). I cannot think of a more appropriate

methodology in the study of the performance and deconstruction of gender within an arts-based and educational context.

My excitement for a/r/tography and its appropriateness for this study is in part due to its important epistemological and ontological alignment with the nature of this study. Beyond this, a/r/tographic research, by design, is committed to the dismantling of dualisms, is collectivizing and reflexive, and celebrates feminist, embodied epistemologies. Pinar (2004) writes that arts-based research paradigms serve to "reconceptualize curriculum as more compatible to life and the constitution of knowledge in a postmodern society with a messy plurality of inaugurations and transactions of meaning" (p. 188). Since a/r/tographers exist at intersections of identities and roles, taking up liminal, hybrid and interstitial spaces, and relying on the folding and unfolding of many voices and narratives as an outcome of their research (Irwin R. , 2013) a/r/tography inherently provides theoretical and practical opportunities to challenge binaries and the environments that construct them. Just as the interruption of the mind-body split is central to performance-based pedagogy and embodiment, a/r/tographers are also committed to resisting the separation of theory, practice and art. Instead, as in the geographical conceptions of embodiment discussed in chapter 1, they seek to find space for synergizing ways of knowing in complimentary or even contradictory ways. They do this through the rhizomatic dismantling and exploration of dualisms on which positivism hinges: subject–object, rational–emotional, and concrete–abstract; a/r/tography thus resists the separation of body and mind, gender and sex, and other oppressive, hegemonic narratives. This inherent commitment to the re-examination of power is integral to the "knowledge-building process in order to avoid creating knowledge that continue[s] to be

complicit in the oppression of minority groups" (Leavy, 2015, p. 9). The very nature of a/r/tography as methodology, then, is not only ideal when discussing gender performances but through its commitment to challenging bianries it provides space for students to think critically, explore diverse voices and perspectives, and can assist in enacting anti-oppressive pedagogies and rituals.

A/r/tography is seen as a collectivizing approach to inquiry, a pedagogical tool, supporter of creative play and a participatory process that brings people together to reflect, analyze, and perhaps even act together (Irwin R. , 2013). Consequently, participants and practitioners alike are in constant engagement with an integrative strategy where opportunities for learning are present for both students and teachers. By conducting an a/r/tographical study, researchers are in a constant state of reflexivity and are encouraged to inject the results of this reflexive practice into their studies and teaching – a/r/tography necessarily forces them to "rethink what they [are] doing in their teaching practices and in their artistic practices [and] as a result, they were more able to provide the conditions for generative experiences for their students" (Irwin R., 2013, p. 202). In this sense, the notion of *currere* (curriculum as a verb, not a noun) is foundational to a/r/tography, where research practices are viewed as "active, contextually situated, and creative while recognizing that subjectivity transforms objectivity" (Kridel, 2010, p. 42). This methodology then inherently honours and supports the diversity of experiences, knowledges and values the study's particpants while providing space to talk across difference and participate in collective meaning making.

A/r/tography and its tenents are an ideal framework for this study as it allows me as the reseacher, as the bricleur, to create performative approaches (**artist**) to interogating topics

of gender and identity, to power and oppression. I then use these performative approaches to better understand (**researcher**) participants' construction and performances of their gendered self and the impact of the workshops, in order then to create dialogue and conversation to facilitate collective meaning creation, opening space for sharing and learning (**teacher**).

In spite of the productive alignment between this study's research questions, theroetical underpinnings and methodological spaces, the historical privileging of quantitative and positivist research continues to create barriers for qualitative researchers (Knowles & Cole, 2008). Consequently, contemplating issues of validity and trustworthiness of newer, arts-based research practices is central to its critique (Leavy, 2015) and is something that I remained mindful of throughout the study. This historical privileging has implications for researchers' funding and publishing opportunities, job prospects and security, and it can distract researchers as it requires them to constantly defend the "rigor and quality not only of their own research but also of an entire methodological approach" (Knowles & Cole, 2008, p. 449). I often have a vision of presenting my research in the form of a performance or other creative discipline, and while the performance is received as both creative, though-provoking and impactful, I await the question and answer portion with great anxiety. I envision an audience member raising their hand and saying "I liked the performance, but is it research?" In other words, I imagine them saying "so what?" Chenail (2008) recalls similar experiences and fears when, in the 80s, his quantitative-oriented colleagues would question "the legitimacy of [his] epistemologies, theoretical foundations, methodologies, procedures" (Chenail, 2008, p. 7). In a confrontation of methodological fundamentalism, Denzin & Giardina (2006) suggest this

critique is a result of the "conservative challenge" where performative, critical and transformative qualitative researchers represent disruptions to traditional research practices and "unsettl[e] many assumptions about what constitutes research and knowledge (Leavy, 2015, p. 11).

However, a/r/tography, while committed to blending the roles of artist/researcher/teacher as a subversive and reflexive act, can be problematic in conducting research and result in ambiguity regarding both the relationship between researcher and participant and when the roles of artist, researcher or teacher are overlapping and not clearly defined. A/r/tographers, by nature and by design, are located at intersections of identities and roles so as to uncover and unfold various views and voices within a research project. This often messy web of subjectivities can be viewed as confusing and create an unclear sense of who is doing what, and why. Without a clear sense of roles and responsibilities within a research project, the boundaries between researcher and participants are often blurred, rendering the project vulnerable to increased criticism. I address this limitation by being reflexive and transparent with participants about my objectives, positionality and biases. Futhermore, as a social justice educator and researcher, committed to honouring other ways of knowing and being, I do not claim to be neutral; rather, I am clear about this study's epistemology and ontology and keep in mind this study's tensions between its post-structural performative understanding of gender and its phenomenological grounds for understanding the materiality of embodiment.

These critical conversations can, and indeed should, act as an invitation to positivist and quantitative researchers to explore arts-based methodological modes on their own, to discover that the "arts provide a multimodal means of representation, [where] the data

collected provide rich insights into the complexities of identity and oppression" (Powers & Duffy, 2016, p. 67). Perhaps through the exploration of these methodological divides, and the employment of arts-based research methods, it will be revealed that researchers conducting narrative, poetic, musical, performative, dance, and visual forms of inquiry employ rigorous methods of data collection, analysis, interpretation, and representation too (Chenail, 2008). With these limitations and critiques in mind, it is important to note that arts-based inquiries do indeed deploy more widley recognized qualitiative methods and this study included obvservation and semi-structured interviews alongside more a/r/tographic components.

3.2   Instrumentation

A/r/tography's commitment to fluidity, collectivization and participation is reminiscent (at the very least) of the processes and philosophies imbedded in *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO), the central instrument used in this study as an **a**rt form, a **r**esearch tool and an embodied approach to **t**eaching: "[b]eginning as an action research approach, a/r/tography pursues ongoing engagements through living inquiry that is continuously asking questions, enacting interventions, revising questions, and analyzing collected data, in repeated cycles" (Kridel, 2010, p. 42). This study relied on the observation of the workshops, including the activity debriefs, interviews with participants, and other participant feedback to better understand participants' experience of gender while interogating the use of TO to accomplish this.

3.2.1   Observation

This study employed observation to better understand the impact and viability of the workshops for addressing issues of gender, embodiment, and subjectivity. Observation

techniques, commonly used by anthropologists, are used to "describe the setting that was observed, the activities that took place in that setting, the people who participated in those activities and the meanings of what was observed from the perspectives of those observed" (Patton, 2002, p. 262).

According to Vogt, et al. (2012, p. 69), observation is an effective design choice when your research question leads you to:

1. Study social, cultural, psychological, or political processes as they unfold
2. Identify, develop, or refine sensitizing concepts or variables
3. Cultivate a rich or thick description within a particular context
4. Uncover or explore causal mechanisms or recognize interactive links between and among variables

Observation offers the researcher opportunities to gather "live" data and what is taking place *in situ* where "the use of immediate awareness, or direct cognition, as a principle mode of research… has the potenital to yield more valid or authentic data" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 456). A highly flexible form of of data collection, observation allowed me as a researcher to take a "fresh look at everyday behaviour that otherwise might be take for granted, expected or go unnoticed" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 456). The taken-for-granted aspects of our gendered performances are central to this study, and so using observational techniques opened ways to better view these unnoticed performances in context and theorize participants' enactment and understanding of gendered embodiment.

Despite its label, observation is more that just watching; it is a systematic approach to watching that requires training, practice and skill. Patton (2002) explains that training to become a skilled observer includes:

- learning to pay attention, see what there is to see and hear what there is to hear;
- practice writing descriptively;

- aquiring discipline in recording field notes;
- knowing how to separate detail from trivia to achieve the former without being overwhelmed with the latter;
- using rigourous methods to validate and triangulate observations; and
- reporting the strengths and limitations of one own's perspective, which requires both self-knowledge and self-disclosure.

In this way, observation, as employed in this study, was an activity that connected my theoretical assumptions, my own lived experiences and embodiment to what I was observing, allowing me to make sense of what was taking place as it was happening. Patton (2002) describes observation as an opportunity to absorb "language, understand nuances of meaning, appreciate variations in participants' experiences" (page, 262) and experience the subtle moments. In this way, observation inherently honours embodiment and the materiality of our lives. Observation techniques also allowed other sources of data to be in conversation with what I was seeing or not seeing and to note any gaps – this was accomplished throught the videorecording of the workshops, affording me opportunities to rewatch and "re-observe" the data multiple times.

All Acting Out Gender workshops were video recorded and photographed and a journal of my observations (appendix E) and reflections of the process, emerging dialogue, my own participation, and any highlights from the day were kept. The video taping and photographing of these sessions, as observational, were crucial as the actions and behaviours of both spectators and actors are central aspects of an inquiry into TO. The natural and obvious technique is, then, to watch what they do, record, describe, analyze and interpret observations (Robson, 2002). Including video as a tool in the study also allowed me to explore discrepancies between what respondents say and what they do, creating a crucial archive of "slippage" for me to analyze. Educational researchers rely

on a host of visual media to support their work, adding new perspectives and dynamic

interpretations. Cohen et al (2011) suggest that

> Visual media are not neutral; they give messages, deliberately or not, and we interpret them in many different ways. They have their own forms and effects (e.g. compositions and technical properties) and these have an effect on the viewer. They are constructions of social events and perspectives, of power and power relations, of social relations and social difference. More than that, we look at them in different ways i.e. we bring our own values, biographies, cultures and background to bear on images. (p. 528)

Furthermore, images and other visual media, and their meanings or interpretations, can

change over time, space and context; this was an important consideration for this study.

Given this study sought to highlight and celebrate difference as a source of collective

meaning making, including video and photographs were essential in honouring the lived

and material experiences of participants.

Whilst observational approaches are not immune to discrepancies, the desire of a

respondent to present oneself favorably to the researcher is decreased, and the reliability

of collected data is increased. (Vogt, Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012). Observations made

upon reviewing workshop material in detail can then be put into dialogue during a focus

group or interview.

Activity Debriefs: mini focus groups

Every exercise and session in Acting Out Gender were carefully debriefed to support the

pedagogical nature of this study, to better understand participants' experiences as they

were happening, and to check in with how participants were feeling about things. The

activity debriefs were not structured in a formal focus group sense (Cohen, Manion, &

Morrison, 2011), but viewing the debriefs as mini focus groups did allow me to collect,

analyze and apply the data collected during a debrief in specific ways.

Facilitating debriefs are not only important to the process of TO (Boal, 2002), but are important opportunities to gather data on a specific or 'focused' idea (the activity). Because each activity was included and executed in specific ways, the debrief has the power to explore perceptions as the participants are developing them in detail and in tandem with their peers – Patton (2002) notes that focus groups are collectivistic rather than individualistic research methods, emerging as an "empowering and collectivizing approach to feminist research" (p.389). Citing Kreuger (1994), Patton (2002) also notes that focus groups support a discussion that is "comfortable and often enjoyable for participants as they share their ideas and perceptions" (p. 386). Patton (2002) suggests that focus group "interactions between participants enhance data quality. Participants tend to provide checks and balances on each other which weeds out false or extreme views" (p. 386). Furthermore, Patton notes that through these interactions, focus groups can uncover "the extent to which there is relatively consistent, shared view or great diversity of views" (ibid).

Focus groups have limitations and therefore my approaching the debriefs as focus groups inevitably has some drawbacks. For example, theory must be centred in a debrief or focus group and focus groups require group process skills (Anyon, 2008) – a deep understanding and knowledge of a study's theoretical underpinnings is essential to a productive and safe debrief. This may limit or create barriers for others than myself to facilitate Acting Out Gender. Limitations are also concerned with participation – for example, those who realize their viewpoint is a minority perspective may not be inclined to speak up and risk negative reactions (Patton, 2002). This can be mitigated, in part, by ensuring other methods are employed where participants can feel safe(r) to share their

viewpoints. This study consequently included interviews to allow participants another space in which to discuss their thoughts and experiences.

3.2.2 Interviews

Following the workshops, I invited participants to self-identify if they would like to complete a one-on-one interview with me. These interviews were semi-structured and were 45 - 90 minutes each (see Appendix F). Commonly used in social science research, interviews can tell a researcher what their participant knows, what they do, and what they think or feel (Robson, 2002). Patton (2002) explains that

> we interview people to find out from them those things we cannot directly observe. The issue is not whether observational data are more desirable, valid, or meaningful than self-report data. The fact that we cannot observe feelings, thoughts, and intentions… we cannot observe how people have organized the world and meanings they attach to what goes on in the world. (p. 341)

According to Vogt, et al. (2012, p. 47) the circumstances in which interviews are most appropriate are:

1. When you seek subjective knowledge that is most effectively obtained from the interview subjects
2. When question call for in-depth answers not easily answered in survey format
3. When in-depth information is more important that the ability to generalize to a larger population
4. When informants need time to think about and elaborate their answers.

Robson (2002, p.271) provides additional and meaningful guidelines when assessing interviews as an appropriate method:

1. Where individual perceptions of processes within a social unit are to be studied prospectively
2. Where individual historical accounts of how a phenomena developed are needed
3. Where exploratory work is required before a quantitative study can be carried out
4. Where quantitative data requires validation or clarification of meaning

Irrespective of the circumstances or guidelines, interviews are a transaction, an approach to information exchange, and they take place "between seeking information on the part of one and supplying information on the part of the other" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 411). The purpose of interviewing then is to access the other person's perspective, and it begins with the assumption that "the perspective of others is meaningful, knowable and able to [be made] explicit" (Patton, 2002).

This study was committed to honouring the lived and material experience of participants and so including interviews as a method for data collection was crucial. Additionally, this study was also evaluative in nature (assessing the viability of TO and performance-based pedagogies in gender and identity exploration) and so it was very important to access feedback from students and teachers regarding the workshops' limitations and successes: "the raw data of interviews are the actual quotations spoken by interviewees. Nothing can substitute for these data: the actual things said by real people" (Patton, 2002, p. 380).

This study used semi-structured interviews with 5 participants both to evaluate the workshops and to better understand how participants' experience of the workshop illuminated and interrogated issues of gender. Semi-structured interviews are informal and malleable in that they allow the interviewer to "modify the sequence of questions, change the wording, explain them or add to them" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 411). This was an important consideration for this study. As much as I was hoping to better understand the participants' experiences of the workshop, I also wanted the interview to feel organic and conversational – if a participant wanted to go in a different direction, I needed an approach to interviewing that allowed for that. When participants deviate from questions or when they stay focused on a particular question, that is also

valuable data that I wanted to include. Finally, semi-structured interviews allow

participants to feel safe in the interview.

Despite the access to deep, rich data that interviews can provide, interviews are not a

perfect method and, like observational approaches, come with some limitations

(Rasmussen, Ostergaard, & Beckman, 2006). Vogt et al. (2012) suggest the central

problems of including interviews in a research design are trust and interpretation of

meaning. Throughout the study, researchers may be required to evaluate whether the

interviewee understands the question, and to decide whether the question's meaning is

consistent with their ideas and that of the respondent. "The relationship of meaning and

language, of words and the world, is problematic… interviews usually involve longer

questions [than surveys] and answers containing many more words that can be

misunderstood" (p.35). This was, in part, mitigated in my study by my use of

observation of the video-taped workshops; having both interview data and observational

data allowed me to note any descrepancies and theorize the source of those

descrepancies.

Trust is also a chief concern with educational studies that include interviews (Vogt,

Gardner, & Haeffele, 2012). Trust is a pillar in TO theory and practice (Babbage, 2004);

interviewees will need to feel safe in expressing themselves in both interview and activity

contexts. More to this point, George & Bennett (2005) note that confidentiality rests at

the centre of a succesful interview – respondents need to be assured that their information

will be kept in confidence and not be shared outside of the study. The issue of trust and

confidentiality was mitigated by me with a thorough consent form, approved by

Western's non-medical research ethics board (NMREB), that outlines the roles and

responsibilities of the researcher and limitiations of dissemination and data storage (see appendix G).

3.3   Recruitment and Participants

Recognizing that no generalized or universal truths are expected to emerge from the data and that no one would experience the study in the same way or leave with the same ideas, it was important to find more than two groups to participate and that those groups were in some ways "different" from one another. As such, participants for this study were recruited by emailing (appendix A) faculty members at one university who either instruct theatre or performance studies or who teach within the teacher education program, inviting them to participate by inviting me to their classroom or program to conduct a workshop entitled *Acting Out Gender*. From there, favourable responses were then used to invite their students to participate (appendix B).

Consequently, I recruited 4 groups of students and their instructors to participate in a three-hour workshop, and although I did not conduct a comparative study between the groups, interesting themes emerged and required some "light" comparisons and hypothesizing.

Table 1 AOG Troupes

Troupe 1	Troupe 2	Troupe 3	Troupe 4
Undergraduate	Teacher Candidates	Teacher Candidates	Undergraduate

Theatre Studies course	No curricula focus – Professional development opportunity	Drama course	English class
Mixed gender	Mixed gender	Mixed gender	Mixed gender
During classroom time	Outside classroom time	During classroom time	During classroom time

3.4   Study Procedure and Rationale– The Acting Out Gender Workshops

The *Acting Out Gender* workshops, led by myself, introduced participants to TO and

PBPs and began by exploring the definitions and ideas of gender that the participants

already hold. Then, using a structured series of games and exercises, participants

explored gender from a variety of perspectives – personal, communal, societal, political

and cultural. The techniques and activities I used were pulled from Boal's (2002) arsenal

and some were further developed by me to explore the construction, embodiment,

reproduction and performance gender specifically and safely.

Acting Out Gender: a basic format

As noted in my introduction, this thesis is organized by three key themes: The/your body,

embodiment and performance studies and performance-based-pedagogies. This

sequencing of theory was intentionally layered onto the development of the workshop,

which will be described below, and the three key themes will be used to help demonstrate

the outcomes of the study in the next chapter. Workshop activities were culled from

Boal's book, *Games for the Actor and Non-Actors* (Boal, 2002) as well as from other

sources while some were developed by me for the purposes of this study. Every exercise

and session were carefully debriefed to support the pedagogical nature of this study.

3.4.1.1   Warmups

The Acting Out Gender workshops began with warm-up activities to get our bodies,

voices and minds grounded in the work and the context of the study, and to assist

participants in better getting to know me, the method, and each other. The most effective

warm-ups have a connection to the main activity and scaffold (build) the participants'

skills and awareness. As Rohd (2013) notes, warm-ups "simply aim to get people out of

their seats and interacting in a different way and to prepare them to participate as the

work gets deeper, more focused, and more 'theatrical'" (p. 4). An additional purpose of

warm-ups is to build group cohesion. Boal (2002) established his theatre forms to begin

with warm-up exercises and games for both individual development and group/ensemble

development.

"In the body's battle with the world, the senses suffer" (Boal), and this battle, or the

body's interactions with the world, creates experiences that disconnect us from our

bodies, from the knowledge and power they have and the meaning of our gestures, both

destructive and protective. Educator Roxana Ng (2004) shares that she became "acutely

aware of the inadequacy of feminism and anti-racism, in fact any kind of progressive

ideology and politic, that takes up issues only intellectually without attention to emotion,

body and spirit" (p. 2), leading her to examine new ways to incorporate embodied experiences into her pedagogical practice.

> My major interest is to disrupt the body/mind binary and to explore what a pedagogy of integrating body-spirit in critical education may look like and what it may be capable of in interrogating and challenging dominant forms of knowledge, including critical knowledges. I want to encourage self and collective reflections, not only through discourse, but more crucially through an exploration of how experience, in this case, bodily experience, participates in enabling, limiting, and mediating the production of knowledge—what I call the inside-out approach (Ng, 1988).

Ng, like Smith (1949), argues that once oppressive and hegemonic ideas become common sense, that is once an ideology becomes normalized and embedded in language, these ideas become condensed in our emotional and physical beings— "in how we relate to women and minority groups for example, and in how we see and relate to ourselves. In short, they become patterns of behaviour." (p. 41-42).

To reconnect to our bodies, then, was an integral first step in each workshop. The first set of activities were really meant to increase bodily awareness in a safe way and ultimately to help participants to respond to the first question this study sought to answer – is a TO-based PBP a viable tool for interrogating questions of how participants understand themselves as gendered, embodied subjects? What then, are the necessary tools for understanding and exploring ourselves as embodied subjects? In Chapter 1's theoretical explorations of the body we uncovered the body as a site of learning and inscription, and so to truly and fully engage in the learning our bodies have to offer we must (re)connect to that body.

This is an important consideration, as it is not only encouraging this reconnection to the body but also underscoring the celebration and validation of the body as a source of

knowledge and learning. If we cannot first honour our bodies as a site of learning and knowledge creation, and "consider the presence of bodies within pedagogical spaces as an essential element of practice and analysis" (Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015, pp. 245-246), the remainder of the workshop will miss an integral opportunity, and the activities that follow will not 'land' in the way that they did.

3.4.1.1.1 Body Scans and Self Portraits

To understand how participants connected to embodiment, it was necessary to intentionally create an opportunity for participants to (re)connect directly with their bodies in a meta-reflective way. At the beginning of each workshop, I began with the following activity (Boal, 2002):

> All the participants lie on the floor and think about their body as a totality, and also about each of its constituent parts: fingers, head, mouth, tongue, legs, sex, eyes, hair, belly button, neck, elbows, shoulders, vertebrae, etc. They try to move the part of the body they are thinking about, whenever possible. After a few minutes of concentration, the Joker gives each person a sheet of paper (the sheets of paper must all be the same size) and a pencil or felt pen (all of the same colour if possible, or else don't let the participants see what colour it is). The Joker asks each actor to draw their own body on the paper, with eyes firmly closed. Once this is done, the Joker asks the participants to write their names on the back of their drawings, still with their eyes closed. She then collects up the drawings, arranges them on the floor in any order, and tells everyone to open their eyes and come and look at this impromptu exhibition. She asks them what strikes them most about the drawings – are the bodies naked or clothed, lying down or standing up, resting or working, in a relationship with objects or on their own, do they contain important details, such as the eyes or the sex organs or only general outlines? Finally, the Joker invites them to try to identify their own drawing. This exercise can greatly sensitise the group: first, when everyone is thinking about their own body, about each individual part of their body; then, when everyone is trying to reproduce by hand what they felt; lastly, after the exercise, when they pay much greater attention to themselves, to their movements, their way of sitting, their way of approaching other people, etc.

This exercise made the participants extremely conscious that each of us are, first and foremost, a body, and asking participants to complete a self-portrait necessarily asks them to honour the different parts of themselves. The portraits began to emerge in some distinct themes (Stick figures, Outside of body, Distortion, Personalized, and Blank) and are described in more detail in the next chapter.

3.4.1.1.2 Pass the Face

Becoming acutely aware of our performance is integral to the analysis this workshop seeks to catalyze in participants and an important. To do this, one at a time in a circle, participants are asked to create a silly face to "pass" to the person standing to the left of them. That person recreates the face, showing the group and then begins to pass their own silly face to the person to the left of them. This continues until all have had a chance to pass a face. Following this, we go around the circle again but this time we add a movement to the face, incorporating more of the body. This passing of the body goes around the circle once again until all have had a chance to "pass". Finally, the group is asked to add one more component to their face and body, incorporating sound. This process is repeated until everyone has passed a face, body and voice.

Beyond warming up our bodies and voices, this activity reminds participants that we are indeed performing most of the time and highlights the impact on our performances have under the gaze of others.

3.4.1.1.3 Colombian Hypnosis

Colombian Hypnosis is designed to continue the warming of the body, to increase bodily awareness and to extend our exploration of embodiment. Initially played in pairs, one participant holds their open hand, fingers facing up, about 4 inches from their partners'

face. Then, moving their hand slowly, the partner tries to keep their face in alignment with their partner's hand. Participants are encouraged to move freely about the room and lead their partners through the space. After a few minutes, partners switch sides and the follower becomes the leader. Following this, and if the activity allowed for it, I would join pairs to other pairs to create a long chain of followers.

This activity seeks to provide opportunities to extend our feelings and connection to our bodies and to explore how our interactions, protective and destructive, feel – their embodiment. This activity is instructive in "heightening students' awareness of their own potential for power and their responsibility for that power" (Glieser, 2017). This activity requires trust, awareness, non-verbal communication and is highly revealing.

Following this activity, a group debrief explored questions of how it felt to each participant, their preferences in being the leader or the follower, what this had to do with power, how being further away from sources of power felt and how this connected to our larger inquiry into gender and gender performances. These debriefs will be shared in the following chapter.

These warmups were followed by an introduction to Image Theatre and the use of Image Theatre tools to explore the embodiment of gender, its construction, or the implications of this construction.

3.4.1.1.4 Finding Rhythm

The last warm-up activity, Finding Rhythm, was an opportunity for both myself and the participants to explore conformity and the consequences of subversion. In Finding Rhythm, participants are asked to create a rhythm with their bodies, a small "move" that can be repeated over and over again – music can be played to assist participants in

moving. After each participant found their own rhythm, I would shout out the word

"unify" and instruct the participants to merge into the same rhythm – but they were not

allowed to talk or communicate. Once the group unified, I would shout "disperse" and

each participant would then need to find a new rhythm of their own. I repeated this

process a few times.

3.4.1.1.5   Image Theatre – Complete the Image

Following the warm-ups, participants were given a break to rest and reflect. Once

everyone came back, I began a series of exercises that introduced participants to image

theatre. As mentioned above, Image Theatre allows participants to explore their mind and

body's response to an oppression or idea. Through Image Theatre, participants can create

individual and group tableaus that explore a variety of gender-related topics including

power, performance and the body.

The first exercise, Complete the Image, was used to demonstrate how

> images are surfaces: as any object reflects the light that strikes it, so all images reflect the
> memories, imaginations, emotions of each observer who looks at them. This means that
> all images are polysemic – they can have many meanings and we should never reduce
> those meanings to the correct one, or to the one the sculptor has intended – we can only
> learn by the multiplicity of feelings, opinions, evocations of participants. (Boal, 2002, p.
> 139)

To complete the image, two participants are asked to shake hands and freeze that image.

Then I ask the other participants, who are watching, what possible meanings this image

might carry: are they in a business meeting, are they friends, is this a drug deal, do they

like each other, hate each other, etc? As a group, we then explore the various meanings

that this one image could hold. Once we have explored these meanings, one of the

participants is asked to remove themselves from the image, revealing the other with their

hand extended. Then, collectively, we explore what this new image might mean. Finally,

the process of completing the image begins as participants who were watching now have the opportunity to insert themselves into the image of the extended hand and create a new image; the audience then explores that image's meeting. The first participant will then remove themselves and a new participant will enter the image, putting themselves in a different position, with a different relationship to the partner, changing the meaning of the image. After some time, I invite more than one participant to enter the image. At this stage, it does not matter if there is literal meaning to the images or to the way participants choose to complete the images; the point is rather to keep the ideas moving and to continue our exploration of collective meaning-making while having conversation across difference.

3.4.1.1.6   When I Say…

Following the debrief of Complete the Image, I invite the participants to stand in a circle to begin creating more intentional images. Where the previous activity was meant to explore "seeing what we look at," this next activity is meant to "see what is inside" while still exploring collective meaning-making.

Participants are instructed to stand in a circle with their backs to the centre and sculpt an image with their bodies to a series of prompts. For example, I might say the word 'Education' and on the count of three, participants are to turn their bodies to the centre of the circle and reveal their image – their embodied response – to that prompt. Once again, we collectively explore the various images and the various meanings they may carry (participants are not permitted to explain what they are trying to convey). While some may have literal responses, others may have abstract or emotive responses, thus creating important dialogue into how we all experience these prompts differently. I then continue

with other prompts such as mother, poverty, entertainment, etc. Once participants have got the hang of sculpting themselves into images and are comfortable with collectively exploring the potential meanings of these images I add a layer to the images – a *dynamization*. This can be done in a few ways. I can instruct the participant to add sound to their image to demonstrate what a "speech bubble" might say if it was floating above the head of the image. Alternatively, I can ask the participant to add movement to their image to see how it may move. I can also ask the audience to consider what a hypothetical "thought bubble" might say should it be hovering overhead of a participant's image. These dynamizations are important in thinking about the differences between what we think and what we do, and in adding dimensions to our collective meaning-making processes. Furthermore, these dynamizations are important pieces of the final activity, the Gender Box.

3.4.1.1.7 Gender Box

This next and final activity of the workshop, the Gender Box, is an adapted exercise that brings a lecture-style activity into a performance space and uses the previous warm-ups and activities as foundations. The Gender Box activity has a few steps:

1) Divided into groups, participants are asked to respond individually to a prompt by creating an image with their bodies. Without seeing what the others are doing, half the groups are asked to respond to "Man Up" (or rather, to what are we asking boys and men to do when we say "man up") and the other half are asked to respond to "Act like a lady" (or, what are we asking girls and women to do when we say "act like a lady"). The group members then show their images to each other one at a time.

2) Following this showing, the group members present the same images as before, but this time all together as a group and not in succession. "Presenting all these individual visions together gives us a multiple vision of the subject, in other words an overview, an 'objective' vision." Initially, "the individual presentation of images gave us a 'psychological' representation, now we are given a 'social' vision; that is, we are shown how this particular theme influences or affects this particular community" (Boal, 2002, p. 177).

3) Next, at my signal, the participants try to interrelate their images and those of their group members. It is now no longer enough simply to present your vision; you must try to connect that vision with others' perspectives. Participants may move in any way they like, as long as their pose relates in some way to other people's poses and to the objects others have placed or imagined. "If each image was previously valid in itself, now the important thing is the interrelation of all the images gathered together, the macrocosm. Now what we see is not merely the social vision, but an organised, organic, social vision. The image no longer shows multiple points of view, but rather a single, global, all-embracing vision" (p. (Boal, 2002, p. 178)).

4) Next, at my signal, the groups are instructed to explore the 'origins' of their images. That is, to explore where that image comes from, how it came to be. Often, we focus only on the effects and not the cause: the result of gendered performatives, but not their origins. Morphing into the causes of their images is highly revealing for participants and often depicted in very different ways for each participant.

5) Lastly, the groups are instructed to create a machine with their origin images. That is, they, once again, must interrelate their images to understand how gender scripts are not written in one place or by one source, but are rather a collection of forces working together – cultural, personal, historical, biological – to create rigid and narrow definitions of femininity and masculinity. Furthermore, creating a machine not only demonstrates the various parts working together, but that to create the "illusion of normalized social scripts and acts"   (Butler, 2004), like a machine, these parts replicate their function over and over again, materializing this illusion of normative gender though repetition. Creating this machine requires participants to add sound either in the form of a "thought bubble" or "speech bubble" and to add movement that can be repeated. Viewing the machine in action is undeniably powerful and always creates important and valuable debriefs. The emerging dialogue from this final activity will be shared and explored further in the next chapter.

3.4.1.2   *Checking Out*

Due to the sensitive nature of this workshop and the potential harms participating in it could create (see below), I end each workshop with an attempt to extend our collective learning into a shared, collective energy and a check-out. To do this, I ask participants to form a large circle and if they are consenting, to hold hands. Then one by one we squeeze our hands circle and pass our collective energy, support and knowledge around the circle. Once the energy has been passed to everyone, I ask that each participant say one or two words about where they are at. This ensures I have a grasp not only on how the session

went, but if anyone may need extra support following the session. I share the results of these check-outs in the next chapter.

3.4.1.3   One Minute reflections

Once the workshop has been completed, and the debrief has come to a productive end, participants are asked to write for one minute about their experiences, their reflections, any learning or moments of reflexivity, anything that comes to mind. This not only gives me an opportunity to have more feedback on their experiences, but provides another space, a personal space for participants to share.

3.5   Analysing the Data

Qualitative data analysis involves "organizing, accounting for and explaining the data; in short, making sense of the situation, noting patters, themes, categories and regularities" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011, p. 537). How a researcher chooses to explain and make sense of their data is important and must align appropriately with the study's theoretical stance: "theory helps us understand, expand our understanding of, and critically judge what counts as relevant knowledge, appropriate units of analysis, research questions, methods, data and analysis and explanation" (Anyon, 2008, p. 8). Using theory as a research tool and a tool for analysis can "produce greater generalizability and increased explanatory range and often the critical empowerment of research participants" (ibid, p. 18). Keeping theory at the forefront of analysis was key to this study, as there were a variety of methods of data collection in play and several differences across the workshop groups. As such, this study relied on content analysis for understanding the data.

Content analysis is the "process of identifying, coding, and categorizing the primary patterns in the data" (Patton, 1990). To do this, the interviews and videotaped workshops were transcribed and an initial read through of the transcriptions was conducted to provide an "opportunity to get immersed in the data, an experience that usually generates emergent insights" (Patton 2005, p. 441). Abiding by what Cohen et al (2011) describe as the *fitness for purpose* principle or deciding on what I want the data to do, I decided to focus on discovering patterns and the generation of themes as it relates to my theoretical offerings. Doing this allows for a "systematic series of analyses, including coding and categorization, until theory emerges" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011). This process was comprised of two main steps and was done using a 'cross-case' analysis, focusing not on individual participants or groups, but rather on observations tracked across different groups about the same activities (Patton, 1990). First, I began with a descriptive analysis of the workshop data, then, focusing on interpretation, or "explaining the findings, answering 'why' questions, attaching significance to particular results, and putting patterns into an analytic framework" (Patton, 1990, p. 438), I conducted an inductive analysis (discovering patterns, themes in the data), using open-coding of the observations and interview transcripts, followed by axial coding to recombine the open-coding. "A code is simply a name of label that the researcher gives to a piece of text that contains an idea or piece of information" (Cohen, Manion, & Morrison, 2011) and can be performed on many kinds of data.

Lastly, a deductive approach was used for exploring and developing any theoretical proposals and empirical insights.

3.6   Ethical Considerations

This study by nature is personal and therefore can elicit personal responses, experiences

and narratives and while Boal's methods are widely used and popular, his critiques point

out that TO methods may not go far enough: "Students may be left with a feeling of

airing their dirty laundry in public without any immediate means of follow-up" (Glieser,

2017, p. 351). I was mindful of this and have included activities into each workshop that

make space and time to get to know each other and the workshop method and to build

trust. Each step is carefully debriefed, content warnings are offered, and check outs were

completed following each workshop.

Moreover, performances themselves are powerful due to their embodied nature but the

very nature of performing means there is always the potential for "slippage between what

the body knows, what it can say, and what the audience will interpret." (ibid). This

implication can go on to reify the very phenomenon I am seeking to interrogate: "these

techniques [don't] necessarily translate to social action or macro practice change…

Students may wonder what to do with the new emotions and cognitions that come up in

relation to others' experiences of oppression without the formal real-world processes to

enact them" (Glieser, 2017, p. 352). Through careful and critical debriefing, I addressed

these slippages and encouraged participants to journal about discrepancies and ways

forward. I was granted permission to conduct this research through the NMREB at

Western and ethics process (appendix G).

To be in your body – it is not safe for everyone. For anyone who entered this study with

bodily trauma, or some lived experience that makes *being in their bodies* not a place they

want to be, this workshop can present discomfort, if not harm. I remained mindful of this

throughout the study and provided space and resources for folks to take a break or to opt out of any portion of the workshop. I also shared my own bodily experiences as a breast cancer survivor and as someone who had a traumatic birth story. In the end, I believe I mitigated this through thoughtful and planful exercises, thorough content warnings, space for reflection and debrief. I used these workshops mindfully as an opportunity to open up pathways for exploring embodiment, especially for those who had never before had to think about what it means to "be in their body" because their bodies navigate the world fairly unaware of how culture interacts with their bodies, and to pose important questions about whose bodies seem to matter more than Others.

3.7   Conclusion

This chapter has offered a review of my research design and chosen methodology, a qualitative, arts-based study of the *Acting Out Gender* workshops. A brief overview of my recruitment and detailed account of instrumentation employed, including interviews, workshop observation, and data analysis was offered. Through 4 sessions with 91 students, participants offered their time, energy, thoughts and vulnerability in the exploration of gender performances – the construction, reproduction and embodiment of gender using theatre games and activities. Now, let us explore what happened and what was shared in those workshops and interviews.

Chapter 4

4 Findings

4.1 Introduction

In this Chapter I provide an analysis of the data drawn from the workshops to investigate the potential and capacity of performance-based pedagogies to foster in students a critical awareness of their own embodied understandings of gender. As explained in the previous chapter, the workshops provided space and opportunities to interrogate questions of gender identity and its embodied performance and for participants to creatively explore the construction and reproduction of gender in their own lives.

This Data Analysis and Exploration consists of 3 parts which I detail immediately below. I draw on the feedback elicited from students who participated in the workshops, on data from interviews as well as on my own observations to identify key themes that emerged in light of the theoretical frameworks that I employed to make sense of the data. I also refer below to literature in the field where relevant to further situate the contribution of my own empirical insights into the productive potentiality of performance-based pedagogies for fostering a criticality that is committed to gender transformative practice and self-awareness inspired by feminist, queer and trans-informed understandings of embodiment.

1) **Review of Workshops**: The bulk of the data collected for this study is from the workshops themselves and I begin by offering a review of each workshop activity, highlighting what happened as we conducted the activities, what was shared during their associated debriefs and the questions the activity opened up for us to

collectively explore. Given that my instrumentation was developed using the theoretical sequencing with which I open this thesis, I begin with those activities that were meant to bring about awareness of *the/your body and embodiment*. I will share the ways we explored *performance-based pedagogy* through the use of Image Theatre and, finally, building on the previous activities, I will review the ways we used PBPs to specifically explore *gender performances and gestures* and their construction.

2) **Participant Feedback:** this section captures what participants thought about what happened during the workshops through one-minute reflections and check-outs.

3) **Key Emerging Themes** I will then highlight the key themes that emerged from the workshops and participant feedback and that have offered some insight and response to my research questions.

4.2   Data Analysis and Exploration

4.2.1   Review of Workshops

Here, it is helpful to have a reminder of the workshops I delivered. Revisiting the table below provides what details I collected about each group or "Troupe".

Table 2 AOG Troupes

Troupe 1	Troupe 2	Troupe 3	Troupe 4
Undergraduate	Teacher Candidates	Teacher Candidates	Undergraduate

Theatre Studies course	No curricula focus – Professional development	Drama Education course	English course
Mixed gender	Mixed gender	Mixed gender	Mixed gender
During classroom time	Outside classroom time	During classroom time	During classroom time

As described in the previous chapter, each workshop followed a similar format and consisted of the following activities, each followed by a debrief:

1. Warmups
   - Body Scans and Self-Portraits
   - Pass the Face
   - Hypnosis
   - Finding Rhythm
2. Image Theatre
   - Complete the Image
   - When I Say…
3. Gender Box
   - Dynamization #1
   - Dynamization #2
   - Dynamization #3
   - Origin Machine

4.2.1.1   Warmups

4.2.1.2   Body Scans and Self Portraits: "drawing" the/your body, your location.

Body scans were an important place to begin the workshops but were also a tricky place to start – on one hand self-awareness and developing bodily-awareness was key to enhancing the experience and outcomes of the rest of the workshop, but on the other

hand, the/your body is not always a safe place to be for everyone, and for some, being *in your body* is incredibly uncomfortable.

If embodiment refers concurrently to "the breadth of lived experiences as one engages with his/her body in the world, and to the shaping of these experiences by cultural forces" (Piran, 2017, p. 2), participants arrived with those embodied experiences, their biographies, and the cultural forces and systems that shaped them. Revisiting those forces and experiences is not always welcomed. Recognizing participants who have experienced bodily trauma and intense embodied experiences was important and bringing awareness to the fine line between a warm connection with one's body and a harmful one was carefully incorporated. I was attentive to this while facilitating the activity and participants reported feeling safe: "I was initially worried and resistant to the first exercise that asks us to think about bodies, but the work was respectful and very mindful, so that quickly changed" (Participant, Troupe 2).
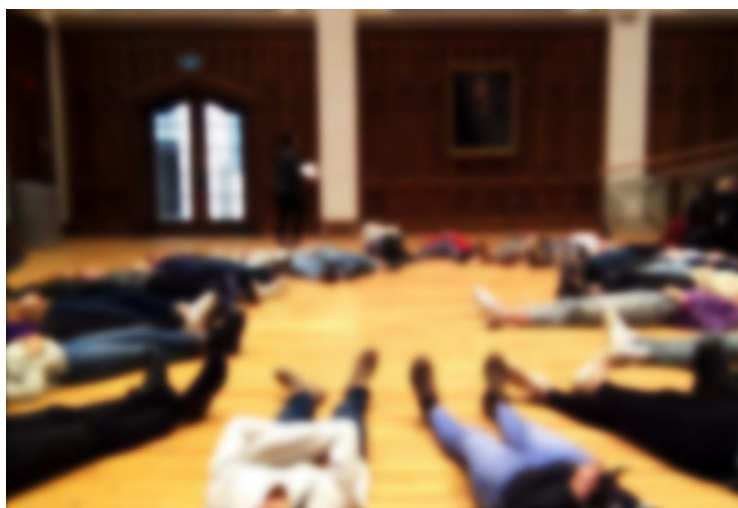
Figure 2 Body Scan, Troupe 4

The Body Scan exercise made the participants extremely conscious that we each of us are, first and foremost, a body and participants noted the almost stark difference they felt following the activity, at times noting the strangeness of it increased their awareness: "Its always nice to reconnect to our bodies. We don't get enough of this" (Participant, Troupe #2). This was key entry point for this study to better understand embodied criticality, or the question of whether doing different things, or doing things differently, can activate a

shift in awareness, perspective, or cognitive inhibitions, and what this might mean for using PBPs or social justice education tools in practice. Boal (1992) was also interested in this and relied on the power of TO to enact "*demechanization*": a set of techniques through which participants will dishabituate their thinking (Raynor, 2017). Anti and non-normative practices that enact demechanization and disrupt our normal patterns of thought and movement are essential to the workshop's goals because we endorse culture in historic and geo-located moments, shaping the ways we think and act into pattern (Wanasek and Weinberg, 2011).
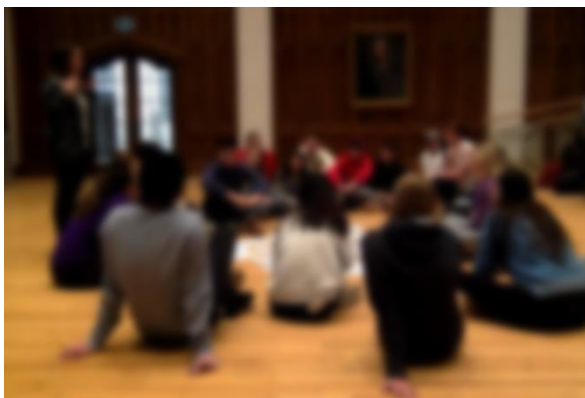
Figure 3 Self Portraits, Troupe 4

Following the body scan, participants were asked to complete a self-portrait which necessarily asked them to honour the different parts of themselves, any biographical moments attached to those parts, and then attempt to portray that in their drawing in an impromptu art exhibit.

Unexpectedly, these portraits began to emerge in distinct themes and while I did not intend to use these images as data per se, these themes quickly illuminated insight into the questions I had regarding *slippage,* and are briefly described below:

Stick Figures
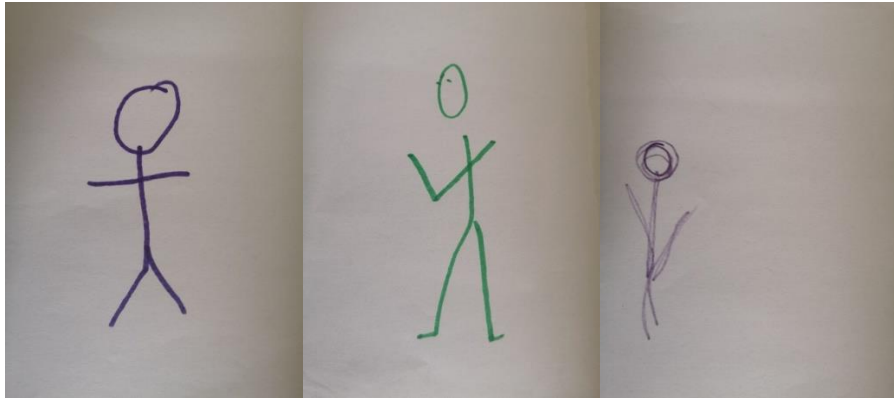
Figure 4 Self Portraits, Stick Figures

For many participants, across Troupes, a stick figure was the common outcome of the

portrait drawing. When debriefed, participants suggest that "it was the easiest" (Troupe 1)

or "the thing they knew" (Troupe 3) to explain why they may have drawn a stick figure.

In this way, participants knew what was expected of them and, seemingly without

thought, they drew what they knew. This was exciting for me as a researcher to uncover

and explore and it immediately began to highlight the ways in which we often choose the

path of least resistance, that we "stick" to what we know. It also highlighted the limits of

a body scan in (re)connecting participants to their bodies – this (re)connection takes time.

If I were to do this again, I would include another body scan to help ground participants

following the workshop and as way to complete another portrait following 3 hours of

embodied work.

Outside of body
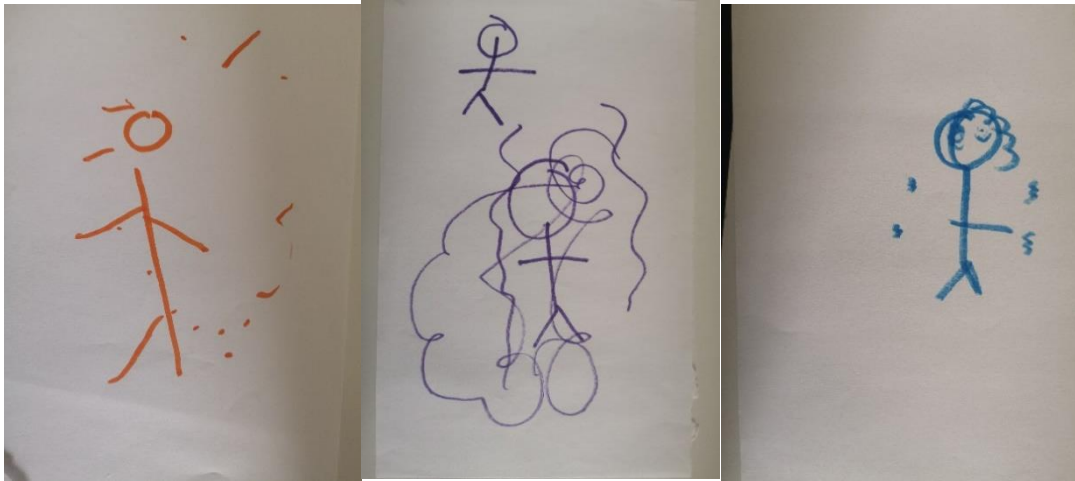
Figure 5 Self Portraits, Outside of Body

Many portraits depicted parts or additions to the outside of their bodies. At first, my

thought was that this was a response to feeling out of their bodies or as if they were

watching their bodies from above during this exercise, but as I began to see portraits like

this across Troupes I began to recall my theoretical explorations of trans embodiment and

how bodies emerge at the juncture of the social and the psychosomatic – our bodies are

not only biological, but consist of material organized in response to lived experiences and

cultural forces. In this way, our bodies extend beyond our physical selves and include

outside influences.

Distortion
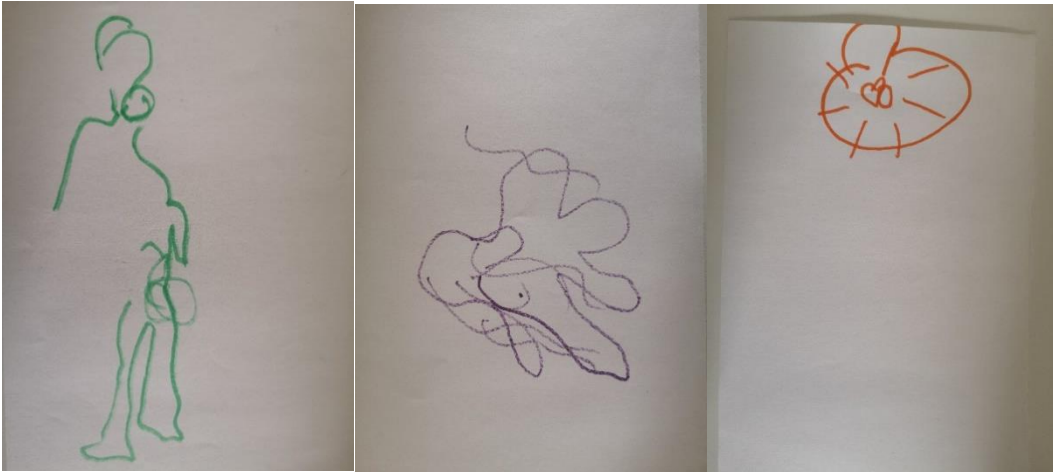
Figure 6 Self Portraits, Distortion

For some participants, distorted portraits emerged highlighting the messiness and difficulty in connecting to our bodies.

Personalized
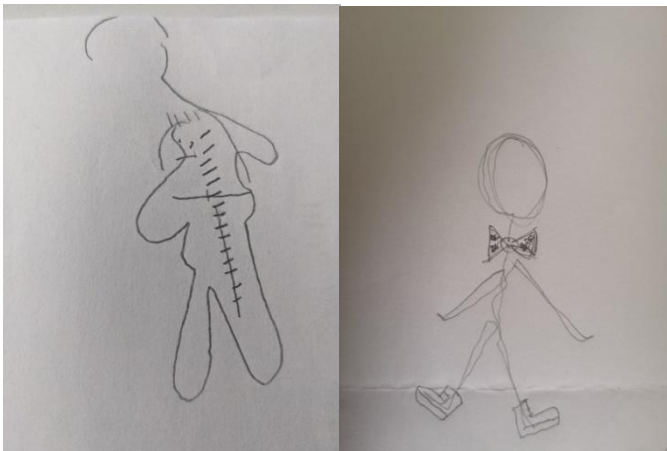
Figure 7 Self Portrait, Personalized

Although most lacked details or identifiers like sex, faces or other identifying markers, there were two participants that provided additional information about themselves throughout the sessions and these identifiers were clearly articulated in their pictures. Because these portraits were so different that others, I included them. Figure #7 is a portrait of a participant that has endured several life-threatening surgeries a self portrait of a trans man.

These embodied experiences are important to note – for many of us thinking about our bodies ends with thinking about its image, shape or appearance but for those who have been forced to really connect, even in uncomfortable or harmful ways, with their bodies we are almost too aware of these parts of ourselves. These two portraits encouraged me to think about how I would have drawn my own portrait. When I conducted this research, I was just emerging from a "cancer patient" identity, and as I sit here now, writing this, I am expecting my second child. These two experiences, cancer and pregnancy, have really forced me to think about my body and to be in tune or connected to my body and reminded me of something someone told me when I was in the middle of my chemotherapy. I was told that "the fast-track to authenticity is trauma"; that is, to know oneself is to have experienced pain. I wonder, then, does authenticity, in part, even in its limited realization, require a certain level of embodiment, of honestly and meaningfully connecting to one's body?

Blank
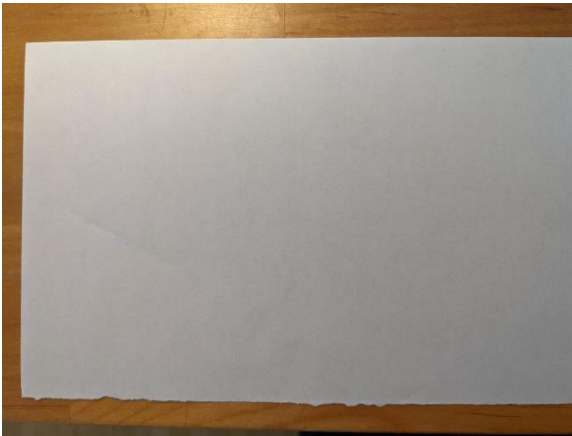
Figure 8 Self Portrait, Blank

Disconnection between one's body and mind does not happen overnight. So many self-portraits were left blank. This could have been in part due to apathy or distrust (after all, this was the first activity), but it was also likely about vulnerability and discomfort with our body's presentation to the world.

4.2.1.3 Pass the Face

Ice-breaking continues with pass the face, an invitation to play and get silly in a space all together. Participant feedback reveals that this exercise effectively attunes us to the patterns and scripts we follow daily, reminding us of our bodies' complex social enmeshments in a low-stakes and humorous way. Post-secondary students' experiences of participation in a classroom is often limited to raising one's hand and the occasional group discussion. Rarely are students asked to make absurd noises, to move their bodies in intentionally awkward ways or to make silly faces. Doing this in front of everyone often creates a great deal of vulnerability and discomfort. Thus, this next activity, immediately following the portraits, is about gathering and being ridiculous together to create comfort, trust and community and as I say in every workshop, "when everyone is ridiculous, no one is ridiculous!" From the outset, this activity is an icebreaker and operates as an invitation to play.

Okay, um, I would say half those people would not, like get on the stage for normal things. But they saw that everyone is going it was kind of like a workshop type thing instead of just a lecture, right? And that gave people the idea of, Oh, I kind of have to participate or have to do this way. when people started doing it, you saw that no one was, you know, embarrassed, no one looked shy, everyone was having a good time. But they were also learning as they were experiencing it.

(Personal correspondence, Participant Troupe 4)

But this activity was, at its core, another entry point into '*demechanzization'* to encourage participants to use their voices, bodies and minds in ways that were out of their norm, comfort zone or daily rituals that often perpetuate and normalize oppression and privilege. Because "embodied teaching and learning provide a unique means of producing, disseminating and exchanging material consistent with the aims of critical social justice education" (Wagner & Shahjahan, 2015, p. 245) it helps for facilitators to activate a certain criticality, an openness to new or strange experiences and ideas: "Relying on cognitive exercises exclusively are not adequate in addressing questions of oppression, power and privilege…[and]… constraint of imaginations, by limiting even the questions we ask" (ibid).

This process of demechanization, or disruption of habitus (Bourdieu, 1977), was discussed by participants during this activity's debrief:

… when you have a routine your brain doesn't really think too much right? Because you're just going on automatic you wake up you brush your teeth, you go to class, you come back you eat food, it's so you're like there's no brain function going on. It's purely like I don't know, you're on automatic, right? And when you do something out of your usual thing, you actually you're like, Oh, you start noticing again and you start thinking you start going back to like the basics, that's what I feel like when you do something new.
(Personal correspondence, Participant Troupe 4)

This activity also provided a small opening for a discussion about our daily, gendered

rituals and an opportunity to begin connecting this work of demechanization with gender

to illuminate gender performances.

> **Danielle Carr:** *"So let's translate that into like gender…"*
>
> **Participant Troupe 4:** *"Yeah, it's like a new stimulus. Yeah, I think with regards to routine and gender, I think I think of the example of like my niece. I saw her from when she was born until like, probably seven years old. And I could see the routine that she got, she goes through throughout childhood, and it's basically treat her like a little girl. Right? So everything needs to be like safe for her, it needs to be this, don't let her do this. Don't let her do that. Blah, blah, blah, like you're her big brother, you should take care of her."*

<div align="right">(Personal correspondence, participant Troupe 4)</div>

Once again, this activity demonstrated how placing the body, and awareness of the body,

in learning and pedagogical spaces can open entry points to complex questions about the

exploration of identity, embodiment and cultural performances. The next activity,

Colombian Hypnosis (Boal, 2002), moves participants from a general sense of bodily

awareness to one that centres the embodiment of power and control, offering access to

conversations about the performance(s) of power, the power of performances, and

unpacking how our identities interact with those performances and experiences of power.

4.2.1.4   Colombian Hypnosis

This activity really takes the Troupes to the next level in thinking about the way power is

embodied, which bodies experience power, and how. You'll recall from the last chapter

that this activity asks participants to partner up and take turns leading one another around

the room – one is the 'follower' and one is the 'leader'. The participants were instructed to encourage safe movements but were also encouraged, when able, to move their partner into positions and spaces that they might not otherwise have gone and to move their bodies in ways they

Figure 9 Colombian Hypnosis, Troupe 2

may not typically move. Not only did this continue the process of *demechanizaion*, but observing the activity illuminated some common themes across Troupes.

What first become evident across Troupes was the way male participants took more risks, pushed their partners to the limits, and "felt more comfortable being in control", especially if their partner was another male. Following the activity, participants noted that there was a lot of "power hungry stuff going on" and that they (male participants) felt "fired up" (Participant, Troupe 1), exclaiming, "so much power!" (Participant, Troupe 1).

This sense of and connection to power, however, was most present in the first half of the exercise. As the activity continued, male participants began to adapt and change their engagement with the activity. Participants noted that at the beginning of the exercise they felt vulnerable but as they engaged more with the activity, their awareness of self shifted to awareness of others. One participant (Troupe 4) noted how their body and emotions were showing up in the activity and shared that "I definitely noticed that when I was upset [found the activity frustrating or difficult], I did a few things that were probably a bit more challenging, but then I think I became a little bit more mindful of, alright, this is

kind of stretching someone's abilities." In this way, male participants believed they would feel comfortable and competent in leading or having power, but then were faced with the challenges and discomfort being in power

Figure 10 Colombian Hypnosis, Troupe 4

brought. During the debrief, some men suggested that they thought they would like the power and assumed that it would be reminiscent of their past experiences (like dance, for example), but that it felt really different and once they realized that they shifted their approach.

This conversation led us to explore how we assume there may be biological or essential performances attached to our gender and, almost without thought, follow those assumptions. This activity then challenged this idea by demonstrating how our performances may not actually align with what feels comfortable or natural and that there are low-stake opportunities to try something different.

On the other hand, I observed that female participants generally were more cautious and moved less, took care of their partners' bodies, and had a generally heightened awareness of their follower(s). Overall, female participants reported they preferred to be the follower. They described the leader role as having too much responsibility, even noting that "with power comes great responsibility" and pressure: "so when I was leading, I had this pressure of like, Oh, I have to think of the movements now. So, like, it was easier to

be the follower" (Participant, Troupe 3). Other female participants noted the strangeness of being the leader, sharing that "it was weird being in charge of someone's movement" (Participant, Troupe 2). Women also noted that being the leader felt "like a gaze kind of turned on you" (Participant, Troupe 2). This was a common thread in the debrief discussions; many commented on how they had to "make up movements" and that created discomfort, raising the question: did participants feel like their performance or movements of leadership had to represent something specific?

These noted differences in the ways male and female participants approached the activity demonstrated a perceived, almost prescribed, performance of power, and despite both female and male participants sharing their discomfort with this prescription, most participants strove to realize it in performance. As a result, there was great discussion during the activity debrief about the notion of power and how we have ideas, and embodied experiences, of power and find difficulty in deviating from them. From there, we were able to briefly explore whether 'power' was neither good nor bad, but rather a matter of how you use it, and to examine some sources of power.

The source of power was important to note as we moved through the exercise. You will

recall from the previous chapter that part way through the exercise, I begin attaching

groups of people, resulting in one leader with multiple followers. (see Figure# 11). I

Figure 11 Colombian Hypnosis, Troupe 4

observed that those who were further away from

the source of the power (the leader) moved less

and responded inconsistently to the movements of

the leader – this was a welcomed break for some

participants, who shared "I appreciated it because

there was less movement… [and] its much

easier"" (Participant, Troupe 2), but the distance it

created also disrupted the connection for others:

"you do feel I think more like disconnected from

the person who was leading" (Participant, Troupe 1). After all, as one participant noted,

"I was making eye contact with the shoulder" (Participant Troupe 1). As a result of this

disconnect, secondary followers felt as though they had to follow less explicitly, noticing

that was there was more forgiveness and non-compliance was less obvious. Similarly,

those who were leading more than one person felt further from the more distanced,

secondary followers, even suggesting that they "didn't feel like there was a third person

at all" (Participant, Troupe 1) and that there was **"**no personal relationship" (ibid). Some

participants noted they would forget about the secondary follower because of its location

and/or proximity to themselves: "I keep forgetting one hand all of a sudden, like back

behind me like, in some weird spot" (Participant, Troup 1). This discussion brought up

questions about how the relationship to the source of power matters and how that

relationship impacts the leaders' awareness of the abilities of your partner(s).

Knowing your partner and their abilities was important, or at least knowing how to read

others' cues and having compassion for those cues was important:

> **Participant, Troupe 1:** *Sometimes you kind of catch somebody, like, you'd see that their body is having trouble falling. So then you'd be like, Okay, we got to move it back to the zero position.*
>
> **Danielle Carr, Troupe 1***: But I think that's really interesting, because as those who are leaders or who have the power, we're not always mindful of the capability and capacity of those that are leading, and we make assumptions that those who are leading are as capable or in the same space as we are.*

If a leader is not tapped into or mindful of their followers' needs and capacities and does

not seek to understand them, we are compelled to, and should, ask questions about who

benefits from the performances and movements put forth by those in power? This part of

the activity provides space for facilitators to speak to intersectionality and embodiment,

how we make assumptions about others' experiences and existence based on our own,

and often fail to consider others in our demonstration of leadership. It also opened space

for considering the role of the follower in communicating their needs and capacities and

for considering how they might go about confronting the leader or subverting their

directions.

Our next activity continued the conversation about power and embodied leadership and

how some bodies are more accustomed to rituals of leadership and power.

4.2.1.5   Finding Rhythm

The Finding Rhythm activity is a quick and silly way to bring an end to our warm-ups

while transitioning into a more explicit exploration of performance(s) and performance-

based pedagogies. You'll recall from the last chapter that the Finding Rhythm activity

instructed participants to move their bodies in any way they wanted to and then when I called "unify", they were to all attempt to do the same movement, without talking. Across Troupes, while facilitating this activity three common pieces emerged: 1) participants do not believe that unifying is possible, especially without using verbal communication (and yet they always do); 2) the transition to a 'unified' group was much quicker and easier than the transition back to their dispersed, or individual, movements; and 3) there was always pressure from the group to unify quickly, to conform.

All Troupes expressed disbelief that this activity was possible, especially with the larger groups; they couldn't understand how a group of 40 would be able to unify their movements without verbal dialogue or planning. The look of shock on participants' faces when it did indeed happen, and with ease and haste, was impactful and prompted me to consider whether we believe that we are more individual than we are? What does this mean for our gender performances? Reeves (2019) reminds us that our culture of capitalism perpetuates the illusion of choice, that each of us can determine our destiny and enjoy all the benefits of creative authenticity and self-development – but do we really?

This point is central to why I opted to use this activity for the workshops. In every Troupe, and any time I use this activity, it took more time for participants do their own thing than to unify. Finding their own rhythm was riddled with shame, fear and intense awareness of the other participants' gazes. Participants, almost instantly, became more aware of their bodies and their performances – which, as demonstrated in the portrait exercise, was not a familiar or known place – and began to fumble and sink into a palatable awkwardness.

When debriefed, participants noted that they followed what was the easiest movement to do: "It's easier to microwave dinner than to make your own" (Participant, Troupe 1). One participant noted that "no one chose the person doing squats!" (Participant, Troupe 4). And easy didn't always mean less physical, but for many the easy thing was something they felt they could do or felt familiar with: "It was easy – similar to my own thing." (Participant, Troupe 1). So, participants not only chose the easiest, least physically demanding movement, but also chose to follow movements that were a lot like their own and that required little transition. In this way, movements that were slightly deviant were acceptable due to their proximity to the unified movement and their ability to quickly conform. Similarly, and what was also surprising, is that those who did attempt to resist or refuse to conform, did not take up movements that were drastically different from the norm, rather their subversion was subtle and made it easier to conform when the time came – and it always did.

This activity began opening space to discuss why people might conform to gender ideals and performances that don't necessarily speak to their identities and highlighted how there are consequences for not conforming to gender scripts. This activity also highlighted, in part, where those consequences came from and how social power may play a role in defining the norm.

> *When [participant] talked about rebelling. Like, I actually started thinking about it. And like, trying to go a little bit longer, kind of like, not just conforming immediately, which I think a lot of people do… I usually do it [conform] because I don't want to make anybody mad. (Participant, Troupe 1)*

In this instance, the participant that resisted was told to: "Come on, just do it already" (Participant Troupe 1). In every Troupe, the pressure to conform came mostly from male

participants, who were using strategy to lead and to choose what movement would be shared or used to unify. At first men would refuse to follow others but once they found a leader, that seemed to stick: "I was determined to make the 'unify'" (Participant Troupe 1). This brings up important entry points into the exploration of embodied power and how some bodies are more accustomed to rituals of leadership and power. An experience in Troupe 2 opened up this important conversation about power and embodied leadership more broadly:

> **Participant, Troupe 2**: *like, when are each doing our own movement, I just pick some random person to follow. And the person that I think is the movement that was chosen by everybody else, so does that make me dominant?*

> **Danielle Carr:** *Maybe*

> **Participant, Troupe 2:** *I think it's also based on our personality and how you grew up as well.*

> **Danielle Carr :** *And I think that speaks to socialization. Opportunities to be in control and to have power. But some of us haven't had as many opportunities, and a lot of that is dictated by our social location, our identities and, and things like that. And so if we're used to and comfortable with being in power, then that might be something that we can take up. So, you know, certainly my white identity provides me with a lot of power. And so maybe, maybe I've embodied that, right, it'll be easy for me to just say, look, this is what we're doing. Everyone's following along, because I'm used to that sort of the way society treats me.*

This conversation demonstrates the usefulness and impact of centering our bodies in learning. This simple and fun activity led a group of pre-service teachers into a discussion about how some bodies are accustomed to experiences of power and control and therefore will naturally, or more easily, take up those spaces. These bodies have been afforded privileges and opportunities to be in roles of authority and therefore engage in authoritative rituals that *feel* natural. This feeling of naturalized and essential embodiment

of power is a great opportunity to move into a conversation about gender and our

perception of *natural* gender performances.

When discussing gender and gender performances in the Finding Rhythm debrief, the

question was asked: "do females generally conform more quickly than males in this

activity?" (Participant, Troupe 2). My response began an integral step towards the

usefulness in using an activity like this to explore embodiment of gender roles and

expectations:

> *I have noticed that the females are generally looking for ways to conform quickly. But I don't think that is, I don't know, it may be that we are not given as socialized beings anyways, as much space to subvert expectations, and we're supposed to be polite, and kind and respectful. And some of that is just to like, identify the process, and then connect to that in that way. But it's not always the case.*

Following this, a discussion of how this activity illuminated power dynamics in the

classroom opened and explored how pressure to conform did not only come from other

participants, but from the process. As an educator, I was aware of the power dynamics

that can, and do, exist in classrooms and educational settings and this showed up in the

activity. My simple instruction to unify encouraged a fidelity to that and participants were

committed not only to leading but to realizing the goal of the activity and that this

commitment could be viewed as a gendered commitment. Those participants with more

social or structural power upheld the process and encouraged everyone to meet the goals

of the exercise – bringing back those important questions about the nature and *need* of

gender expression and performances. What, and who, benefits from conforming to gender

performances scripts, and what process are we faithful to in conforming to traditional, or

rather legible, gender performance(s)?

Ryle (2020) explains, "The way we understand categories of sexuality in Anglo-European societies are also dependent upon the existence of categories of sex and gender; a society without sex categories or gender would be a society without homosexuals, heterosexuals, or bisexuals." Adhering to scripts about our identities offers proof of our membership in certain groups or categories of people – when people are categorized, they can be arranged and ordered.

Next, we move into a group of activities that add layers and complexity to our conversations about embodiment and power and open spaces for exploring how our identities and biographies impact the way we see and experience the world – an important and integral component in understanding embodiment broadly.

4.2.1.6   *Image Theatre – Complete the Image & When I Say…*

You will recall from the previous chapter that the Image Theatre activities were meant to provide opportunities that allow participants to explore their mind and body's response to a prompt or idea. Through Image Theatre, participants can create individual and group tableaus that explored a variety of gender-related topics. My instructions for the first activity, Complete the Image, shared the process behind the activity:

> So the idea is that we want to embrace and interrogate the messages our bodies give. And we're going to do this in almost silence, because it's really about what is the message that my body gives, versus what is the message you're receiving? So we're going to start with

an activity called the handshake. And so all I'm going to do is ask folks to make an image sculpture with their bodies… So I'm going to ask two volunteers to step inside the circle and hold a handshake. There you go. Okay. So our job as the audience or as Boal calls, spect-actors, we're sort of spectators and actors, because we're part of the process. He would ask us, what do we see here? What's happening? Make it up? What's happening here? (Danielle Carr, AOG workshops)
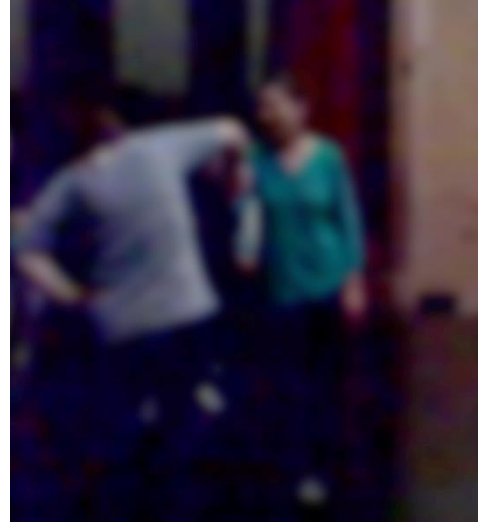
Figure 12 Complete the Image, Troupe 2

In Figure 12, Troupe 2 participants began calling out the various ways they read the image, including a handshake, and what that might have represented: "a business agreement between two friends"; or, "I think [she] just got the upper hand of a very good car deal." Others saw different images: "I didn't notice a handshake. You'd almost think [she] was gonna do a wrestling move"; and "Or after a game, getting pissed off with the winner."

After some time, I ask the group to switch up the image:

So one of you is going to remove yourself from the image [pointing to one participant] and you will stay exactly as you are. I'm going to invite somebody else to come up and complete the image. But use a different image than [they] used. So now we're creating a new image (Danielle Carr, AOG workshops)

This process would continue with one participant staying and a new participant would join to create a new image (see Figure 13).

Figure 13 Complete the Image, Troupe 4

As the images began to evolve and become more abstract, so did the participants' reading of the images. For example, a series of images from Troupe 2 following the initial handshake is presented below:

Figure 14 Complete the Image, Troupe 2

In Figure # 14, other participants interpreted the image as a relationship breakdown, with narratives like "please don't leave me" or "looks like he just cheated and he's trying to say something to make up for and she's like f that" and "she's ready to go."

Figure 15 Complete the Image, Troupe 2

When the image changed again, the narrative took a more detailed and creative turn and participants' reading said that perhaps "they're dancers!" or "they are fighting people off" or that "it's a classic technique in a zombie apocalypse."

Figure 16 Complete the Image, Troupe 2

When that image was changed again, the description become very nuanced and spoke to protest and resistance. For example, one participant suggested it was an image of a "dad dropping his daughter off and she doesn't want to go." This evolved further and participants began to suggest that "it's a statue, and she's mad about the statue and trying to rip it down," or that "it's a revolution, tearing down a statue," or that it demonstrates "male power and female power."

What happened next was demonstrative of the intention Boal (2002) had for this activity, to demonstrate that by inserting ourselves into an image, we can change it – "a rehearsal for revolution." After it was suggested that this image may
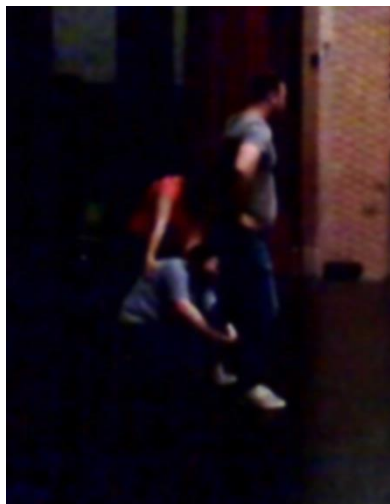
Figure 17 Complete the Image, Troupe 2
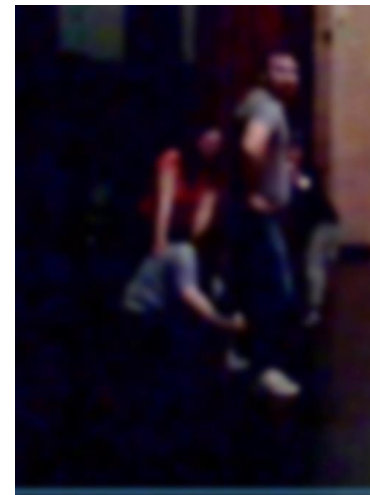
Figure 18 Complete the Image, Troupe

depict gender power dynamics, I invited the rest of the group to join the image in any way they wanted: support came flowing in from other female participants, ultimately changing the gaze of the male participant (Figures #17, #18).

> So that the idea of doing things like that are really lovely to work with students, because it gives them the skills and practice to what does it look like to intervene? What does it look like to do something different to try and change the scene or the outcome, and but it's safe. There's no actual implications of getting it wrong, or getting it right, because we also know there's implications for doing that. (Danielle Carr, Troupe 2)

But the image continued to evolve. After it was suggested that the image "looks like a protest" (Participant, Troupe 2), another male participant entered the image (see Figure 19) and shouted "touchdown":

> And I think it's a useful activity when we work with our kiddos to think about their own personal power, right that like you can sort of make changes and you can come into the scene to create change and support. But we also have the power to do the very opposite. Even if it's not our intention. (Danielle Carr, Troupe 2)

Figure 19 Complete the Image Troupe 2

This progression was witnessed across Troupes: responses to the images at the start of the activity were basic, taken for granted, literal readings, but as the images changed so did the narratives. They became more nuanced, personal, creative, descriptive and deep. The one exception came from a group in Troupe 3 who recalled how "I thought in the beginning, like we had more discussion about what we thought, what we interpreted, based on what was happening, and then the more, like specific it got, the less we needed to discuss, and it was more obvious to what was happening" (Participant, Troupe 3). Irrespective of how the narratives and images unfolded, the debrief from this activity provided a productive moment to unpack and explore those narratives as a group. This highlighted the usefulness of this activity, and TO in general, in exploring the body, embodiment, performance(s) and gender through this important consideration: that who is creating the image, and who is reading the image, matters.

As discussed in previous chapters, exploring cultural and identity performances requires an understanding of embodiment and a broad engagement with Performance Studies as a

lens of interrogation that opens up opportunities to examine the experience of learning in relation to embodiment and performance practices (Perry & Medina, 2011). Diamond (1996) asserts that engaging in these performance practices encourages participants to be in constant negotiation "between a doing (reiteration of norms) and a thing done (discursive conventions) that frame our interpretations […and that] between someone's body and the conventions of embodiment, we have access to cultural meanings and critiques (p. 5).

Translating this into a pedagogy, then, not only emphasizes the performative nature of culture and identity but *doing* brings forth an awareness and celebration of embodied knowledge, disrupting the privileging of cognitive and verbal participation in classrooms:

> Unfortunately, many teachers (including those who value critical pedagogy) believe that silence prevents students from becoming agents and engaging in dialogue… many critical pedagogues argue that agency and dialogue in the classroom can only be achieved through students' willingness to 'voice' their own lived experiences, thus privileging a western construct and a very particular way of being and thinking (Hao, 2011, p. 268).

In response to this, and to continue connecting embodiment to performance more explicitly, we then move to the next activity, Image Theatre. Image Theatre is a tool that can provide, and expand, opportunities for participation and knowledge creation and can be mobilized to interrogate the performative nature of identities. Boal (2002) insisted that to meaningfully engage in this activity,

> the players should look quickly at the half-image they are completing, arranging themselves in a complementary position as fast as they can not only to save time but to avoid thinking with words and translating them into … the actors should think with their bodies and their eyes. (Boal, 2002, p. 140)

This activity also addressed the ongoing and concerning question of *slippage*: If by providing opportunities for our minds and our bodies to rehearse together for change, are we providing opportunities to embody, to inhabit, those change-making practices?

> I found to like the first couple rounds, we were all a little hesitant to say or what we were thinking and also to jump in. But then I feel like we sort of established a little bit of trust in our group and like we all sort of laughed together, even the people who were doing the poses were sort of giggling and I think it made everyone feel a little bit more at ease. By the end. We were like, you didn't have to wait for someone to jump in, like people were just going people are just throwing in ideas. And so it became sort of a safe space to like try out things. (Participant Troupe 3)

This is an important point that cannot be overlooked. As a social justice and violence prevention educator, I engage with students who can demonstrate strong, critical anti-oppressive language and values, but don't seem to inhabit or enact those values with any real consistency. This, in part, is because of the social implications and fear of isolation that often comes from standing up against oppression or engaging in non-normative practices, but also because they have not had a chance to try it out, to see what the consequences might be within a low-stakes context.

One of Boal's (2002) primary intentions of this exercise was to bring about a sense of empowerment whereby simply inserting ourselves into a 'scene' can change that scene. In an exploration of oppression and power, this is an important activity to access feelings of agency. With the pre-service teacher Troupes, this activity was useful and participants thought they could use

Figure 20 Complete the Image, Troupe 4

this in their prevention education concerning bullying or gender-based violence, for example. In Troupe 3, one participant noted: "I found that if you were looking at a scene,

I found that person substituting in, either continued that scene or completely reversed it."

This reflection was shared in Troupe 2 by a participant who noted "how just inserting ourselves into an image can change it, right. And I think it's a useful activity when we work with our kiddos to think about their own personal power, right that like you can sort of make changes and you can come into the scene to create change and support" (Participant, Troupe 2).

I encouraged the Troupes to bring this exercise a step further, offering opportunities to extend our conversation about embodiment. So while, yes, inserting ourselves into a scene can change that scene (think bystander intervention, for example), this activity gave the Troupes opportunities to further examine and explore how our idenitites, and our embodiment and performances of those identities, shape how or if that change can occur, and the impact (harmful or supportive) that change might have on participants in the scene. In connecting this to their curricular obligations as teachers, one participant from Troupe 3 notes that the activity:

> **Participant, Troupe 3** *"really touches upon the drama curriculum being the point of view as well, and how so much of what we're doing is about being patient in our interpretation of what we see based on body language, facial expressions. And so that can you know, one person can see a scene another person can see the see the same scene and have a completely different perspective. And so, that is where conflict can often arise, right?"*
>
> **Danielle Carr** *"And a lot of what we see is mediated, dictated and has been socialized by particular structures and context. And so we, we like to do image work to think about what is it that we see."*

Following this debrief of Complete the Image, I invited the participants to stand in a circle to begin creating more intentional images with the next activity, When I Say.

Where the previous activity was meant to explore "seeing what we look at," When I Say is meant to see what is inside. You will recall that this is done with participants

instructed to stand in a circle with their backs to the centre and sculpt an image to a series

of prompts with their bodies:

> *So we're going to continue with this image work. And what we're going to do next. So keeping in mind, all those sort of things that we just sort of started to explore, our body language is for sure one thing, but our eye contact our level. So thinking about that, as we move through the next series of images, so I'm going to say a word, which will act as a prompt, and then I will count to three, clap my hands, and you will provide an embodied response to that. Whenever it makes you feel think remember, reflect upon, it doesn't matter. It can be abstract, it can be literal, literal, it can be whatever you want. It's just sort of like immediate thoughts about it. (Danielle, instructions)*

To begin, I would say the word 'education' and on the count of three, participants turned

their bodies to the centre of the circle and revealed their image, their embodied response,

to that prompt. Once again, we collectively explored the various images and the various

meanings they may carry (participants were not permitted to explain what they were

trying to convey). For example, when I used the prompt "Mother", participants read the

images as "affection", "hugs", "baby" or "giving". The prompt "Education/School"

elicited responses like "teacher", "students", "structure", "protection" and "safety**".**

While some may have literal responses, others may have abstract or emotive responses,

thus creating important dialogue into how we all experience these prompts differently. I

then continued with other prompts. This activity continued to support the consideration of

"who creates the image, matters," opening up spaces for having conversation across

difference and laying important foundations for the final parts of the workshop that

explicitly explore gender performances.

The next activity, the Gender Box, gave us an opportunity to engage in community and

collective knowledge creation by exploring both how we respond to prompts, and how

we read or view others' embodiments of those prompts, specifically as it relates to gender performances.

This study's understanding of gender, as a social construction, an inscription, and as performative is injected into this next portion of the workshop to provide an embodied entry point for participants into complex, subjective conversations about identity, and specifically about our gendered identity. Exploring gendered performances and gestures – how those are mediated through time as space and become embodied and then performed – is the inspiration for the next activity.

4.2.1.7   Gender Box

This final activity of the workshop, the Gender Box, is an adapted exercise that brings a lecture style activity into a performance space and uses the previous warm-ups and activities as foundations. As outlined in detail in the previous chapter, the Gender Box activity has a few steps:

1) Half the groups are to respond to "Man Up" and the other half to "Act like a lady." The group members then show their images to each other one at a time.
2) Group members are then asked to present the same images as before, but this time all together and not in succession.
3) Next, the participants try to interrelate their images with those of their group members.
4) Next, the groups are instructed to explore the 'origins' of their images. That is, the conditions under which those images are constructed and the consequences for not adhering to that image.
5) The groups are then instructed to create a machine with their origin images.
6) Lastly, participants add sound and movement that can be repeated.

I began with the following instructions for step 1 and provide below a simple mind map from this activity that demonstrates selected images with their associated readings from participants to the prompt "Man Up." An analysis of those readings was completed to

better understand the themes that underpin the groups' understanding of what it means to

"man up." These themes are depicted in the illustration as well.

> So I want us to think about, and remembering that we're going to start with thinking about gender and the way it's presented in binaristic ways in our society. And so we want to think about who's ever been told to 'man up' or heard someone say, 'man up". So thinking about that, I want us to think about what are we asking boys and men to do when we say 'man up', 'grow some balls', 'be a guy'… Okay, so when you're ready, I'd like you to go into the center. And tell us, what does it mean to man up? What are we asking boys and men to be, to have, to do when we ask them to man up? (Danielle Carr, AOG Workshop, Troupe 2)
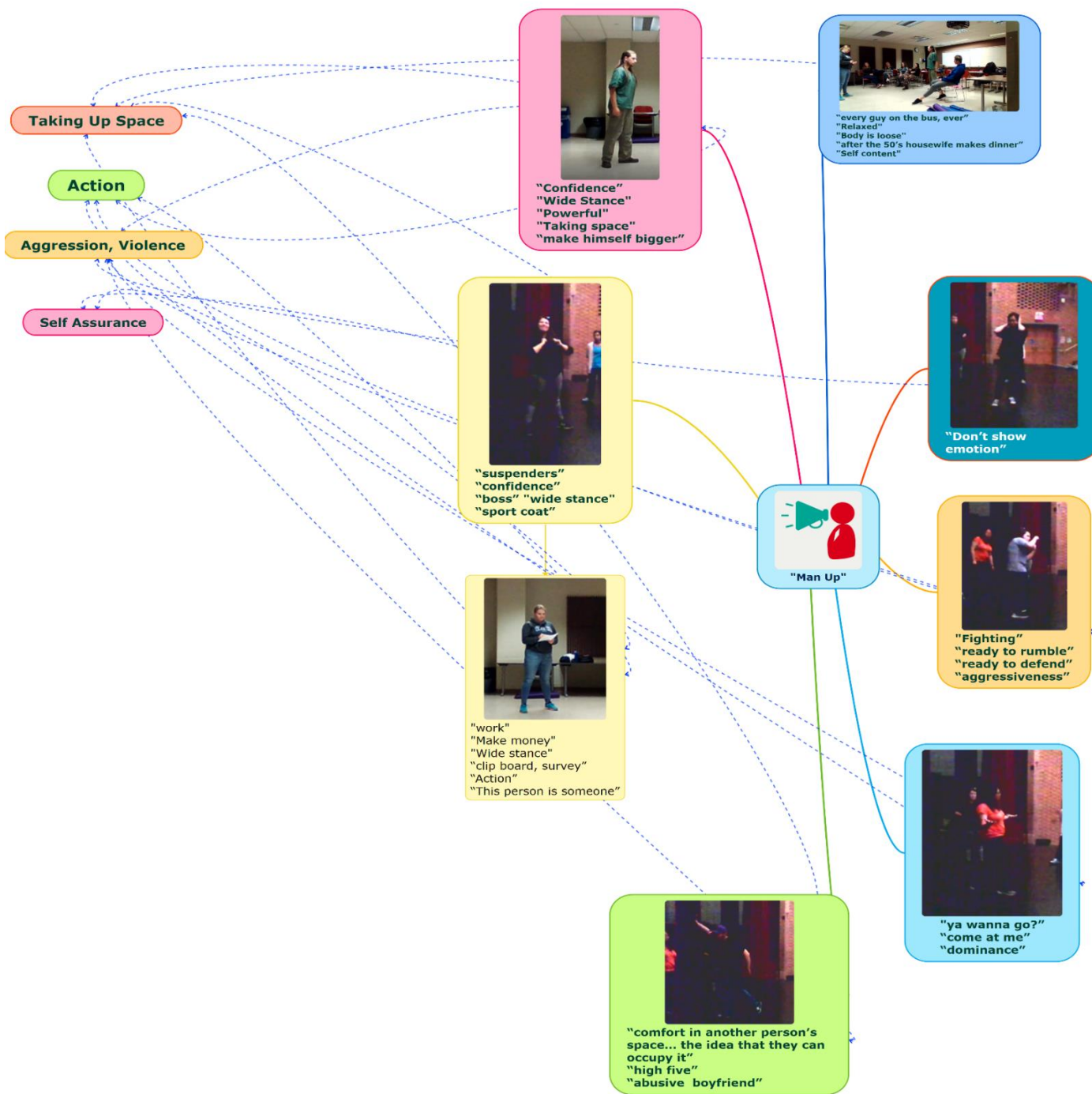
Figure 21 Man Up

These instructions were then repeated for the "Act Like a Lady" groups. Below I provide

a simple mind map from this activity that demonstrates selected images with their

associated readings from participants to the prompt "Act Like a Lady." An analysis of

those readings was completed to better understand the themes that underpin the groups'
understanding of what it means to "act like a lady." These themes are depicted in the
illustration as well.
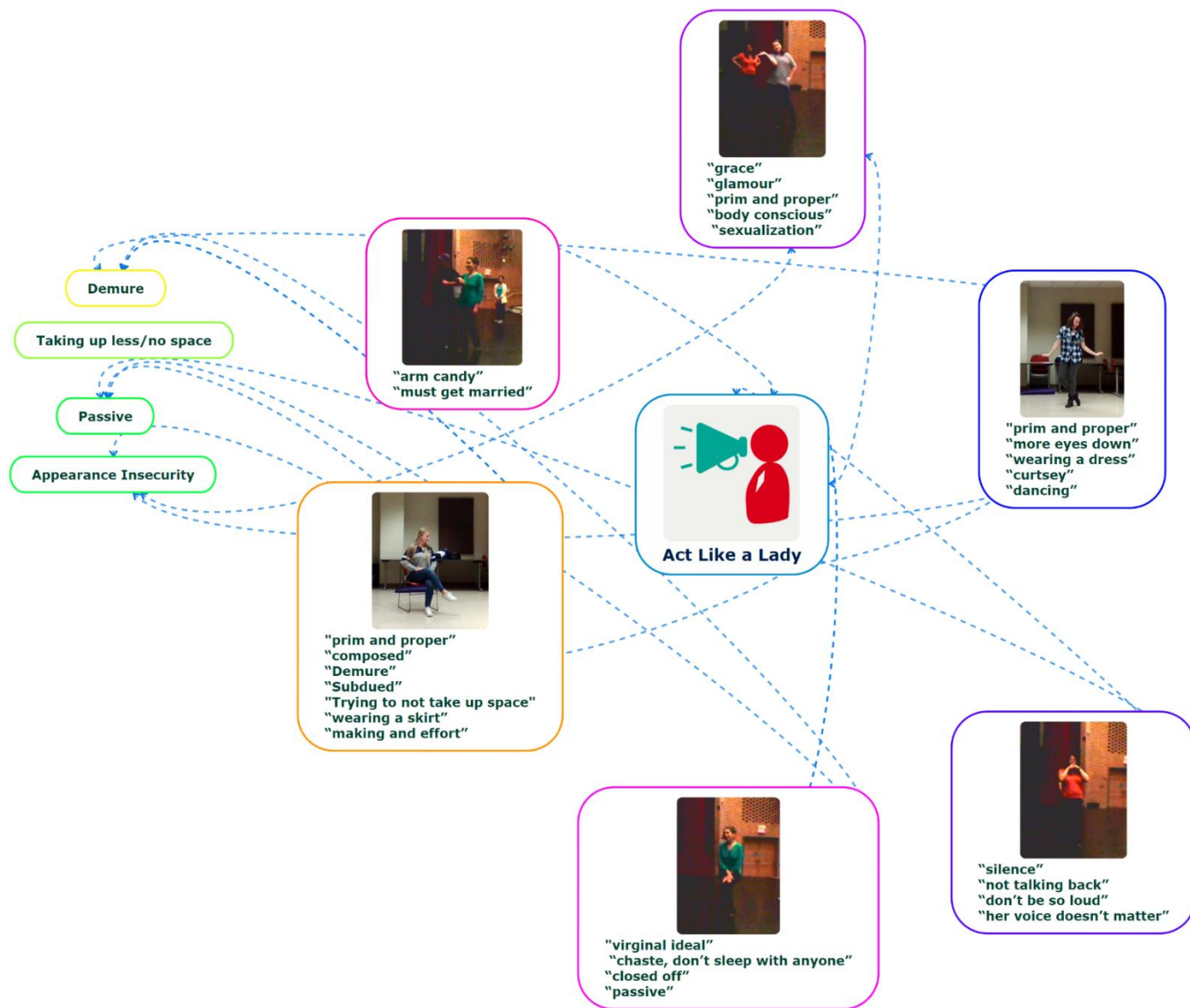
Figure 22 Act Like a Lady

I then gave the following instructions for Steps 2 and 3 and below are some images from this activity with their associated readings from the remaining participants.

I'd like you folks to move yourselves now to interrelate to one another in any way you want. Think now about a social image of Man Up, right? Think about how your images might reinforce one another. So, we see our social image transformed into more of a ecosystem or macrocosm of how we understand what it means to be a man. (Danielle Carr, All Troupes)

Figure 23 Gender Box, Man Up Dynamization 2, Troupe 2

Figure 24 Gender Box, Man Up Dynamization 2, Troupe 1

Figure 25 Gender Box, Man Up Dynamization 2, Troupe 2

Following this, the groups were instructed to morph into the origins of their images, that is, explore the conditions under which those images are constructed and/or the consequences for not adhering to that image. Below are Origin Image examples and the associated readings from the audience from the "Man Up" images. An analysis of those readings was completed to better understand the themes that underpin the groups' understanding of those origins and are described below.

"Violence"
"History/Rule"
"Expectations to work and to provide"
"Religion"
"Bow and arrow"
"Acquisition of food"
"Safety/Protect"

"hunting"
"war"
"a little boy being yelled at for having emotions"
"dad, male figure"
"sports" "sport culture"
"violence"
"traditional gender roles from hunting and gathering"
"warrior"
"being passed down to go from like warrior through war to like sports"
"disappointed older male figure looking at the younger generation. And then that gets repeated"

Figure 26 Origins Analysis, Man Up

Finally, and perhaps one of the most impactful and creative parts of this activity, is the Origin Machine where groups are instructed to create a machine with their origin images. That is, they, once again, must interrelate their images to one another to understand how gender scripts are not written in one place or by one source, but by a collection of forces, working together – cultural, personal, historical, biological. Furthermore, creating a machine not only demonstrates the various parts working together, but that to create the "illusion of normalized social scripts and acts" (Butler, 2004), like a machine, these parts replicate their function repeatedly, materializing this illusion of normative gender though repetition. Creating this machine requires participants to add sound either in the form of a "thought bubble" or "speech bubble" and to add movement that can be repeated.

Viewing the machine in action is undeniably powerful and created important and valuable debriefs where participants suggested that "The impact of repetition can shape the way you see things" (Particpant, Troupe 3) and that "The repetition of statements like 'don't be a pussy' emphasized the brutality of an everyday sentence" (Participant, Troupe 4).

These machines represented the many voices of society and culture and began to uncover for participants the structures that underpin many of our messages about gender and its performance. Participants were able to realize that the source of these messages are not singular, from one place, but rather that they come from a collection of places, further reinforcing the notion that the messages are natural and innate. The collection of voices, in the machine and in culture, is louder than our own. One participant (Troupe 3) noted that the machine exercise was a unique opportunity "to visually see all the competing influences in our lives, either in our heads or real people or media influences, that

contribute to how we believe we should act based on how society perceives our

respective genders. None of the concepts were foreign to me but seeing it visually instead

of reading about it was powerful in really portraying these messages."

Figure 27 Machine Image, Troupe 4

4.2.2 Participant Feedback

Using participant feedback, I share how Acting Out Gender, and the activities included,

landed with participants. This feedback, unlike data from the debriefs and my personal

observations, is personal and anonymous and provided an opportunity for participants to

perhaps speak to things that they didn't during the workshop, offering a more private

space for reflection. Because we are all perform differently depending on the audience,

including this form of feedback was important for me in gauging the range of

participants' experiences, as well as their nuances.

4.2.2.1   1-minute Reflections

The 1-minute reflections (participants were asked to write about their experience,

reaction, or thoughts about the workshop) were full of rich reflections that generally fell

into four areas of reflection. First, and the most common and expected, was a reflection on how the workshops and the activities opened up spaces and questions about gendered power dynamics and performances in society and in participants' own lives.

Secondly, many of the reflections focused on how the workshop encouraged participants to come out of their comfort zones, and on how using their bodies in learning environments shifted their engagement and understanding of embodiment. This engagement with their bodies, as a source of knowledge and place of knowing, created challenging moments and participants noted how it was "out of my comfort zone with my peers" and shared "the activity that stood out to me the most was one that made me most uncomfortable" (Participant, Troupe 2). Participants noted that they felt using the "body to empower knowledge creates something out of the traditional classroom experience so its more memorable in the long run" and that the workshop activities enhanced their understanding of embodiment, sharing that the activities were "Not just talking about [gender issues] but also putting them into action." Reflections demonstrated how slippage might easily occur: "None of the concepts were foreign to me but seeing it visually instead of reading about it was powerful in really portraying these messages." (Participant, Troupe 4). This opened up spaces for thinking about their bodies and differently – "[I] Didn't think about body movement in this way before" (Participant, Troupe 2) – and their language differently – "the workshop forced me to think about how my body was connecting to the words I was saying" (Participant, Troupe 4). Participants reflected on the effect this has in turn on their emotional and mental state: "the self portrait activity allowed me to connect that idea to myself and see how much my

emotional state affects my physical state, rather than just my mental state" (Participant, Troupe 4).

Thirdly, participant reflections shared how many of the activities provided opportunities to learn about and from their peers, connect to others' experiences of gender, and how this made engaging in the subject matter a little easier. Participants shared how they "used to be anxious to come to class now easier to talk and participate." And that

> *sometimes when we want to talk about things like gender or race or politics people can have a scared reaction because they think they will be challenged or attacked if they have views that don't fit with the rest of the group or it's something they just really don't want to talk about. Such conversations can make people uncomfortable so by doing it in a way where we covertly demonstrate your ideas it felt more welcoming and open to diversity and variety in our responses.*

(Participant, Troupe 3)

This reflection was shared across Troupes and highlighted "how you were able to have a different perspective to very normative things we have in our society" in the workshops. One participant (Troupe 4) shared how the activities allowed for "seeing the other side of the spectrum as I sat as an audience member hearing the vulgar language used against the opposite sex" and that ultimately the learning and discussion was "enriched from the experiences and cultures of their peers." Some expressed surprise when "the class created frames of analysis for my composition that not even I had initially envisioned" (Participant, Troupe 3).

Ultimately, this created spaces for shared understanding while allowing participants "to have different perspectives and opinions of what it's truly about" (Participant, Troupe 4). Participants noted how it was "impactful to understand how my peers define masculinity and femininity" (ibid) and that the workshops encouraged them to think about things that

they may not have previously focused on. One participant (Participant, Troupe 4) reflected on how they have often taken time to consider the impact of gender roles on females but "I have not however taken as much time to think about the expectations of men and masculinity in our society."

The final theme found in reflections, in a way, was a result or extension of the former and represented how the workshops offered an opportunity to create as a community and build ideas collectively. Participants shared how this collective process left them feeling "empowered knowing that my peers felt the same way and struggled with the same pressures" and "[reassured] in that the many people felt that the stereotypes didn't apply anymore." (Participant, Troupe 2). Ultimately, the process of the workshops allowed for shared knowledge-building and participants reflected on how "Without discussion amongst the groups, all groups expressed very similar themes," as well as on how "It is so interesting to see how each person interpreted those few words differently. It is also interesting to see how even though we sculpted differently and maybe interpreted it slightly different there was always a common under lying theme. – it was crazy that we all had very similar ideas" (Participant, Troupe 4).

4.2.2.2   Checking Out

Due to the sensitive nature of this workshop and the minor but potential harms participation could create, I ended each workshop with an attempt to extend our collective learning into a shared, collective energy and a check-out. To do this, I asked participants to form a large circle and if they are consenting, to hold hands. Then one by one we squeezed our hands around the circle to pass our collective energy, support and knowledge. Once the energy has been passed to everyone, I asked that each participant

say one or two words about where they were at. This ensured I had a grasp not only on how the session went, but on whether anyone needed extra support following the session. Below are the results of these check-outs from Troupes 2 and 3 as word clouds. A word cloud (also known as a tag cloud) is a visual representation of words: "Cloud creators are used to highlight popular words and phrases based on frequency and relevance. They provide you with quick and simple visual insights that can lead to more in-depth analyses" (Monkeylearn, 2022).

Figure 28 Troupe 2 Checking Out Word Cloud

Figure 29 Troupe 3 Checking Out Word Cloud

4.2.3   Emerging Themes

As I reflect on what I perceived as important moments throughout the data collection –

moments that were interesting, compelling, or unexpected – overarching themes began to

surface. I say unexpected because, admittedly, I began analyzing data believing I would

primarily find, and focus on, moments that illuminated participants' experiences and

understanding of gender and gender performance – after all, that was the intention of the

workshop. Indeed, an increased awareness of gender dynamics and performances was an

apparent theme; there were great conversations, sharing and learning about gender, its

construction and embodiment, and participants noted that they "became more aware of

gender and power in [their] life" (Participant, Troupe 3), as well as how engaging in

PBPs allowed for a "greater understanding [of] how gender is socially constructed" (Participant, Troupe 2). Many participants noted that the workshop encouraged deep reflection: "After this activity I took time to reflect on how I have seen these stereotypes play out in real life and I was shocked as so many scenarios came to mind" (Participant, Troupe 3); "during the workshop, I was surprised at how deeply I actually started to think about gender, and how it resonated with me after we finished the workshop" (Participant, Troupe 2).

While there is little question as to whether the participants took away ideas and questions about gender performance, and I will further discuss the results of these findings in the next chapter, what really stood out to me, and what this study has begun to highlight for me, was *how* this happens and what conditions might need to be in place for addressing questions about the appropriateness and efficacy in using TO to deliver social justice or critical education curricula.

What the data exposed to me was that performance-based pedagogies in general and more specifically, the TO-based workshop *Acting Out Gender*, creates conditions to explore the body, embodiment, performance(s) and performance studies, in three (3) important and overlapping ways:

1) The activities included in the workshop provided participants space to examine bodies and embodiment by exploring who is creating/performing the image, and why who is reading the image/performance matters. The activities also **considers**

> **the role of and centred the body and embodiment,** and our 'comfort zones', in learning;

2) with this in mind, the sharing of perspectives and various readings of the same image/performance offers an opportunity to have (and practice) **conversation across difference**, ultimately

3) creating spaces for **collective meaning making** and community knowledge creation.

I advocate then, that these 3 Cs of PBPs are the necessary conditions for enacting an interrogation of personal and collective questions of our gendered, embodied subjectivities and for encouraging critical and creative capacities for interrogating power structures. These 3 Cs will be discussed in the next chapter.

4.3   Conclusion

This chapter set out to uncover and explore the ways participants interacted with and understood the workshop and its activities and to provide an analysis of the data drawn from the workshops to investigate the capacity of performance-based pedagogies to foster in students a critical awareness of their own embodied understandings of gender.

This was accomplished by drawing on feedback and data elicited from students who participated in the workshops, from interviews, as well as from my own observations. Moreover, referring to literature in the field where relevant, helped to further situate the contribution of my own empirical findings into the possibilities of using performance-based pedagogies for enacting a criticality that is committed to gender transformative practice and self-awareness. The resulting empirical insights, the 3 C's, or **C**onsiders the role of the body, **C**onversation across difference and **C**ollective meaning making, and

how they address my emerging questions about slippage, will be further explored and

explained in the next chapter.

Chapter 5

5   Discussion

5.1   Introduction

This study asked three questions: 1) "Does *Acting Out Gender* work for its intended purposes?" That is, can it be a tool used to interrogate personal and collective questions of our gendered, embodied subjectivities and for encouraging critical and creative capacities for interrogating power structures? As the study evolved, other, more urgent questions emerged, asking, 2) how does it do this – or what learning conditions does AOG create that allow for a successful workshop? 3) How do the learning conditions it creates begin to address *slippage* – how do the findings begin to answer why many students demonstrate strong social justice knowledge, language and values but do not seem to *embody* it? Do not seem to *live* it?

To answer these queries, this study used performance-based workshops titled Acting Out Gender (AOG) to interrogate questions of gender identity and its embodied performance. Through the *AOG* workshop developed for this study, I provided participants with a space and the tools to explore their embodied experiences and understandings of gender identity and to creatively explore the construction and performance of gender in their own lives. With data collected through facilitation, observation and participant feedback, this study demonstrated the positive and productive use of TO-based PBPs in supporting participants' interrogation of gender performances and embodied subjectivities and that this was accomplished by the learning conditions AOG creates. These conditions, The 3

C's, are: a Consideration of embodiment and centring the role of the body in learning; opportunities to learn and to practice Conversation across difference; and ongoing Collective meaning making and knowledge creation. These 3 Cs offer insight into my questions about slippage as they begin to paint a picture for what might be needed to move students from knowledge to action, from recitals to rituals of anti-oppression practice.

This chapter discusses the empirical insights gained in this study and the meaning of these findings as it relates to the research questions, original and emerging. As well, a description of unanticipated outcomes is given. Then I explore how these findings fit and fill gaps in the literature explored in Chapter 3 and how they demonstrate a more nuanced use of *Theatre of the Oppressed* methods. Next, I address any unanswered questions, recommendations for future research and broader applications of this work. Finally, I share lessons I learned while conducting this research and the things that did not work out as planned.

5.2   Findings

The answer to the first essential question, does AOG work for its intended purposes, is a simple yes. As demonstrated in the previous chapter, participants established a new level of embodied criticality and skills for interrogating gender performances and power dynamics. But while answering this question, more crucial and pressing questions emerged – how exactly did it do its work, and what does that mean for questions I have about *slippage*? The following discussion of the 3 Cs and will be organized according to the same theoretical scaffolding with which I open the thesis: the/your body; embodiment; and performance studies and performance-based pedagogy. These themes

and their theoretical offerings, when used to inform and develop activities or lessons like the ones included in AOG, enact the 3 Cs and work to address this study's research questions and the pedagogical challenge of slippage. A visual is provided on the next page to help connect the dots:

THEME	RELATED RESEARCH QUESTIONS	HOW? RELATED THEORY	HOW? RELATED AOG ACTIVITIES	3CS	ADDRESS SLIPPAGE? 158
THE/YOUR BODY AND EMBODIMENT	Is a TO-based PBP a viable tool for interrogating questions of how participants understand themselves as gendered embodied subjects?	With the understanding and theorizing of the body as spatial / relational, and as a site for learning, inscriptions and subversion, we can use the body and embodiment as an alternative pedagogical tool that jars students into a difference awareness.	Warm Ups: - Body Scan - Pass the face - Hypnosis - Finding Rhythm -	Considers the role of the body and embodiment in learning	Embodying a problem allows for empathy. Embodiment, considering the ways your body interacts with the world, and the way the world interacts with the body and with intentional, embodied pedagogies, AOG produces containers for meaningful dialogue and embodiment of power and identity.
GENDER PERFORMATIVES AND GESTURES	To what extent can TO-based PBP provide spaces for imagining possibilities for resistance and critical embodied reflexivity as it relates to interrogating restrictive and oppressive systems?	Performances vary, identities intersect and context, time and space, help form our ideas and derive meaning from everyday interactions. When participants work collectively and creatively, a shared understanding begins to emerge. Everyone may not agree, but everyone shared in the creation of that knowledge and then becomes aware of their context's ideas of gender.	Gender Box - Dynamization #1 - Dynamization #2 - Dynamization #3 - Origin Machine	Collective meaning-making and knowledge creation	When students are involved in creating meaning about gender, about contributing their personal ideas and experiences as a collective, it becomes easier to understand and accept others' notions and experiences of gender. The meaning created and knowledge produced then is shared, accepted and understood. This knowledge is also situated in their own context, making room for new or improved anti-oppressive rituals to be developed.

Table 2 AOG Findings

5.2.1   Considers the Role of the Body

The first C, Considers the role of the body and embodiment in learning, shows up in three

distinct yet connected ways. First, using the body, and embodied pedagogies, necessarily

changes learning, both as a process and as an outcome. To witness and experience something in

the body offers insight not available in traditional pedagogies. To feel power dynamics, to

experiment with the corporeal response to power, for example, offered a tangible space to

consider power imbalances, their construction and embodiment. This connection is an integral

first step in empathy development.

Secondly, using the body creates opportunities for students to consider their own embodiment,

that is their experience and interaction with the world and context in which they find themselves,

and the embodiment of others. AOG exercises not only provide space and moments for students

to unpack their current gender rituals but to experiment with new practices, while bringing into

awareness that **"**who does the thing, matters. who sees the thing, matters." (Participant, Troupe

3)

> The human is understood differentially depending on its race, the legibility of that race, its
> morphology, the recognizability of that morphology, its sex, the perceptual verifiability of that
> sex, its ethnicity, the categorical understanding of that ethnicity.   (Butler, 2004)

Third, because of how we have historically received education, using the body to learn disrupts

our habitus of learning, jolting the student into a new sense of awareness, a crucial experience in

enhancing one's embodied criticality. This disruption of traditional learning rituals and practices,

accomplished by the de-mechanizing processes in AOG, are essential to critical thinking

(Slattery, 2001): "Exploring post structural notions of the self in educational contexts through

arts-based projects that foreground the excavation of the unconscious…provide[s] an alternative form of representation for fresh new understandings" (p. 380, 381).

5.2.2   Conversation Across Difference: A performative approach to understanding intersectionality and difference

The second C, Conversation across difference, showed up in the Image Theatre exercises of AOG and during activity debriefs. Students were afforded opportunities to respond to prompts, to look at images as their peers, share their reflections and hear the reflections of those around them. With the foundational work of embodiment in tow, and with a performance studies framework informing the activities and debrief, students were able to engage in a conversation that illuminated that the way we see the world, or the images on a stage, is organized, in part, by our embodied experiences and that each participant's embodiment will be different. This enhances the conversation and provides students with the necessary discursive frame to better understand why their peers may have seen an image in a very different way or responded to a prompt in an unexpected way.

A foundational post-structural thought is that "our existence as persons has no fundamental essence, we can only ever speak ourselves or be spoken into existence within the terms of available discourses" (Davies, 1991, p.42). With careful and planful facilitation and debriefing, the Image Theatre exercises allowed students to dive deeper into their own viewing of the world, as a response to their own experiences, and then dive deeper into the ways their peers view the world – this opportunity then opens space to engage in dialogic practices that place embodiment at the centre of their awareness while illuminating moments of connection and respectful disconnection with their peers.

> Its very interesting, not only to see what to hear everyone's interpretation of whats happening, but also when a new person is added to the scenario, how they think they can modify that scene and whether its something simple, like a comforting position, or like [participant] pose is a prime example. She thought she was going in as a yoga teacher giving simple adjustments to your neck position, but we all thought she was going into strangle her. We all have very different interpretations. (Participant, Troupe 3)

5.2.3 Collective Meaning Making: Developing a community of reflexive learners

The third and final C, Collective meaning making, emerged through most of the activities in the workshop, with increased uptake in the Gender exercises, specifically the Origin Machine activity. Having opportunities to have productive and careful conversation across difference opened spaces for the Troupes to create a shared meaning or understanding of gender, one that represented the group and its context. Informed by Butlerian notions of gender performances, the Gender Box and Origin Machine activities created a culture of learning, offering space for participants to create a shared, contextual understanding of gender performances and gestures, their construction, embodiment, and reproduction.

The culture of learning, that is, the environment, values and attitudes of those who share an educational space, are "positively affected when educators and students develop a true community of learners" (Inzlicht & Good, 2006). This idea of collective meaning making is crucial for developing anti-oppressive rituals and practices and was accomplished in AOG through the development of a community of learners. A community of learners can be defined as a group of people

> who actively engage in learning from one another—learners from teachers, teachers from learners, and learners from learners. They thus create a learning-centered environment in which students and educators are actively and intentionally constructing knowledge together. Learning communities are connected, cooperative, and supportive. Peers are interdependent in that they have joint responsibility for learning and share resources and points of view, while sustaining a mutually respectful and cohesive environment.   (The Charles A Diana Centre University of Texas Austin, 2021)

The Gender Box activity was a great place to focus in on that development. After giving the instructions, we began to explore the various ways we respond to "Man Up" and "Act Like a Lady"; co-creating meaning and knowledge around these prompts inherently honoured lived experiences as valid and meaning-ful. Including performance-based and experiential opportunities to contribute to this learning community not only adds a new approach to learning but allows for the practical embodiment of that learning.

5.2.4   What are the implications of the 3 Cs in the pedagogical challenge of slippage?

> *There are three methods to gaining wisdom. The first is reflection, which is the highest. The second is imitation, which is the easiest. The third is experience, which is the bitterest. —*
> *Confucius*

The 3 C's work to address the pedagogical challenge I face as a social justice educator, and the questions this study raises about slippage, or why students don't seem to embody many of the ideals they claim in language. To better illustrate this finding, I use a model that seeks to explain how one becomes competent at a certain task or practice. Specifically, this model demonstrates how one becomes unconsciously competent; that is, they enact a ritual or practice without intentionality, unconsciously.

Adapted from Robinson's (1974) framework on leadership capabilities, this competency model suggests that as one engages in something new, they go through a series of stages of competency, from *unconscious incompetence* to *unconscious competence*. This model offers insight as to

where slippage might be taking place in traditional classrooms and pedagogies and how AOG

workshops and the 3 Cs can address this pedagogical challenge.

Using the example of learning to play the guitar, consider the first step: one is likely unaware of just how good or bad they are, or may be unaware of how
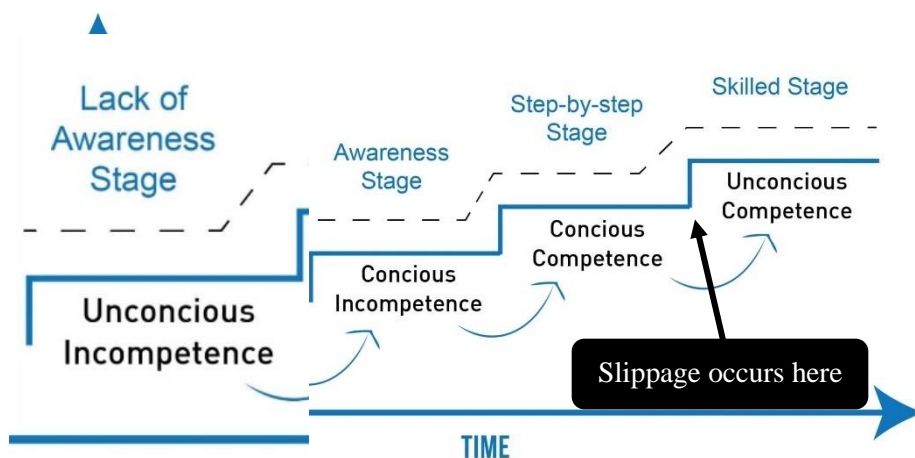
Figure 30 The ladder of competence development (adapted from concepts summarised by Robinson, 1974)

difficult playing the guitar may be, when playing the guitar for the first time. This is described as *unconscious incompetence*. Essentially, we don't know what we don't know. For AOG participants, some may start at this stage – unaware of what to expect both in terms of PBP activities and content, but still open to the idea(s).

Moving on with the guitar example, once we strum that guitar and attempt to play, we are immediately jolted into a new awareness, illuminating that playing the guitar is hard and that we don't know how to do it – a *conscious incompetence*. Now, we know what we don't know. In his explanation of Transformative Learning Theory, Mezirow (1991) describes this as a disorienting dilemma and suggests this is an integral step to change and transformation. The transformative learning experience
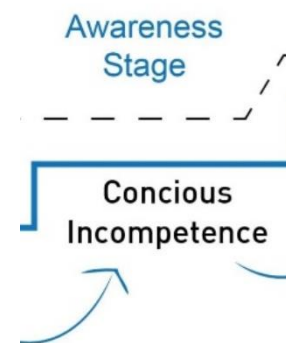
> begins with *disorientation* or a disorienting dilemma, an inner disequilibrium in which the harmony of the self is disturbed yet the problem is neither understood nor satisfactorily named. Disorientation started a doubting process in which old meaning perspectives were perceived as inadequate in the face of heightened awareness of inconsistencies within the self. (Mezirow, 1991, p. 177)

Some AOG participants may have started at this stage, aware of their discomfort, disinterest or fear of trying out a PBP and/or exploring the content, while other participants may have been jolted into this stage during the warm-ups in AOG. Irrespective of their starting point, the Body Scan enacted a bodily awareness for the participants straight away, and was new and, for some, exciting. The Pass the Face warm-up continued that awareness, adding interaction with others, creating vulnerability among participants. For many, this stage of conscious incompetence can be the hardest stage as we are faced with our own lack, bias, barriers, and we become aware of the challenge ahead in overcoming them.

Next, after guitar lessons and equipped with pages of music, you might feel more confident and competent in playing the guitar. At this stage, the student must engage in learning opportunities to develop new skills and practices, things that they will do consciously, with intention and perhaps facilitation. This moves the student to the next stage, *conscious competence* – they can play the guitar with sheet music and instruction. But what happens without the sheet music, without instruction? Can they pick up a guitar and play without thinking, as second nature? Traditional pedagogies that aim for the 'teach to the test model' may take students to this stage where conscious competence is rewarded most easily (Desai, 2017). As a student reaches this stage, they are in a space where they can regurgitate and recite, they can pass a test – they know what they know, and they use what they know consciously, learning to rehearse for grades because it is encouraged as an outcome.
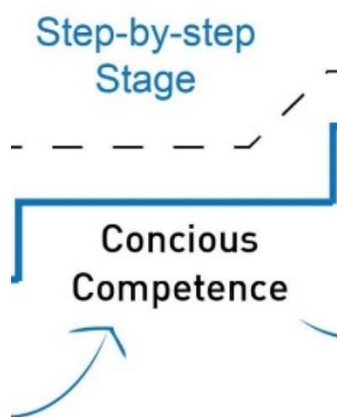
It is at this stage where slippage occurs, but pedagogies like AOG, that encourage students to act critically on their feet, to problem-solve in teams, or to work with real-world issues/problems, can push students to the fourth stage, *unconscious competence*.

Theatre of the Oppressed, as described in Chapter 3, is a creative and performative approach to Freirean education ideology that seeks to move education away from a download-of-information style of learning to 'conscientizacao' or conscientization (Freire, 2000). Freire saw that for individuals to represent a proactive outlook they needed to shift their position in society from an object (someone who is acted upon) to a subject (someone who acts). AOG methods include the body, embodiment and collective knowledge creation, thus positioning the student as a subject.

AOG offers opportunities to practice and to *develop* practice. Practicing critical dialogue, developing vulnerability and empathy, understanding embodiment and difference, AOG and the 3 Cs have the capacity to move students toward unconscious competence; that is, they don't know what they know, it is now just part of who they are. In summary, below is a reiteration of the competency steps.

Skilled Stage

Unconcious Competence

| Unconscious Incompetence: You don't know that you don't know something | Conscious Incompetence: You know that you don't know, and it creates discomfort | Conscious Competence: You know you know how to do something, and it takes effort and intention | Unconscious Competence: You know how to do something; it becomes ritual and second nature |

Figure 31 Competence Arrow

Here we layer AOG onto this model

| AOG participants may start here, unaware of what to expect or what will happen | AOG participants may start here, already uncomfortable, for a variety of reasons, about participating | AOG and Traditional pedagogies can bring students here | Embodied and Performance-Based Pedagogies, through the 3 Cs, can support students to get here |

Slippage occurs here
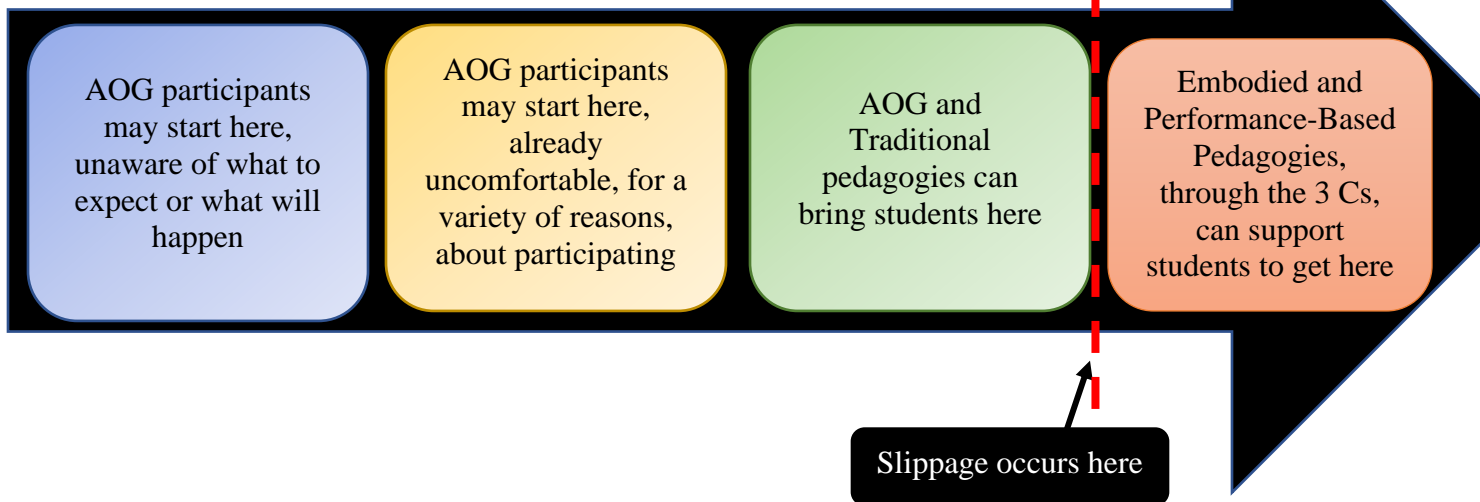
Figure 32 Competence Arrow with AOG

The immense difference in how this work "landed" amongst Troupes was the most unexpected outcome of this study and poses important questions about who this work is for and for whom it works best. At the beginning of this study, an assumption was made that the use of performance-based pedagogies would be best suited for students who are engaged in, or at the very least inclined to do, theatre or drama, and that the use of embodied pedagogies would be a stretch for students who came with little to no experience of drama and theatre practices. However, very early in the data collection process, this assumption was proven to be problematic and began a conversation about pedagogy, audience, and what conditions must be in place for transformative learning to occur.

Troupe #1 was a group of theatre students in a performance studies class. Much of the content and approaches I used were not new to them and certainly a connection and awareness of their embodiment was already present and had been deeply explored throughout their theatre careers. As a result, simply put, they didn't really like AOG. These students were accustomed to connecting to their bodies and as a result did not get the same effects or experiences as other

Troupes. Because this connection was a part of their daily or regular habits, they did not experience the first C in the ways that other, non drama students, did – they were not out of their comfort zones, did not feel as though they were learning in new ways and did not experience the jolt of awareness other Troupes did. There was one exception in this Troupe that further substantiates this finding – the only student that seemed to truly derive moments of reflection and meaning was the one student who had no theatre or drama background.

5.3   Findings in Context

As explored in Chapter 3, many TO-based studies followed a Boalian script as a means to apply theory and explore oppression, often diverting attention that could be given to the constructionist underpinnings of embodied subjectivities and performances. Many of the selected studies focused on teacher education and teachers' own critical self-reflection of their held perceptions, bias and assumptions to prepare them for working with and in diverse or marginalized communities. What was missing from many of these studies is a more nuanced use and examination of how these biases are constructed, embodied, performed, and reiterated. This could have been accomplished, for example, in the Image Theatre components, through an examination of how participant identities and biographies changed the image and what that image represented. In doing this, other studies also missed the opportunity to better examine how participants experience embodiment and how we view others' embodiments change based on our own interactions with the world.

The findings in my study extend much of the work that has already been done in TO-based research by offering meta-critical insight into what processes are occurring during a PBP experience or TO-based workshop that support student learning and the possibility for moving students to a state of *unconscious incompetence*. This study's findings regarding the 3 Cs also

demonstrate how intentional inclusion and considerations of the body/embodiment, performances and gestures add nuance and opportunities for deeper exploration of the issue. To this point, this study offers facilitators and educators with a detailed description of the workshop activities, the theory that underpins each activity, and how that theory shaped dialogue and facilitation in the workshops. Furthermore, this study demonstrated how, when brought together in meaningful, planful ways, theory, practice and dialogue can address the slippage between language and embodiment in relation to key social justice ideals, an issue not explored in previous studies of this kind.

5.4   Unanswered questions, applications, and future research: Moving from anti-oppressive *recitals* to anti-oppressive *rituals*

The original approach to data collection for this study was to conduct a series of workshops (3-5) with two different high school drama classrooms that would also include a rehearsals for change component where students would have opportunities to try out new practices and experiment with subversion. However, for a variety of reasons, the study changed its course and, in the end, I offered one workshop to 4 groups of undergraduate and teacher education students and did not have time to include rehearsals for change components; explicit practice for change and subversion were also not included. This made it difficult to fully address research question (c): To what extent can TO-based PBP provide spaces for imagining possibilities for resistance and critical embodied reflexivity as it relates to interrogating restrictive and oppressive systems?

Participants provided feedback that AOG does indeed open space for imagining possibilities of resistance with some participants beginning to play with subversion in the final activity, the Origin Machine. Participants also shared that through collective experiences and community

dialogue they had more become aware of their performances, both protective and harmful, but noted they wish they had the opportunity to try out some new things and continue the work and hoped for time and space to really dive into that potential.

This partially answered question opens the possibility for future research and future AOG workshops, while the 3 Cs open questions about broader applicability and possibilities for future research, asking whether AOG exercises could be adapted to broader explorations of power and identity? Possible research and applications may include:

AOG 2.0: Can AOG, when rehearsals for change components are included, support students in moving away from anti-oppressive recitals to anti-oppressive rituals, to an unconscious competence?

I imagine that adding this rehearsal for change component would also add a 4th C – Contextual and situated learning – and that this **C** would continue to move students to the final stage of competence. Conversations across difference and collective meaning making are both happening in a particular time and space; this context will embed its own unique potential for the exploration of gender and gender performance(s). This 4th C may uncover rituals and ceremonials we currently engage in that might be harmful and may encourage a critical self-reflection of those practices. Participants will be better able to see themselves in this work and in their community, hopefully prompting a motivation for change.

Gender-based and sexual violence prevention education: Can AOG exercises illuminate gendered, racist, heternormative and cissexist power dynamics that underpin much of the gender-based and sexual violence that occurs? Can using PBPs uncover, and fill, gaps in students' navigation of rituals of consent?

International Service Learning predeparture training: Can AOG activities be adapted to help students explore their own privilege, the performance of that privilege, and the ethnocentric values that often underpin humanitarian and global south volunteer programs?

Professional Students (Law, Medicine, Dentistry, Business, Engineering): Can AOG be adapted to help students, staff and faculty understand the historical and often harmful hierarchal culture that exists in many professional Schools?

5.5   Lessons Learned

As an expected part of the doctoral journey, mistakes were made, and lessons were learned while conducting this study. Outlined below are explanations of the major lessons I learned and things that didn't work out as planned.

5.5.1   Collecting more demographic data

Extensive demographic data was not collected as I wanted the workshops to feel informal and friendly. I wanted participants to feel like active participants, not purely subjects of research, and I wanted to ensure that participants had the choice to reveal the parts of their identities that they wanted to have known throughout the workshop. Thus, many identity brackets were unknown to me as the researcher unless spoken about specifically by participants during debriefs. For those that spoke of their lived experiences either as existing on the LGBTQ2S+ spectrum, or as a specifically gendered or other identity experience, I was able to provide analysis that explored these identities.

Relying on participants to introduce their lived experiences or as belonging to certain identities, I did not fully enable these conversation moments. This is a lesson learned for me, that when

designing research questions and workshop guides, deliberation ought to be given to how to pose questions that allow participants to feel they can voice different lived experiences but are not required to 'out' those experiences. The goal would be to find a balance between introducing possible avenues of discussion about how participants experience the world, while also providing space that does not mandate them to then disclose all parts of themselves.

5.5.2 Technology, Technology, Technology

Indeed, the saddest and hardest lesson that I learned in this process was my lack of understanding of what was needed to fully capture the workshops on video, resulting in missed opportunities and moments in the workshop. Using a laptop to capture the workshops was a big mistake as I neglected to use a quality microphone and camera and relied solely on the microphone and camera that was imbedded in the laptop. Doing this meant that I did not pick up all the sound, had only one angle from which to see the workshop, and the quality of the sound and video was less than ideal.

Despite this, I was able to enhance some of the components to better analyze the footage and am confident that I captured not only the essence of the workshops but much of the nuance and details as well. In the future and if replicating this study, I would advise a few considerations as it relates to using media for data collection:

- Use best-quality equipment
- Consider the size of the space – you may need more than one microphone
- Consider how different camera views can offer different perspectives and use multiple cameras

- Take photographs of images or scenes created – you may want to have someone else do this for you

5.5.3   Methodological Mishaps

"Our endeavour to write about embodiment fails before it begins" (Perry & Medina, 2011, p. 64): in this sense, the body is too murky a water to navigate with words, pages and computers. Fusco (2008) reminds us that in educational research a "discursive and material disinfecting and cleansing takes[s] place" in the translation of the body to written text. I struggle with this contradiction consistently; despite my best efforts and intentions, I have inevitably produced a text and had to capture my reflections on the importance of embodied learning using a traditional tool biased toward Western modes of cognition. Even through my reading and writing of how western academic institutions privilege certain ways of knowing and learning, I too will inevitably contribute to this privileging. The production of a text, despite my ambitions to also create performative versions of my findings, is unavoidable and a necessary step in my doctoral work. This contradiction, however, is mitigated in part by my chosen methodology, where to be engaged in the practice of a/r/tography:

> means to inquire in the world through an ongoing process of art making in any art form and writing not separate or illustrative of each other but interconnected and woven through each other to create additional and/or enhanced meanings. (Sinner, Leggo, Irwin, Gouzouasis, & Grauer, 2006)

5.6   Conclusion

This chapter shared the important empirical insights I gained in this study. I discussed the success of the AOG workshop in that it created learning environments and conditions that can support students in moving beyond anti-oppressive recitals to anti-oppressive rituals. This was accomplished through a description of the 3 Cs and unanticipated outcomes of the study. An

exploration of unanswered questions, recommendations for future research and broader applications for the work was also shared. Finally, I shared the lessons I learned and the limitations I faced while conducting this research.

Chapter 6

6   Conclusion

This study sought out to explore how I, a gender and sexuality educator, dedicated to social

justice and to disrupting oppressive ceremonials while developing more inclusive and

pleasurable ones, could use embodied, performance-based pedagogies to do better, to give more,

and to support students' exploration of self and other in a creative and critical way. I engaged

with critical social theories that attend to questions of embodiment in order to create and deliver

four performance-based workshops with undergraduate and teacher candidate students; my goal

was discover whether these workshops, *Acting Out Gender*, could be used to interrogate personal

and collective questions of our gendered, embodied subjectivities and, if it can be (it can!), to

answer the question: how does it do this (the 3 C's!)? Finally, does any of this offer any insight

to my pedagogical challenge of slippage (it does!)? As such, this chapter will conclude the study

by summarising the key research findings in relation to my initial research questions and

discussing the value and contribution thereof.

6.1   Findings and Possibilities

The aim of this study was to understand the contribution of embodied performance-based

pedagogies in students' critical and embodied explorations of their sociocultural locations,

specifically **gender expression, a central and conspicuous part of the sociocultural**

embodied experience. This study revealed that using embodied performance-based

pedagogies, like those included in Acting Out Gender, are a viable and important tool for

interrogating questions of how participants understand themselves as gendered embodied

subjects, and as embodied subjects more broadly. The extent to which these tools can be employed to encourage participants to develop and foster critical and creative capacities to interrogate gendered power structures and embodiment, and the extent to which they can provide spaces for imagining possibilities for resistance and critical embodied reflexivity, is dependant on the extent to which these tools facilitate and encourage the 3 C's.

This study demonstrated that when participants have opportunities to centre embodiment and their own bodies in learning, when they have and practice conversation across difference, and when they can contribute to collective meaning making, they are being jolted into an awareness that enacts a creative, embodied criticality that supports their exploration of embodiment, self, others, and the often-invisible gender rituals they engage in. Consequently, this study has extended existing TO-based research in that, while it did uncover the possibilities for using TO to explore the construction and embodiment of gender, it also gave insight as to *how* it does this. With this understanding, it is now possible to imagine using these tools for the exploration of subjects and topics much broader than gender performatives.

Moving from recitals to rituals would need to become a practice, a daily ritual, and therefore advocating for more embodied and performance-based pedagogies in all classrooms is imperative to realizing that goal. In this way, these 3 C's can and should be present in classrooms outside of Theatre or Gender studies, and instead be integrated into classrooms and spaces where embodied learning is not present or not celebrated.

Finally, when offered as opportunities to rehearse for change, these tools uncover rituals and ceremonials we currently engage in that might be harmful, encourage a critical self-reflection of those practices, and allow participants to try out something else, something more pleasurable and more justice-oriented, *in their bodies*. This trying of 'something else', in a

low-stakes, creative space may be the answer, in part, of the pedagogical challenge of *slippage* as it offers participants a chance to experience, in the body, 'something else', and then, through critical dialogue and collective knowledge creation, offers space to try something else as a community. This community performance puts collective, kinesthetic pressure on participating bodies "that ends up altering the routine, the body that performs the routine, and eventually, perhaps, culture itself" (Noland, 2009, p. 2).

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Appendices

APPENDIX A – RECRUITMENT EMAIL

Dear_____,

My name is Danielle Carr and I am a PhD Candidate at Western University working with Wayne Martino and Kim Solga (Arts and Humanities). I am currently working on an exciting study that uses *Theatre of the Oppressed* techniques and other performance-based activities to explore gender and gender 'issues' with students. I am writing to you today in hopes of you assisting with this study and having me into your classroom to deliver a 3 hour workshop/class this Fall that will provide your students with an opportunity to explore new theatrical and embodied learning techniques and skills and talk about an important topic in a fun and creative way! If you are interested or would like more information, please reach out to me directly so that we can make the necessary arrangements.

Thank you so much in advance – I look forward to 'playing' with you and your students!

Sincerely, Danielle Carr, B.A., MSSc
PhD Candidate
Critical Policy, Equity and Leadership Studies Gender and Performance Studies
Faculty of Education Western University

APPENDIX B – VERBAL RECRUITMENT

Hi everyone!

Danielle Carr is a PhD Candidate at Western University and is working on an exciting a study that uses Theatre of the Oppressed techniques and other performance-based pedagogies to explore gender and gender 'issues' with students. She has asked me for help in asking you to participate in this study. She will be hosting a workshop that will provide you with an opportunity to explore new theatrical techniques and skills and talk about an important topic in a fun and creative way!

She is very much looking forward to 'playing' with you! The workshop will take place during class time on____(insert date)_____. You do not need to attend class that day if you do not want to participate. I will hand out the Letter of Information and Consent form now – please bring back with you to this class on_____(insert date).

APPENDIX C – PARTICIPANT LETTER OF INFORMATION

Letter of Information (Students) for:

Acting out gender: Embodied criticality and performance-based-pedagogies
A doctoral study for the Faculty of Education at Western University

Principal Investigator:
Wayne Martino, PhD

Researchers:

Danielle Carr, MSSc   Kim Solga, PhD

Dear Participant,

You are being invited to participate in this research study with Western University because you are currently enrolled in a first-year Arts and Humanities course or are currently a Bachelor of Education student with a focus on English and Drama.

The purpose of this study is:

> ➢ to examine the experience and understanding of gender for participants
> ➢ to creatively explore participants' understandings of gender and gender identity and how participants understand the difference between gender and sex
> ➢ to learn more about gender through performance and workshop activities

This research will be conducted using a workshop and interviews and data will be reported as part of a doctoral thesis.

What are we asking for?

Participants will be asked to participate in 3 hour workshop that use theatre games and activities. Participants will be asked to journal throughout the workshop and some will be asked to complete an interview following the workshop – the interviews are expected to take no more than 1 hour. These workshops will be completed inside their scheduled class times and itnerviews will be scheduled at the participants convenience outside of regular class time . All participants will be asked if they would like to participate in an interview following the workshops. Four interested participants will be drawn at random to participate in this portion of the study.

Are there any risks and discomforts?

The chances of harm happening to you from taking part in this study is very low. For some participants, this study, due to its focus on gender identity may inadvertently elicit emotional triggers. To mitigate this, the researchers will ensure group work is not a component of the workshops so that

the discussion can be monitored and researchers can intervene in any potentially harmful conversations. Ground rules and group agreements are embedded into the beginning of the workshops and will be revisited throughout the study with participants.

Furthermore, each day, the workshops have deliberate activities included to increase trust among the participants and researcher and to create a space that is inclusive and creative.

What are the benefits of taking part?

The development of young peoples' gender identity is an important task within adolescence– and increasing access to the exploration of gender in classrooms directly addresses gender-based violence and sexism, homophobia and transphobia. Youth today are increasingly seeking ways to be *authentic* and active creators of their own gender identity and exploring way to engage in creative self-expression, your involvement in this study will provide access to this create self-expression and provide space to critically explore your own experiences of gender.

Voluntary participation: Your participation in the research is completely voluntary and participants may choose to stop participating at any time. Your decision not to continue participating will not influence their relationship or the nature of their relationship with researchers or with staff of Western University either now or in the futurenor will it have any impact on your grade or progress in your program. You do not waive any legal right by signing this consent form.

Withdrawal from the study: You may stop participating in the study at any time, for any reason, if you so decide. Your decision to stop participating, or to refuse to answer particular questions, will not affect your relationship with the researchers, Western University, any other group associated with this. In the event that you withdraw from the study, all associated data collected will be immediately destroyed wherever possible.

Confidentiality: All study documentation/recording of the participant will confidential. The data for this study will be collected in observation notes, video tapes and interview transcripts. All data will be encrypted, stored in a password-protected computer and in a locked cabinet. This data will only be accessed by the researchers for this project or representatives of The University of Western Ontario Non-Medical Research Ethics Board who may require access to study-related records to monitor the conduct of the research. The recordings will be used to visually document participants' engagement and understanding of Theatre of the Oppressed, to better capture participants' embodied responses and experiences of gender and to help researchers understand participants' engagement in critical analysis through imagery. This data will be destroyed after five (5) years. Confidentiality will be provided to the fullest extent possible by law.

If you have questions about the research in general or your role in the study you are encouraged to contact Danielle Carr, a researcher, at, the Principle Investigator at or The Office of Human Research Ethics (519) 661-3036 (ethics@uwo.ca). **This letter is yours to keep.** Attached is an active consent form – this form does not need to be returned should you decline the research.

Consent Form for:
Acting out gender: Embodied criticality and performance-based-pedagogies
Principle Investigator:
Wayne Martino, PhD
Researchers:

Danielle Carr, MSSc   Kim Solga, PhD

Participant: "I have read the letter of information, have had the nature of the study explained to me and I agree to participate. All questions have been answered to my satisfaction".

  ➢ I consent to video recording (you may choose to not be recorded and still participate in the study)
  ➢ I consent to authorize the use photographs
  ➢ I consent to use associated data

Name ——————————————

Signature ——————————————

Date ———————————

APPENDIX D- WORKSHOP GUIDE

The workshops are designed to follow a basic format – a warm-up to build the ensemble and prepare the group physically and mentally for the main activity (using Image Theatre & Rainbow of Desire), a primary activity to interrogate gender, its construction or the implications of this construction, and a reflection period to tie all the pieces together, provide feedback, and establish the next steps. Activities will be culled from Boal's book *Games for the Actor and Non-Actor* (Boal, 2002) as well as other sources. Some will be developed by me for the purposes of this group. Every exercise and session is to carefully debriefed.

- **The/your body and embodiment**
  - Body Scans and Self-Portraits
  - Warm ups: Pass the Face, Hypnosis and Finding Rhythm
- **Performance Studies and Performance Based-Pedagogy**
  - Complete the Image
  - When I Say…
- **Gender Performances and Gestures**
  - Gender Box
    - Dynamization #1
    - Dynamization #2
    - Dynamization #3
    - Origin Machine

IF EVERYONE IS RIDICULOUS, NO ONE IS RIDICULOUS

BUT FIRST, SOME THEORY
Each workshop began with a brief intro to the main concepts and ideas

(RE) CONNECTING TO OUR BODIES
Beginning with a safe but intentional exercise that brings awareness to our bodies and the stories they carry

WARM UP
Pass the face
Hypnosis
Rhthymn

IMAGE THEATRE
Looking at what we see and seeing across difference.

GENDER SCRIPTS
What does it mean to "man Up" or "Act Like a Lady"?

ORIGIN MACHINE
Where does that all come from?

APPENDIX E OBSERVATION GUIDE

Acting Out Gender Observation and Reflection Guide

Date:

Location:

Session #

# of participants (including teacher)

Throughout the workshops and while reviewing the workshop video, I will be observing and looking for participants' demonstration of the following things (or moments that contradict these things):
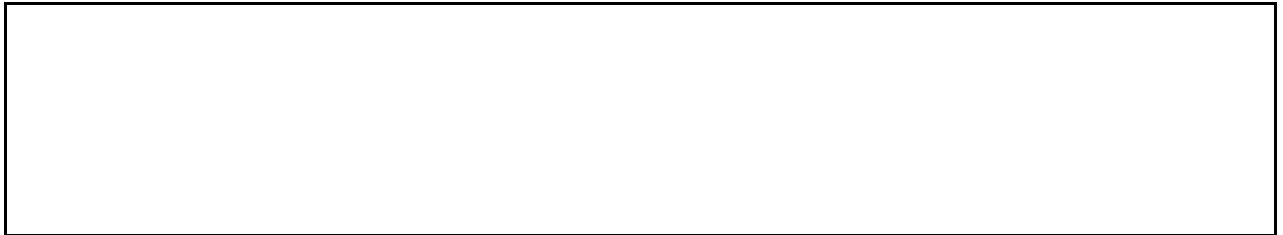
Creativity (flexibility, originality, use of symbolism/abstractions to demonstrate ideas, impulse expression)

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Criticality (divergent thinking, recognizing/challenging assumptions, demonstrates or explores 'root' causes)

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Understanding of TO /PBP (demonstrates an understanding of the techniques and concepts of TO)

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Recognition of **internal** experiences of gender (embodied, emotional, performative

demonstrations of gender)

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Recognition of **external** experiences of gender (hierarchy or power imbalances within gender/

gender binaries, sources/implications of gender construction)

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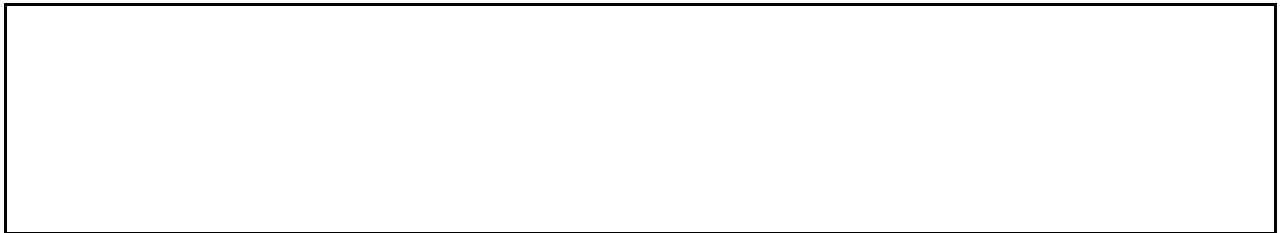
Demonstration of resistance/subversion (interrupts citationality, explores alternative ways of

'doing gender')

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APPENDIX F INTERVIEW GUIDE

Acting Out Gender Interview Guide

Date:

Location:

Participant ID:

This study will end with an interview with selected participants. These interviews will explore views about gender for each of the participants following participation in the workshops. I will be looking again at understandings of gender, the impact of gender on one's life, understanding of TO and/or PBPs, and perception of how gender is seen in the world around them. I will listen attentively to their own narratives, noting metaphors, patterns, places of connection and disconnect, and where their stories resonate and contradict each other. Questions may include:

1. What is your understanding of gender? How do you define gender?
2. How do you understand gender in your life?
3. How do you see gender in the world around you?
4. What do you see as the purpose of theatre?
5. Did you enjoy the workshops? What aspects of the workshop did you enjoy the most? Were there any aspects that you did not enjoy and why?
6. Was there any particular aspect of part of the workshop that was significant for you or impacted on you or got you reflecting on the significance of gender in your own life? To what extent were the workshops helpful in assisting you learn about gender and power?
7. Can you talk about your reflections during the workshop? Was there anything in particular that stood out for you? What did the workshops prompt you to think about? Did they help you to reflect on your own experiences and understanding of gender? Did they lead you to think about other related situations or events in your life? Please explain.

Appendix G ETHICS APPROVAL

Date: 18 April 2022

To: Dr. Wayne Martino

Project ID: 109588

Study Title: Acting out gender: Embodied criticality and performance-based-pedagogies

Application Type: Continuing Ethics Review (CER) Form

Review Type: Delegated

Date Approval Issued: 18/Apr/2022 10:57

REB Approval Expiry Date: 02/Apr/2023

Ethics Approval Lapse: April 3 - *
April 18, 2022*

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Dear Dr. Wayne Martino,

The Western University Non-Medical Research Ethics Board has reviewed this application. This study, including all currently approved documents, has been re- approved until the expiry date noted above.

REB members involved in the research project do not participate in the review, discussion or decision.

The Western University NMREB operates in compliance with the Tri-Council Policy Statement Ethical Conduct for Research Involving Humans (TCPS2), the Ontario Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA, 2004), and the applicable laws and regulations of Ontario. Members of the NMREB who are named as Investigators in research studies do not participate in discussions related to, nor vote on such studies when they are presented to the REB. The NMREB is registered with the U.S. Department of Health & Human Services under the IRB registration number IRB 00000941.

Please do not hesitate to contact us if you have any questions.

Sincerely,

The Office of Human Research Ethics

Curriculum Vitae

Name: Danielle Carr

Post-secondary   Western University

Education and   London, Ontario, Canada

Degrees: 2008 B.A.

Queen's University Belfast

London, Ontario, Canada

2013 MSSc

Honours and   Robert McMillian Graduate Award in Educational Leadership

Awards: 2017

Related Work   Education Coordinator, Gender-based Violence Prevention

Experience   Western University

2017-present

Faculty

Fanshawe College

2016-2020

Research Fellow

Schulich School of Medicine and Dentistry

2014-2015

Publications:

Cendros Araujo, R., & Carr, D. (2021) Developing a self-paced online course for gender-based violence prevention education: Process and lessons learned, ICERI 2021 Proceedings, pp. 6497-6504