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The Case of The Alias:

Applied Theater Techniques and Middle School Students' Self-Esteem and Mutual Trust

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Abstract

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Using a modified version of Boal's Image Theater and Forum Theater in combination, I show that the self-esteem and trust of middle school students can be affected positively. My technique consists of a number of steps, which take the participants from a still picture or Tableau, through questions and discussion, to an interactive section. During these steps, particularly the final step, students are given the opportunity to practice the way that they would react in preparation for real life situations. This technique gives participants the tools to fight their 'oppression', no matter the severity, and prepares them to change their fate. By working with a group of middle school students I learn that 'oppressions' like domestic violence, perceived racism and the inability to trust plague the children of this group. Over a few sessions, students show a boost in self-confidence and ability to trust.

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Table of Contents

The Case of The Alias:

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Mutual Trust

Chapter One

A History and Survey of the Field

Though I didn't know it then, I was lucky enough to work with experts in the field of Reminiscence Theater, Tony Goode and Warwick Dobson, when I was fifteen. We went into a nursing home and collected the stories of the residents. I sat and talked with about twenty men and women who spilled their secrets. They told me everything from how they met their spouse, often adorable and heart-warming encounters, to how they felt when they heard that President Kennedy had been assassinated. Our team pooled the stories and devised a play that combined them into one memory. We then performed the work for the seniors and watched their faces light up. There was no doubt that our creation had had a huge impact on each and every one of them. Through tears the participants told me that we had their memories exactly right. I remember clearly one woman who thanked me and explained that watching our play made her feel like she was back with her departed husband, if only for a few minutes. It was at that beautiful moment that I knew that I realized the moving and healing powers "applied drama" has. Tony and Warwick called me 'Petal', and introduced me to a field I had no idea existed. They taught me countless techniques and set me on what is now my career path. In another

workshop with them, we worked with elementary school students, and I found my calling. If applied theater can lighten the burden of senior citizens, why not children as well? While I realize that these two groups are wildly dissimilar, it all boils down to how you feel about yourself, and how applied drama can be used to elevate that feeling.

Self-esteem is a psychological term meaning to reflect a person's overall evaluation or appraisal of his or her own worth. It is my opinion that self-esteem can not only be explored, but also elevated though theater. Applied theater practitioners work to give participants a voice, and to help them to see all that they can accomplish in life by way of certain exercises specifically designed for this purpose. It is my goal to use applied theater techniques to address how middle school students measure their self-worth in relation to their families. In order to successfully approach this goal, and a class of middle schoolers, I first had to survey the field in order to find out what, exactly, applied theater is.

The Central School of Speech and Drama in London describes the practice of applied theater as, "intervention, communication, development, empowerment and expression when working with individuals or specific communities." (Nicholson, 3) An Australian online journal, *Applied Theatre Researcher,* described applied theater as "theatre and drama in non-traditional contexts- theatre in the community, theatre in business and industry, theatre in political debate and action, theatre in lifelong education and learning." (Nicholson, 3) The New Zealand Ministry of Education claims that applied theatre is "part of the wider discipline of Drama in Education"

and that it involves work "in business, corporate and community settings." (Nicholson, 3) It is clear from these descriptions—only three of hundreds—that due to the newness of the term, coined in 1980s, the greater theater and education communities have not exactly reached a consensus on how the term or form is to be used. This leaves our generation with an exciting task, that of exploring, expanding, and working of the implications of this field.

According to Helen Nicholson, editor of the journal *Drama in Education* and applied theater professor and practitioner, applied drama gained currency during the 1990s, becoming a favorite of academics, theater practitioners, and government policy makers, who defined the genre as practices that exist mainly outside of conventional mainstream theater institutions, and are particularly designed to benefit societies, communities, and individuals. (Nicholson, 4) Applied theater encompasses many forms, including, but not limited to, drama education, theater in health education, theater for development, theater in prisons, Community Theater, Heritage Theater, and Reminiscence Theater. Heritage Theater is a form that strives to bring to light the history and culture of a community, while Reminiscence Theater uses memories as a base for its creative work. Each of the forms that make up applied theater have their own practices, insights, and assumptions, the practice itself is an interdisciplinary and hybrid practice. Generally, applied theater is concerned with an aspiration to use theatrical practices to improve the lives of individuals and create better societies. Through both process-oriented and performative practices, applied theater has the potential to address something beyond the form itself and develop new possibilities for everyday living rather than

segregating theater-going and other aspects of life. Though practitioners have been working in the field for many years, the emergence of the terms 'applied drama', and 'applied theater' signal a new interest in the professionalization of the field, and the exploration of the political and theoretical concerns that come with the practice.

The new term 'applied theater' is important in that it does not announce its political allegiances or intent as clearly as older forms of political theater. Applied drama has emerged into a time of cultural change in which the arts are viewed to have inherently transformative and redemptive qualities. During this time, the 1990s, described by Nicholson as "a new world disorder", the western world was readjusting to accommodate the collapse of Cold War dualisms and the idea of theater as an antidote to the alienating effects of industrial capitalism came under radical review. A sense of political uncertainty is useful in applied theater because practitioners often work with people in vulnerable situations, such as refugees, asylum seekers, the homeless, and the displaced. (Nicholson, 11) In applied theater work, there is a focus on the conceptualizing the ability to enact social change. The work emphasizes the application to specific settings and audiences, and the relation of identity to the space in which the work takes place. Applied drama is always 'contaminated' by context, but this often helps to address the concerns of local audiences and participants by accepting that practices in applied theater are immediately relevant to the social and cultural contexts in which they take place.

Many argue that applied drama has powers of transformation, the ability to permanently change something about the participants and their environment.

Schechner, a professor at Tisch School of the Arts and editor of *The Drama Review*,

offers a term for this connection; transportation. He asserts that the more widely

accepted word, 'transformation', has too much of a permanent connotation that is

often found in ritual—marriage ceremony for instance—which is intended to be

fast-acting, yet lasting, and predictable. Transportation on the other hand, is less

fixed. Participants may be temporarily transformed, but return to their starting

places after the end of the drama. This does not preclude a more permanent

transformation, because Schechner argues that a series of transportations can

achieve a transformation. However, some practitioners worry even about the

relatively modest use of 'transformation', saying that the idea of changing a

community or even an individual, even temporarily is a lot of pressure, and adds the

weight of responsibility onto their shoulders. While these practitioners certainly

desire change from their work, they choose not to use the language of

'transformation' in order that they do not make promises to the participants that

they may not be able to keep.

Of course there are schools of thought that label applied theater as a

'transformative agent'. Taylor, an associate professor of educational theater at

Steinhardt School of Culture, Education, and Human Development of New York

University, explains that applied theater aims to frame the audience within an

experience, and if the work is successful the audience can act as commentators on

what is being played out in front of them. This allows them to assess their own lives

and act on what they feel in order to complete the change. Applied theater operates

from a central transformative principle: to raise awareness on a particular issue,

teach a concept, interrogate human actions, prevent life-threatening behaviors, heal fractured identities, and/or change states of oppression. (Taylor, 1) As participants use theatricalized interaction to work through these issues, they are changed and see themselves or their community in a new light. With the clarity that applied theater techniques can bring, they may be able to produce growth around them, or even transform they way they view and feel about themselves. In this view, applied theater has an immediacy that gives participants the impetus to change their world. Applied drama often raises questions of allegiance, identity, and belonging, which in turn prompt us to ponder how ideas of citizenship, culture, and community might be constructed and understood. How can practitioners negotiate different world-views in their work?

In applied theater, theory and practice are not separate models or thought processes, and it is imperative that in studying them they are regarded as interdependent and always changing. Nicholson argues that one is nothing without the other, and that to achieve the most, they must be used in tandem. She says that if they can be combined, applied theater can reach its goal of, "conceptualizing and interpreting theatrical and cultural practices that are motivated by the desire to make a difference to the lives of others." (Nicholson, 16)

Applied theater, though a new term, is not a new practice. Applied theater practitioners are indebted to the theatrical radicals of the twentieth century and to those innovative individuals in education who strived for a balance between student and teacher in the learning process. (Nicholson, 8) There are two main strands of

pedagogy that have influenced applied theater: one comes from the Brazilian

Marxist Paulo Freire (1921-1997) and the other from European models of

progressive education. Freire was concerned with reworking traditional teaching

methods based on the transmission of knowledge, and placed the student, rather

than the teacher, at the center of the pedagogic process. His work had a great effect

on the Brazilian theater director Augusto Boal (1931-2009), who remains an

influential figure in the field of applied drama. Boal contributed greatly to Freire's

practice by using theater as a mode of political questioning and education. He as a

proponent of progressive education focused on learning by doing and thought that

drama in education was perfectly placed to add to the child-centered learning

approaches popular in the 1960s (Nicholson, 9) An example is the use of

improvisation and role-play as a learning medium. Another contribution to applied

theater is Community Theater, or Grassroots Theater, characterized by the

participation of community members in creating a piece of theater which has special

resonance for that community. Jellicoe believes that though it may not be explicitly

political, there is certainly a concern for social inclusivity and community building

through the process of making theater. (Nicholson, 10) There has been a long

tradition of overlap and collaboration between these traditions and their

practitioners. All three have a focus on activity and involvement over passiveness

and detachment, participants engage physically and emotionally along side

professionals. Applied theater works toward a demystification of the arts by

encouraging people of all backgrounds to actively take part in theater and drama.

The first branch, chronologically, from which applied theater comes is that of European Progressive Education, created by John Dewy in 1897. Dewey published his theory on education in *School Journal* detailing his ideas, which, due to the similarities, it is clear that Friere and Boal had studied. In fact, Friere based much of his PhD thesis on Dewey's ideas (Gadotti, 117) Dewey expresses the importance of education in order that the student gains knowledge and become a productive member of society. He asserts that education is the "participation of the individual in the social consciousness of the race" (Dewy, 77), and that education should take into account that students are social beings. A child's instincts will help to develop the material presented to him or her, but there can be no learning without motivation. Dewey posits that the only way to prepare for any circumstance is through education; with it one will have any tool he needs to succeed in life, and under any conditions that it puts forth. Dewey warns that education will surely fail if it neglects the fundamental principle of the school as a form of community life, and that the teacher should not be so much of an authoritative figure, as a community member ready to assist the student. (Dewey, 79) Similarly to the progressive Brazilians, he asserts that if the student is put in a passive role, the result is a waste of time. Just as in Freire's work, Dewey posits that it is necessary for the student to take an active role and participate in the learning going on around him in order that the truth is revealed. Dewey and Friere also share the belief that education can lead to a shared social consciousness and social reform.

Pauol Freire, described by the *New York Times* as "the greatest specialist in literacy movements and radical educator in the world." (Gadotti, 23) was born the

son of an army sergeant and a seamstress in 1921 in Brazil. His mother, a high

school graduate, taught him to read and write before he ever went to school. When

he was thirteen years old, his father died and Paolo's studies had to be put off, giving

him a late start at education. Freire was poor and living in a rural place, but while

spending his time with other children and workers of the area, he found ways to

connect with the people to whom he would devote his life. His mother raised him as

a Catholic, and instead of denying his Christianity; he claimed that it was

progressive. He believed that "the prophetic church is a church of hope, hope which

only exists in the future." After he turned twenty, he obtained a place in the Faculty

of Law at the University of Recife and met a primary school teacher, Elza Maia Costa

de Oliveira, who later became his wife. Elza was the one who encouraged him to

focus on his studies, and helped to elaborate his method. They had five children,

three of whom became educators like their father. Freire became the educational

director of the Department of Social Service of Industry and learned to talk with the

working class and to understand their way of learning. While studying the

relationships between parents and children, he discovered the basis for his anti-

elitist, anti-idealistic pedagogy. Freire moved on to practice law, but quit soon after

his first case to devote himself to educational work. He was one of the founders of

the Cultural Extension Service of the University of Recife, wrote a thesis on new

methods of teaching adult literacy, and demonstrated his ideas at the Regional

preparatory Seminar in Pernambuco in 1958. The thesis earned him a Ph.D. in 1959

(Gadotti, 13) In 1962, Freire used his theories to teach three hundred sugar cane

workers to read and write in only forty-five days, and the Brazilian Government

created many similar cultural circles throughout Brazil. Unfortunately, there was a

military coup in 1964, and Freire was imprisoned as a traitor. During this time he

became particularly interested in Marx and read as much as he could (Gadotti, 132)

He spent a brief exile in Bolivia, worked for five years in Chile, then published his

first book, *Education as the Practice of Freedom,* in 1967, and followed with his more

famous work, *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* in 1968. The next year Harvard University

offered him a visiting professorship, and after a year in Cambridge, Freire moved to

Geneva, Switzerland to work as an educational advisor to the World Council of

Churches and advise educational reform. In 1979, he was able to go back to Brazil,

and supervised adult literacy projects and acted as the Secretary of Education for

Sao Paulo. Freire died of heart failure in 1997.

Though Freire was inspired by many schools of thought including Marxism

and anti-colonialist thinkers, there is a very clear connection made with Plato's

educational philosophy. In *The Republic, Book VII,* Plato stresses the importance of

stepping out of ignorance and into the knowledge of the truth. The Platonic student

must actively step into a new position and reposition the self in order to break free

from ignorance and subjection. This aligns with Friere's ideas about education being

the key to success and giving man the tools he needs to break oppression. Plato

suggests a structure of education—Platonic Dialogues—in which he advises the

student to question authority and what is really true, and advocates a dialogue

between tutor and pupil. Friere breaks away from Plato when he proposes his

"Banking Model of Education", in which he asserts that the student is an empty

account to be filled by the teacher. Plato posits that students are already full of

knowledge and that teachers are merely there to help students realize their full

potential of their understanding. Friere took the ideas of those before him and

expanded and explored even further.

Paulo Freire left behind a legacy of methods and pedagogy that greatly

affected applied theater of today. To understand his theories, we must look at their

context among the illiterate, who made up half Brazil's population at the time. Freire

aimed to give these people the freedom to control their own destinies, so that they

could participate in the construction of Brazil. Though Freire would argue that he

never created any literacy method, the "method" that he used to transform the lives

of so many is much more of an educational philosophy than a teaching method.

Linda Bimbi explains a crucial part of Freire's philosophy in the preface to an edition

of *Pedagogy of the Oppressed.* She says that his methods focus on "Conscientization",

which she describes as having two particular characteristics. The first, proposes

that, by using new techniques, a new vision of the world is learned that contains a

critique of present circumstances. The methods for this quest are left to the

creativity of the "free" conscience. The second is that to become conscientized, one

must be part of a community, with a relation to the common situation. Friere took

the idea of Conscientization from the classic Marxist term, meaning critical

consciousness. This approach to learning will lead to the collective engagement in

the class struggle. (Nicholson, 42) Basically, Freire sees education as part of the

global process of transformation of society. (Gadotti, 17) What sets Freire apart is

his view that learning is part of the process of becoming individually free and more

human. Freire acted on these ideas and found ways to incorporate them, as the

central theme, into his work. He believed that with tools like reading and writing, oppression could be overcome. Freire encouraged his pupils to be active participants in the learning, and to express themselves verbally, thereby becoming uninhibited and able to take part in everything. Another extremely important piece of Freire's work is dialogue. He asserts that dialogue is part of human nature, and therefore, there is no human progress or transformation without it. He hopes that this dialogue will bring about discovery. To Freire, education was a political act, and empowered those receiving it to overcome the limits of their political and social position. Further, this transformation could never work without the oppressors' willingness to rethink their way of life and the role that they play in the occurring oppression.

While Friere was never directly involved with theater, his ideas opened the doors for theater practitioners worldwide. Friere's works extended the ideas that pedagogy could act as resistance to political oppression. He argued for active models and encouraged learners to share their ideas in dialogue with each other, a very theatrical practice. This inspired applied theater practitioners, like Boal, to incorporate the idea of active involvement and active, ever-changing dialogue into their forms. Friere's emphasis on the 'real' (accounting for the personal feelings and material circumstances of the oppressed) has resonated with drama practitioners working with marginalized groups across the world. (Nicholson, 42) He believed that to become truly liberated, the oppressed had to "be their own example in the struggle for their redemption", an idea later put into action through theater by Boal.

Boal was born in Rio de Janeiro in 1931 to a baker and a housewife. Though from an early age he was interested in theater and prepared skits for his family with his three brothers, he did not become involved in theater until his adulthood. He pursued an undergraduate degree in Chemical Engineering at the Federal University of Rio de Janeiro, then went on to New York to study at Columbia University's School for the Dramatic Arts. During this time, he also pursued his master's degree in Chemical Engineering. While at Columbia, Boal was introduced to the work of both Brecht and Stanislavski, and formed connections with experimental groups, like the Black Experimental Theatre. In 1955 he staged two productions of his own plays and shortly after was asked to work with the Arena Stage in Sao Paulo. While at the Arena Stage, Boal developed new forms of theater and adapted these methods to deal with the social conditions of Brazil. Unfortunately for the young, successful director, a military coup in 1964 forced Boal into exile due to his controversial teachings and cultural activism. In 1971 he was kidnapped off the street and systematically tortured in prison. He was then exiled to Argentina, where he stayed for five years, in which time he published two books, *Torquemada* (about his torture), and *Theatre of the Oppressed* (based on his good friend Freire's *Pedagogy of the Oppressed*, and incorporating the idea of Conscientization). Boal worked to eliminate illiteracy in Peru while he more thoroughly developed his ideas and methodology. It was around this time that he invented the idea of the 'spect-actor'; the dual role of those involved as both observers and creators of dramatic meaning and action in a performance. Boal traveled all around the world sharing his work and created the first International Festival for the Theatre of the Oppressed in 1981.

Soon after, Brazil's military dictatorship fell, and Boal returned back to Brazil in 1986 after fifteen years of exile. He established a center for the Theatre of the Oppressed in Rio de Janeiro, and initiated his Legislative Theatre movement to express issues concerning citizenship, culture, and various forms of oppression. From 1992 to 1996 Boal served as councilor of Rio de Janeiro and used Legislative Theatre to get thirteen new laws passed. His son Julian worked with him and continues his father's tradition today. Boal was nominated for the Nobel Peace Prize in 2008, received the title of 'World Theatre Ambassador' for the UNESCO in March 2009, and died after a long battle with leukemia only 2 months later. Some critcs argue that Augusto Boal is the best known and most respected Brazilian theater-practitioner abroad.

Boal's method seeks to transform the audience into active participants in the theatrical experience. He posits that traditional theater is oppressive because spectators do not get a chance to express themselves, and actors and spectators should be on the same team, not fighting against each other. Just as his predecessor Freire, he views education as liberating, but he takes it a step further. In Boal's theater, spectators learn through their own actions and find a new assertive side of themselves that they never knew was there. They see their lives in a new, and true light by way of Boal's methods.

Looking at the history and techniques of applied theater, it is difficult to situate my own views within these many, and often contradictory practices. My interests lie in applied theater aimed at children; a field on which I have found very

little information. Certain children have many of the same issues as the adults with

which Boal and other practitioners worked. Many of these issues need to be

addressed in a slightly different way in order to best serve a younger population. My

hope is to use modified versions of Boal's applied theater techniques to elicit a

response from the students. Among these techniques will be that of Tableaux. After

the students use their own experiences to create still pictures they will become the

'spect-actors' and step into the role of the protagonist and try to change the course

of action. Just as in Forum Theater, the other actors will try their best to keep their

positions the same. Finally, there will be a discussion about the process, what

students felt that they learned from it, and how their ideas have either changed or

stayed the same. The process of the active creation is a very important aspect,

maybe even the most important. As the participants use drama to work through

issues, they will be changed and transformed; they will see their surroundings in a

new light. They will have clarity and the confidence to take control of their own lives

and produce progress around them. Applied theater can be the fast-acting catalyst

that allows participants to change their world. I hope that I am successful in

structuring a program that will allow the students that I work with to benefit from

their small exposure to applied theater. As British theater director Tim Etchells has

said, performance is about 'going into another world and coming back with gifts'.

(Nicholson, 13) These gifts may be the tools we need to change the real world

around us.

  In the art of applied theater there is a passion for the community and

granting freedom to those who are held back by the society in which they live,

whether by illiteracy, dictatorships, or social stigmas. It is important to recognize the pioneers of this field and see how much they have given through their creations and dedication to the pursuit of the truth and the most effective way to bring it to light. Applied theater is still in its infancy and has a long way to go in order to reach all those in need of its transformative and healing powers. This is certainly a lot of theory, but a lot of activity also. As Nicholson says, "Without theory, even the most reflexive of practice gets stuck and becomes repetitive, just as theory can become bafflingly abstract without practice. And so I have decided to create a thesis containing both parts."

Chapter Two

Techniques and Practices

With some help, I was able to arrange to visit Coan Middle School, and to work with a number of students who had at least a small interest in the arts, and were involved in Coan's after school program. Coan is a public middle school located in East Atlanta and aims to "Develop successful students who are self-determined, resourceful, caring and knowledgeable". As I planned my excursion to Coan Middle School for the opportunity to work with a group of students, I gathered the techniques that I would use to inspire my work. Most of those techniques come from Augusto Boal.

In his book *Games for Actors and Non-Actors* (1992), Boal goes through the three functional types of the Theater of the Oppressed: Image Theater, Invisible Theater, and Forum Theater. He explains how the Theater of the Oppressed works, which rules can be bent, and which must never be broken.

Image Theater is a series of exercises and games designed to uncover essential truths about societies and cultures. This form of theater is done without resorting to spoken language at all. The participants make still images with their bodies to express their lives, feelings, emotions, experiences and oppressions. The group working on the project collaborates on titles and/or themes and individuals use the bodies of others as clay to sculpt images that reflect these titles. This frozen image is merely a starting point; the images may never remain static. Boal suggests that Image Theater is a first step on the road to Invisible and Forum Theater. The idea is that a picture paints a thousand words and that our over-reliance on words can confuse our perceptions. The creation of these images can bring us closer to our feelings and to the realities of our lives that give rise to those feelings. Boal says that "thinking with our hands," physically participating in the action, can circumvent the rules in our head placed there by society and personal experience. It is extremely important that this work be done in a group. Each individual will perceive something different about any given situation and bring his or her unique perspective to the exercise. Images can work across language and cultural barriers and sometimes, unexpected commonalities appear. One example that Boal gave of this type of theater emerged from some work he did in Sweden. The subject was lovemaking. An eighteen-year-old girl created an image of oppression; a woman

lying on her back with a man on top of her. Boal asked the group to create the "Ideal Image". One man reversed the positions, woman on top. But the group settled on a man and a woman sitting on the floor facing each other, legs intertwined. This is their representation of two free people, making love. Image Theater is central to more recent therapeutic work, which is the subject of Boal's book *The Rainbow of Desire: The Boal Method of Theatre and Therapy* (1995).

Invisible Theater is a public theater that involves the public as participants, sometimes without their knowing it. They are spect-actors, a very crucial word in this work, meaning active spectators. Generally, while the piece is going on and even after it has ended, the spect-actors are unaware that anything other than "real life" has taken place. Boal is very insistent that Invisible Theater is theater. Though it will inevitably be modified according to the circumstances, it is a scripted play that is rehearsed. Several actors rehearse the play, then perform it in an appropriate public playing space. The scene usually involves the unexpected subversion of "normal" behavior of that society. In reaction to the piece, the viewers become involved in an argument, usually helped along by a few actors planted in the audience expressing opposite and extreme reactions to the events of the scene. One example of Invisible Theater is called *Racism: The Greek.* The piece took place in a restaurant, and the theme was the prejudice against foreigners in Sweden. The piece starts with a wife and husband at a table engaged in an argument. She tells him he is being too fond of other women, that he doesn't help around the house, that he takes no interest in their son, etc. He tried to assert his 'man's rights'. A young woman, the husband's mistress comes in and sits down at another table. The husband leaves his wife and

goes to sit with his mistress. An amorous dialogue ensues. A young Greek man

enters and looks for a place to sit. The wife offers the seat at her table and tries to

seduce him. The husband notices what's going on, returns to his wife and tries to get

rid of the Greek, attacking him on the grounds of his nationality. The husband is

enraged, not because his wife is with another man, but because that man is a Greek.

The waiter intervenes and general argument ensues involving the unknowing spect-

actors. During the performance, the public's participation generally becomes

thoroughly "full-blooded". While the response can be extremely emotional, it can

also lead the spect-actors to become thoughtful and open-minded. These exercises

show that the creation of a disturbance around an unresolved social issue can

provoke thought and hopefully action among those who observe and participate.

Forum Theater is a theatrical game in which a societal problem is shown first

in its unsolved form. This part can be as long or short as you wish, even a full-length

play. Then it is shown again, but this time the spect-actors are invited to suggest and

enact solutions. The problem is always the symptom of oppression, and should be

an oppression that the audience members have personally experienced. The play,

called the model, is shown the second time, speeded up until a member of the

audience shouts, "Stop!" and takes the place of the protagonist. At this point, the

spect-actor tries to re-direct the action to rise up over the oppressors and be

declared victorious by the rest of the audience. Once this occurs, the audience may

take the roles of the oppressors. The game is presided over by a figure called the

'joker', who teaches the audience the rules, and ensures that the game runs

smoothly. Virtually all of the rules of the game can be changed if the audience wants.

There are only two fundamental ideas that Boal suggests be kept in mind: spect-actors must be the protagonists of the dramatic action, which can be controlled by the joker, and these spect-actors should try to prepare themselves to be the protagonists of their own lives. Boal advises that the audience be warmed up before they are asked to participate in the dramatic action to embolden them and prepare them for the game. He also says that, if at all possible, there should be full and detailed sets and costumes. This gives the spect-actor confidence to act freely and express herself.

The idea of Forum Theater is to prepare the audience to go out and solve the problems in their own lives. Boal argues that "the Theater of the Oppressed is located on the frontier between fiction and reality—this border must be crossed. If the show starts in fiction, its objective is to become integrated into reality, into life". (Boal, xxx) He believes that once the spect-actors start taking action, the play is reality and if they can take action in Forum Theater, they can leave and take the same action in their lives. Forum Theater is a practice ground for the public to see what works and what doesn't, so that they have the tools that they need to fight their own oppressors and be triumphant over them.

One very poignant example of Forum Theater is an experience of Boal's that took place in a tiny village in Sicily called Godrano. It is about 40km from Palermo and has no hospital, hotel, supermarket, cinema, theater, or gas station. The village is run completely by the Mafia and is essentially pastoral. There are fewer than one thousand people, and over eight thousand cows. Boal explains that everyone in

Godrano was unhappy and that the women of the village were severely oppressed.

He had to jump through many hoops to even present the forum piece because the

chief of police, in a moment of lucidity, realized that if the people were going to

practice doing actions that they thought necessary to liberate themselves, that this

work was even more "subversive and dangerous" than he had anticipated. His

realization shows the power of Boal's work. Boal had to go to the *Sindaco* (Mayor),

who generously allowed the work. They presented a forum piece about the

shepherds who wanted to form a co-operative in order to figure out how to solve

the problem of the lack of local markets (the cause of cows out-numbering people

8:1), and accused the *Sindaco* of not only not helping them, but positively impeding

the co-op in pursuit of its goal. Interestingly, the *Sindaco* was in the audience and the

whole audience got to see the look on the real *Sindaco*'s face when the spect-actor

Sindaco was speaking. The real *Sindaco* actually stopped the action and played

himself, with purely political motivations. He used his entrance into the square to

transform the game into one he knew better, the parliamentary game. But in this

game all the characters are equal, and the *Sindaco* did not enjoy this democracy, and

failed to get the villagers to see the situation his way in the end. Boal stresses that at

no time in Forum Theater should an idea be imposed, as it does not preach. It simply

liberates and stimulates spect-actors, transforming them into a public who may take

control of their fates in the future and act out in their daily lives in order that they

end their own oppression.

Boal spends a good portion of the book detailing exercises that are helpful

and often necessary for actors and spect-actors alike. These exercises are meant to

allow emotions to manifest themselves freely in the body of the actor. He describes exercises that fit into five categories—muscular, sensory, memory, imagination, and emotion. Exercises that fit into each category help to acquaint the actors with that particular part of themselves. Further, there are exercises that increase the actor's ability to connect to the world around him or her. He also splits these up into five categories, feeling what we touch, listening to what we hear, dynamising several senses, seeing what we look at, and the memory of the senses. The exercises allow actors to get in touch with their bodies and minds and prepare them to break free from the oppression holding them down.

While Boal's techniques were the basis for my project, I also used Tableau, a technique similar but not identical to Image Theater. This is a technique that I got the opportunity to learn first hand from renowned applied theater practitioners, Tony Goode and Warwick Dobson. A Tableau is essentially a frozen picture. The participants use their bodies to create a picture: a snapshot of action. A good example is Image Theater from Boal's work. The original picture is merely the starting point for an array of interactive exercises that can lead not only to self-exploration, but also wonderful original work.

The first step is to choose a theme or backdrop for the picture that you are about to create. An easy one to begin with is something simple and well known, like the zoo or a classroom. After the easy themes are explored, students can delve into the more difficult and emotional ones. It is especially important when working with children to ease them into the activity in order that they feel comfortable and can

give their trust. As the comfort of the participants grows, so can the depth of the theme. Participants should be encouraged to take on roles outside of what they would usually play, such as that of an animal, inanimate object, or someone of another race or gender. At this point, movement and text may be added to go deeper into the character and scene that had been created. Each actor might create a line and/or movement for themselves and perform them with the group, then individually. The line should be the thoughts of the character at the moment the snapshot was taken. The movement may accentuate the emotion behind the line or help create the feeling of the character. Conversely, a spect-ator might create a line and/or movement for a character of their choosing, and either direct the actor, or step in to that role themselves. This is very similar to Boal's forum theater. Spect-artors can use their experience stepping into the role as practice for making that change in real life. It can also open their minds to think about situations in a new light. In this stage, spect-ators can be asked for their opinions on the scene and characters. An example would be to ask them what could be done to change the situation presented, then give them the opportunity to step into the role of director and change the positions of the actors in order to change the situation.

While I used mainly Tableau, I also used an arsenal of warm-ups and exercises. Over a few years of performing and working in applied theater, I have picked up some techniques that I implemented in order to open the students up to new ideas, and to gain their trust. Warm-ups were a particularly important element because they awaken the students a very basic level: stimulating their senses and preparing them for the work ahead. After sitting in class all day, these exercises let

the students know that they are allowed, even encouraged to move and make noise. Below are explanations of each exercise I used in my sessions.

Shakedown

Shakedown is an excellent way to raise students' energy level and get them excited. Shake your right hand, then left hand, then right foot, then left foot eight times each. Then repeat shaking each appendage seven times, then six, and so forth until you reach one. The shaking should get faster as the number of shakes goes down.

Lion Face-Lemon Face

Lion face-Lemon face is used to warm up the muscles in the face, and keep students on their toes. The leader called either "lion face" or "lemon face" out to the group. If lion face is called, students respond by making their faces as big as possible, sticking out their tongue, and putting their hands up like the paws of a roaring lion. If lemon face is called, students respond by making their faces as small as possible, like they just ate something very sour. The leader can mix up the order to make sure the students are paying attention.

Sirens

Sirens help the students to warm up their voices, as well as keep their energy up. Using a "woooo" sound, start at a pitch of the leaders choice and go up and down (with the pitch) to the top and bottom of your range. Next, use your body to follow the pitches that you make.

Lip Buzz and Roll R's

This exercise helps students to warm up their lips and mouth in preparation for reciting tongue twisters or difficult passages of text. To buzz your lips put both lips together, exhale, and relax your lips allowing them to vibrate. You should sound like a horse. To roll your R's, place the tip of your tongue on you alveolar ridge and exhale on an 'H'. Keep your lips relaxed and open. This sounds like a double 'r' in Spanish, or a very large fly.

Walk through the Circle

This exercise can help students to trust themselves and each other, and make them feel like they are in a safe space. Begin with the group in a circle. Have each student slowly walk through the circle to a place on the other side with their eyes open. Next, repeat this with eyes closed. Students can help each other and must complete with walk without hurting anyone or themselves.

Machine

The machine is one of my favorite activities. It really helps the students feel comfortable with each other and work together. The idea is to create a human machine, where each person's movement sets off the next person's and so on, similar to mousetrap. If you choose, the machine may have a theme, for instance sports or nature. The first student creates a movement and a sound to go with it. He or she chooses a tempo and continues to repeat the sound and movement for the entirety of the exercise. The next student creates a movement and sound that connect to the first student's, and so on until everyone is part of the machine. At this point, the leader can conduct the machine. Using her right hand for volume of sound

and her left for volume of movement, the leader can change the dynamics of the machine.

When coming up with the lesson plan for the time I would spend at Coan, I kept the strengths of each of these exercises in mind. I knew that my goal was to use these exercises to create an experience for the students in which they could express their feelings about themselves in relation to their families. In order to accomplish this, I used Boal's techniques as a basis for my own work. I planned to use pieces of Boal's Image and Forum theater in conjunction with Tableau, as well as a number of discussion questions that would hopefully lead the students to think about the situation at hand in a new way. Most of the questions that I proposed to the students in relation to the tableaux were based on Boal's questions. Further, I used the feeling of Boal's work. I too believe that giving participants the opportunity to change a representation of their lives can give them the wherewithal and courage to change their real lives. Knowing that I would only have two ninety-minute blocks, I narrowed my focus to family. Below is the lesson plan that I created for my two sessions at Coan Middle School.

<u>Monday February 27, 2012</u>

Introduction: Getting to know you games and warm up (20 min)

    -Learn names and tell them about myself

        Go around and say name, age, and one fun fact

    -Shake down

-Toe touch/windmill/ washing machine- other physical warm-ups

 -Lion-face/lemon-face

 -Sirens

 -Lip buzz/Roll R's

 -Topeka Bodega, Cinnamon Aluminum Linoleum, Red leather yellow

  leather, Unique New York

-Walk through circle with eyes open then with eyes closed without hurting

 anyone.

-Blind Walking. With eyes closed lead your partner.

-Machine

Tableaux Training (60 min)

 -Explain tableaux. It's a still picture. Frozen. A moment in time.

 -Split into 2 groups. Each creates tableaux then shows the other.

 -Easy Tableaux

  -Zoo (both groups)

  -Cafeteria (group A)

  -School (group B)

 -Discuss each above with group not showing the tableaux.

  -What is the scene? Describe it.

  -Who is each character?

  -What relationships do you see?

  -Who is the boss? The underling?

  -How could you change the statues to change the relationships?

Change it.

-Add Lines/Movement (Go back to original positions)

Zoo:

-Switch places with someone.

-Keep their pose.

-Change the pose.

Cafeteria and School:

- What do you think your own character was thinking at the

moment this picture was taken?

-On the count of three, everyone say your phrase.

-When I touch your shoulder, say your line out loud.

-Come up with a movement that goes with your line.

Everyone at once. Then one at a time.

-To watching group:

-Choose a character. What do you think they were thinking at

the moment this picture was taken?

-Is there a character whose line or movement you would

change? Go change it.

Thank you and Goodbye (10 min)

Wednesday February 29, 2012

Warm up (15 min)

    -Hello and chit chat (what did you learn in school today? etc)

    -Shake down

    -Toe touch/windmill/ washing machine- other physical warm-ups

    -Walk through circle with eyes open then with eyes closed without hurting

        anyone.

    -Blind Walking. With eyes closed lead your partner.

    -Machine

Review Tableaux (20 min)

    -Remind them what it is/how you do it.

    -Amusement Park (both groups together)

        -Add lines/Movement

            - What do you think your own character was thinking at the

                moment this picture was taken?

            -On the count of three, everyone say your phrase.

            -When I touch your shoulder, say your line out loud.

            -Come up with a movement that goes with your line.

                Everyone at once. Then one at a time.

Ideal Family Tableaux (25 min)

    (each group separately)

    - Discuss each above with group not showing the tableaux.

        -What is the scene? Describe it.

        -Who is each character?

-What relationships do you see?

-Who is the boss? The underling?

-How could you change the statues to change the relationships?

Change it.

-Add lines/Movement (Back to original poses)

- What do you think your own character was thinking at the moment

this picture was taken?

-On the count of three, everyone say your phrase.

-When I touch your shoulder, say your line out loud.

-Come up with a movement that goes with your line.

Everyone at once. Then one at a time.

-To watching group:

-Choose a character. What do you think they were thinking at the

moment this picture was taken?

-Is there a character whose line or movement you would change?

Go change it.

-With second watching group, talk about the differences between the

two pictures.

Director's Family (25 min)

-One eager volunteer will the direct the group to make a tableaux of his/her

own family.

-Discussion follows as above.

-Director may change lines and or movement to make it more truthful

          -Director is asked to change the scene to be how he/she wishes it was.

-Thank you and Goodbye (5 min)

        With confidence in my plan, and knowing that it would change the moment I stepped into the middle school, I prepared myself to meet the students. Luckily, I could not have asked for a better group.

<center>Chapter Three</center>

<center>Coan Middle School Report</center>

        Before heading over to Coan Middle School, I set some goals for myself. While excited, I knew that I only had a few days with the students, so I tried not to get ahead of myself. My main goal was to use the previously explained applied theater techniques to explore how students feel about themselves in relation to their families. The techniques and exercises that I chose to use for the session all have a focus on trust and opening up. I hoped that they would give the students the opportunity to see their own feelings more clearly and, if I was lucky, help them to change their environment. I would have settled for only the realization that the students were, in fact, capable of changing what they don't like about their situation, what Boal would call their 'oppression'. Of course, I worried that the students would not respond at all, that I wouldn't be able to earn their trust enough to delve into personal issues. I designed my lesson plan with this fear in mind, and chose

exercises and techniques that I thought would foster trust. As it turned out I was incredibly fortunate.

Session One

I came to Coan Middle School with a lesson plan for my session with nine students ranging from sixth to eighth grade. When I arrived, I was informed that a few of the students did not attend the after school program that day, and therefore had only four students with whom I could work. Throughout the hour and a half session I had about ten students, a few who came in and out, and were not particularly participatory. The students who participated were Olayinka Gabriel, Mya Scott, Gabrielle Gould, Askari Flewellen, Markita Jackson, Jaisha Rosser, Cameron Williams, Rashakisha Thompkins, Deahvyon Carter, Faith Slaton.

I began by introducing myself to the students and getting to know them a little, in order to foster some trust. They told me their names and what activates they liked to do. Most of them were very willing to share this information and seemed happy to be there. I started with a few warm-ups. The first was shakedown, which the students unexpectedly really enjoyed, and which we therefore repeated. We moved on to lion-face/lemon-face, sirens, and tongue twisters. The next warm-up was less of a hit. We walked through the circle, but due to loss of interest, we cut it short. For the final warm-up activity we did the machine. They chose the theme of baseball, which I thought was a nice, easy one with which to start on our way to deeper topics. They did a pretty good job of understanding the rules to the machine and following them, as well as being original and creative in their sounds and movements. Though they were reluctant to touch each other, or have their sounds

and/or movements truly interact, they did work well together. The students were able to achieve an innovative rhythm with their sounds, their movements were cohesive, and together they told a story.

The next section of the session was working with tableaux. I first explained what a tableau is and the rules to create one. They were quite eager to jump in. I began with a simple one, the zoo. The students were jumping over each other to show me their animals and formed distinct social cliques within their final picture. Four of the girls, Olayinka, Mya, Gabby, and Jaisha, came in together and seemed to be a tightly knit group. All four of them, after changing their animals multiple times, decided on a variety of large cat: jaguar, cheetah, tiger, and panther. They all placed themselves near each other, in similar poses. These girls were the more interested group. Throughout the workshop, they hushed interrupters and even asked a particularly disruptive student to leave if she couldn't behave. The other students chose a flamingo, a monkey, a zookeeper, and some combination of large cat and gorilla. The latter was played by an eighth grader named Faith, who insisted that I call her Whitney Houston, and was a bundle of unfocused, and often distracting energy. I asked the students to tell me who had the most power at the zoo. They responded decidedly that the elephant did. When I asked whether the zookeeper was perhaps more "in-charge", the group became divided. About half assured me that an elephant could easily break the bars of its cage, sit on, and kill the zookeeper, while the other half was sure that the zookeeper could put the elephant in its place with ease.

For the second round of tableaux I split the students into two groups, Olayinka, Mya, Gabby, and Jaisha in one group (A), and Markita, Whitney Houston, Askari, and Deahvyon (B) in the other. Group A's setting was the school cafeteria and Group B's was math class. They got together with their groups and created a tableau to exemplify the setting that they were given. Group A created a very cohesive snapshot. I discussed with Group B a variety of questions. What is the scene? Describe it? Who is each character? What relationships do you see? Who is in charge? Who will win the food fight? Who already gave up? I then asked each actor to say what her character was thinking at the time of the snapshot. I had them say these lines separately and all together. While the cafeteria scene was a lovely example of a tableau, the fun began with math class. At first Group B's tableau was exactly as you would expect, a teacher at the board pointing, and three students sitting attentively in a row of chairs. When I asked them to show what their own math class looks like, they changed immediately. One student went to sleep, another (not surprisingly Whitney Houston) stood up on a chair and started in on how boring both math and the teacher are. When I asked the others if WH really behaves this way in class, they assured me that she did. In trying to get her to settle down a little, I asked her what the teacher would have to say or do to make her really pay attention. After some thought, she said that the teacher would have to call her mother and her mother would have to take away her phone. A small price to pay for her learning some algebra, I thought. But then I realized that everyone was nodding, it seemed that they all agreed that having their mother called was the only way to keep them in line. I asked for a show of hands as to who would straighten up if their

teacher called their Mom. Almost one hundred percent raised their hands. Then they started chatting with each other. One student said that her mother was crazy and should be institutionalized and that she would do anything not to elicit the wrath of Mom. I asked about their fathers. I told them that in my family, Dad is that one I wouldn't want to upset. They all looked at me blankly. Jaisha stated very frankly that she'd never met her father, and three heads nodded in agreement. Mya said she knows her father, but that he isn't in her life at all and wouldn't care one way or the other if she misbehaved in school. Only Markita admitted to living with her father, but said her mother was the disciplinarian. I asked them how their mothers would react if told by a teacher that they were misbehaving in class. I specified that they really were being bad. They all jumped to imitate their mothers. Many were extremely severe. One student said that her mother would undoubtedly ask her to choose the belt with which she would be hit, another countered saying that *her* mother uses high-heeled shoes.

Since the students had found a compelling tangent, I followed it. I asked for volunteers to play the mother, student, teacher, and principal at a parent—teacher conference. Everyone volunteered; I chose the girls from Group A. Gabby was chosen by the others to play the mother, and I asked her to be her own mother. She did a lovely job. I asked her if she thought her mother was too harsh. She said definitely, and went on about how horrible her mother is to her, and yells at her all the time, even when she hasn't done anything wrong. I asked her to reprise her role, but this time, as she wishes her mother would be. This time she was sweet and understanding and stood up for her "daughter" in the meeting. Each girl took a turn

playing her own mother and then her "dream" mother. Mya said that her Mom is mean sometimes; but that she needs it or she wouldn't behave. It was wonderful to see the girls realizing that there are other ways to handle conflict than yelling and violence. Without being prompted they wanted to change their environment. Every girl who played the teacher explained how important education is and how it should be taken seriously, yet they all basically boasted about not paying attention in class. This short session made me wish that I could go back and work more with these kids. I firmly believe that multiple exposures to applied theater techniques could influence the way that interested students view themselves and the way that they interact with others.

Session Two

        While session one was amazingly productive, session two was much less so. Unfortunately many of the interested students from session one did not return, which made it difficult to build on what we had done before, as I had planned. Luckily, I was able to achieve all the goals I had set for both days on the first day. It seemed necessary to step back and re-invest in the basics. During the second session we mainly played with making machines and tableaux. While the students were not particularly focused on the techniques, by the end of the session they were much more trusting of each other and of me. One of the games we played involved one person going out of the room, then returning and guessing something the others had decided upon while she was away. At the beginning of our time, the girls left inside the room took every precaution so that the guesser would not cheat. They

clearly did not trust each other to play fairly. I explained to them that it didn't make sense to cheat because it would make the game far less fun. They seemed to take it to heart and by the last round of the game they had more confidence in each other's honesty. In terms of trust and inclusion, the students certainly took a few steps forward.

<u>Session Three</u>

At the end of my first session at Coan Middle School, a number of the sixth grade girls (eleven to twelve years old) asked me to come back. Being that I had a wonderful time with them, I agreed. On the third day I went back, but without an agenda. I thought I would just "hang out" with the girls, get to know them, and have some fun. I brought a board game, "Life", for them since they mentioned that they liked to play, but we ended up making up games and chatting outside in the lovely Georgia weather. Mya, Gabby, Faith, Markita, and Rashakisha were back, along with two new eighth grade girls. While with them for only an hour, I noticed some interesting things that gave me insight into their world.

There was a very interesting dynamic between the younger and older girls. Mya and Gabby felt that the older girls (who were far less attentive and much wilder) were keeping them from "learning", and asked them to "go away" multiple times. They did not feel comfortable around them, and certainly did not trust them. As a concrete example of my observations, I present this scenario. When I first introduced myself to the girls last week, they all gave me fake names. I mentioned that Faith wanted to be called Whitney Houston, but Mya told me her name was

Tatiana as well. Almost everyone lied about his or her identity. As the first session

continued and I worked to create a safe space, the students opened up, admitted

that the names they had given were false, and supplied their real names. Today I

saw a repeat performance of the name swap. When the sixth and eighth grade girls

met each other, they all gave fake names. It suddenly became clear to me that simply

by allowing me to know their true identity, the girls were showing that they trusted

me.

Boal dealt with the oppressions of South American adults, and even though

his work inspired my own, I never thought that in only a few days I would catch a

glimpse of the oppressions of African American children. While just making

conversation with the girls a sensitive topic came up. They informed me that "*they*"

were trying to shut down Coan Middle School. When I asked who "*they*" were, Mya

promptly told me that the "white people" didn't care about them and didn't think

that the students of Coan deserved an education. Gabby added that they would have

to take a forty-minute bus ride to a mostly white school in another county. I assured

them that this could not really happen, that it was called "bussing", and that it has

been illegal since the civil rights movement. While they seemed relieved, they were

very adamant that their education was important to them and that the "white

people" didn't see it that way. At this point I began to wonder what they thought of

me. After all, I am very white. In fact, earlier they argued that my naturally red hair

was fake, because "no one has hair that color". Well, I got my answer. When I asked

Gabby and Mya about their classes, they told me about their Home-Economics class,

in which they made collard greens. As the picky eater that I am, I informed them of

my distaste for the stuff. Mya looked at me and jokingly said, "You don't like collard greens? You ain't black!" She immediately did a double take, having caught her mistake, and looked extremely embarrassed for a second. Then we both laughed together. It was a wonderful moment, and I realized that I was in! For a few hours we saw no color. I am honored by the trust and openness that I received from the girls and have therefore decided to go back once a week to Coan. I hope that my efforts can make a difference in their lives. Now that I have spotted the group that they see as their oppressors, been told that they don't view me as part of that group, I feel that I can use a more pure form of Boal's techniques, as well as some of my own. My goal is to work toward writing and devising a play based on these themes, and seeing where the work takes us.

Chapter Four

Conclusion and Future Research

Going into this project, it was my goal to use applied theater techniques to address how middle school students measure their self-worth in relation to their families; to look at how they interact with others and how they I feel about that interaction. I was able to reach this goal and beyond. During my sessions at Coan Middle School, the students and I delved into not only their home lives, but also how they interact with and trust others. There is so much more I could do with my findings and I can't wait to get back out into the field.

I began with the idea to explore the use of applied theater techniques with children. While this field was one that I loved, I actually didn't know that much about it. After a lot of research, I developed a pretty good idea of the field. I realized that not only had I already participated in some applied drama, but that some of the techniques that I hold near and dear are based on those of applied drama leaders. I knew that I wanted to work with children, and finally settled on looking at the effect that applied theater techniques can have on middle school students. In the beginning I had so many ideas of techniques to alter and try with a group of students that it was difficult to narrow my direction. I landed on investigating middle school students' self-esteem in relation to their families. I planned on using a modified version of Boal's Image Theater, which I had previously learned as a technique called Tableau, in combination with a few pieces of Boal's Forum Theater. These techniques, along with a few warm-up and exercises, were designed to foster trust in the students and to open them up to the possibility of a new outlook.

Serendipitously, I connected with Coan Middle School, the perfect place to test my ideas. Coan hosts an afterschool program in which about sixty students are involved. I was originally given two ninety-minute sessions and whichever students had an interest. I ended up spending three very productive, not to mention fun, sessions with the students. In that time we learned so much from each other, and I was lucky enough to see some amazing personal discoveries among the students.

Using applied theater techniques allowed for a window into the self-esteems of the students. It was clear, from the way that they carried themselves to the way they dealt with their peers, that toward the end of the work, the confidence of the

students had been raised. For instance, at the beginning of the first session, there was a clear divide between the younger and older students. The sixth graders let the eighth graders rule the roost. Only thirty minutes in, the younger girls began to stand up for themselves, telling a particularly disruptive older student to quiet down or get out. This is an action that, judging from their original behavior, I would never have expected. I hope that the work has the same effect on the way they carry themselves at home. In a simplified variation of Boal's forum theater, the students were given the opportunity to step into a scene as their own mothers, acting as their real mothers and then their 'dream' mothers. They were also given the opportunity to ask their mothers to treat them as they felt they deserved to be treated. They 'practiced' staying clam, and using words instead of violence to solve disputes and get their points across. It is Boal's belief that this sort of work can help prepare people for what they face in real life and give them tools to rise above their oppression. Based on my work, I agree and believe that no matter the oppression, whether it be an abusive parent or school bully, viewing yourself as worth the work, as capable of standing up to the injustices of your life, is the first step to standing up and changing your fate.

This project was much more to me than receiving honors. It gave me the support and opportunity to explore an area of the arts that I wish to make my career. It was unbelievable to see the way that only a few hours changed the way middle school students viewed themselves in relation to their families. It made me more confident than ever that the techniques of applied drama can make a difference in the lives of children everywhere.

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