

But Now You Can See Me:  
Devising Theatre With Youth Artist-Researchers  
in Search of Revelations and Docutheatricality

by

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## ABSTRACT

Guided by Clifford Geertz's notion of culture as symbolic stories people tell themselves about themselves, the purpose of this study is to examine how youth in an urban area of Phoenix, AZ experience collectively creating and performing original documentary theatre. I pay attention to the ways youth participants—also known as artist-researchers—construct, perform, and/or perceive their identities as they practice drama techniques including improvisation, physical theatre, and Theatre of the Oppressed for the purposes of making docutheatre for social justice. First the artist-researchers chose the topics for their play. Next, they learned and applied drama and research skills to gather and examine data sources used to construct a script that explores hiding and exposure. In the process of sharing and gathering true stories our unique docutheatre-making culture was created.

This multimodal qualitative research case study draws upon the genres of arts-based research and visual ethnography as primary modes of data collection and interpretation. Narrative description and the ethnodramatic mode of representation are used in conjunction with still images and this study's companion website ([www.meant2see.com](http://www.meant2see.com)) to report research findings. Primary data sources include participant observation fieldnotes, over twenty hours of recorded video footage, photographs, and the project's original script and performance of *To Be What's Not Meant to See*. Further data include journal entries, drawings, and social media. All data were coded using In Vivo and Process Coding methods and analyzed through a cultural studies lens.

Codes were sorted into phenomenological categories representative of recurring ideas and themes. Assertions were then solidified once specific key linkages were constructed. This study's key assertions are: Key Assertion 1: Participation in devising documentary social justice theatre influences and affects the construction, perception, and/or performance of urban youth identities through profound connections made with interviewees during the interview process and through the collection of true stories that provide new information and rare opportunities for self-reflection and self-realization; Key Assertion 2: Portions of the roles urban youth play in their identity narratives are disguised or hidden—purposefully, reluctantly, and/or subconsciously—in order to appeal to friends, families, or the codes of dominant culture.

## DEDICATION

To my son Giancarlo, I hope you never let fear of judgment keep you from expressing your beautiful soul.

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## CHAPTER 1

### INTRODUCTION: REVELATIONS

#### **Prologue**

“I think what really hit them is when we revealed something about ourselves, I think that’s what hit them the most. For us to be that willing to tell something about us I think it made them more willing to see more and to accept what they were going through.”

Monroe, *Giant High School Artist-researcher*

“It was strange to hear myself, like, do I make those weird noises? Do I really say ‘like’ that much? It was interesting to see my words put into something that had a bigger effect than my opinion.”

Nick, *To Be What’s Not Meant To See interviewee*

“I felt like it was because these are real stories, like, they were actual *real* stories. The people, they were *there*, and they were being told their story in a way they never actually thought of it, like, they never seen themselves there being, like, played out. They went through it, but they never actually saw it played out like themselves. That’s what made them connect to it even more.”

Lacey, *Giant High School Artist-researcher*

Within us, we have everything, we are a *person*. But this *person* is so rich and so powerful, so intense, with such a multiplicity of forms and faces, that we are constrained to reduce it. This suppression of our freedom of expression and action results from two causes: external, social coercion and/or internal, ethical choice. Fear and morality. I do or do not do thousands of things, I behave or do not behave in thousands of different ways

because I am constrained by social factors, which forced me to be this or stop me from being that.

Augusto Boal<sup>1</sup>

Couldn't keep it in;  
heaven knows I've tried  
Don't let them in, don't let them see  
Be the good girl you always have to be.  
Conceal, don't feel,  
don't let them know  
Well now they know.  
Let it go,  
let it go.

Anderson-Lopez & Lopez (2013)

\* \* \*

### **Statement of Purpose**

The purpose of this study is to understand the experiences of youth who engage in the process of making documentary theatre and the role of the researcher-facilitator in this process. By the time this study came to its end, the primary research question and my outlook changed in ways I welcomed but did not expect. This research is a multimodal arts-based and visual qualitative case study that begins as a narrative about me attempting to create a partnership with immigrant youth to investigate how they experience making

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<sup>1</sup> (Boal, 1995, p. 35).

documentary theatre; it ends as a narrative about seven teens from Phoenix, AZ and our creation of a research-based play about hiding and exposing. Participant observation fieldnotes, over twenty hours of recorded video footage, photographs, and the project's original script, *To Be What's Not Meant to See*, are this study's primary source data. Data were systematically analyzed in order to theorize and make interpretive heuristic assertions concerning our experiences and the potentials inherent in this type of research-based dramatic and theatrical process. Additional data also include journal entries, drawings, and social media.

### **My Intended Audience**

A secondary purpose of this case study is to provide a resource text for readers such as pre-service teachers or facilitators, educators, community leaders or organizers, social workers, youth activists, etc. to critique and/or contemplate as they research and plan to implement similar types of programming. There are multiple reasons for constructing this research as a case study, one being that the case study genre of qualitative research suits the length of my fieldwork and the number of study participants. This genre of qualitative research encourages concentrated examination of one self-contained phenomena. As a result, I interrogated our experiences from many different angles and critically examined everyone's complex lived experiences (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007; Saldaña, 2005; Thomas, 2011). I also became drawn to the case study genre because of its connection to storytelling as an analytic tool and reflective practice.

McCammon, Miller, & Norris (1997, 2000) demonstrate this connection through their compilations of various case studies of drama teaching and learning. They believe that "in addition to promoting reflection on practice, cases . . . promote problem solving

discussions of concern to both pre-service and in-service teachers” (McCammon, Miller, & Norris, 1997, p. 104). Furthermore, the storyteller gains new perspectives on her own practices as she narrates her case and simultaneously reflects on her role in the process (McCammon, Miller, & Norris, 2000). Case study narratives are useful for pre-service teachers; however, my intention is also to reach a wider audience of people interested in using the docutheatre devising method with young people in nontraditional learning environments and/or socially engaged areas of public service.

### **Documentary Theatre, A Partnership For a Change?**

I am passionate about docutheatre techniques because they marry my love for theatrical devising, working with young people, *and* research. When I originally proposed this study, I imagined youth participants and myself as performance ethnographers of our communal experiences and those of the people we encountered during our process. One of the primary goals of this project was to use the documentary theatre (or *docutheatre*) technique to create a research partnership with youth artist-researchers. Young people who fall within the socially constructed target age group of thirteen to nineteen tend to be disregarded as overly emotional and irrational and unable to make decisions for themselves (Dobbs, 2011; Lesko, 2012; Mintz, 2004). My intent was to counteract this ideology by utilizing docutheatre as a way to engage youth as expert researchers of their own lives.

In some respects we became creative partners as we devised a docutheatre script. I shared my skills and worked as a dramaturg to provide constant feedback and edit their work into a more cohesive script. I also took on the role of director as we prepared the staged reading of our script. The artist-researchers, also referenced throughout this

dissertation as “ARs,” gathered research sources, conducted interviews, and wrote, co-directed, and performed their own monologues and scenes. However, I cannot in good faith call them this study’s research partners. I alone wrote the research proposal and planned the docutheatre devising program and rehearsal sessions. I chose the critical framework and theoretical lenses without sharing their principles or consulting with the ARs. Though I keep in communication with the ARs on our Facebook group page and often seek their approval of the ways I present and represent data, I now write alone.

To rectify this, I decided it was important to use the same tools I offered the ARs to make space in this dissertation for their voices. Therefore, I include as many of their spoken words transcribed from video as possible in the form of *ethnodramatic* text (Saldaña, 2005, 2011a). In the past two decades research-based theatre and performed ethnography have continued to grow in popularity in the field of qualitative research despite critiques of objectivity claims or aesthetic values (Ackroyd & O’Toole, 2010; Conquergood, 2003; Denzin, 2003; Donmoyer & Donmoyer, 1995; Saldaña, 2005, 2011a; Snyder-Young, 2010). I choose to use this method for reasons similar to those before me: because it is the most credible, vivid, and persuasive way to report research findings (Saldaña, 2011a). Though I remain the narrator of our experiences, I believe that the ARs and our audience can speak for themselves more effectively than I can for them. Moreover, I hope to provide you various ways to interpretatively engage with this research study. As such, I visually represent our work through various still images found throughout this dissertation and I created a website for visitors to view visual data ([www.meant2.see.com](http://www.meant2.see.com)).

## Primary Research Question

This study began with the following central research question: *In what ways, if any, might participation in devising documentary social justice theatre influence and affect the construction, perception, and/or performance of immigrant youth identities?* I originally chose to focus this study on the identities of teens of immigrant origins because as a daughter of immigrants I am not only drawn to their stories, I am also a stakeholder in the personal experiences of immigrant youth. As a new resident of Arizona and the first U.S. American-born female of my family, I believed it was my responsibility to use this research opportunity to question disturbing undercurrents in the sociopolitical climate, primarily racist anti-immigration policies which dehumanize people of color, discount ethnic studies, demand instant command of the English language, and promote a monocultural society. This is where I wished to intervene with my own particular subject position, my skills as an artist and applied theatre facilitator, and this research project.

I did partner with youth whose parent(s) were not born in the U.S., meaning the group consisted of second generation immigrants like myself. However, when it came time to pick the topic for our docutheatre script, not one of the ARs cared to approach his or her immigrant origins or to examine issues that might pertain to immigrants. When I asked them why this was, the answer was unanimous: “It’s not really that big a deal.” Before I met the ARs I decided not go into this devising process with an idea for a piece already in mind (i.e., this did not have to be a play about being an immigrant or immigrant issues). I was personally interested in first and second generation immigrant youth identity processes, but I knew I did not want to consciously push these interests on the group. I agree with Oddey (1994) who shares, “it has often been a fundamental need

[when devising] to have a strong personal association with the material or idea in order to express something about yourself as well as thinking of ways to bring ideas alive” (p. 26).

It was important to ask the ARs to choose a central theme(s) or idea(s) that deeply affected them so they might invest in their work. I hoped this process would unify the collective in the pursuit of understanding a social issue and that it also might inspire each AR to sensitively explore his or her interviewees’ personal and unique experiences. I encouraged the youths’ desire to pursue what was important to them. I tried to embrace the discoveries made during our process and then later again when I worked with the data corpus to generate assertions. I did not discard my curiosity about their immigrant experiences. Instead I viewed their individual identities like life stories and their immigrant backgrounds as only one of many important events. I thought, “Remember Enza, It’s about them. If they want to talk about it great, if not then don’t push the issue.”

**Primary research question (revised).** As a result of this turn of events, I struggled with some important decisions: Should I analyze why the youth did not find it important to approach their “immigrant-ness” even though they knew this was why I wanted to work with them? Perhaps I could try to make a case for why omission is more significant than disclosure, or why certain behaviors or choices were indicative of some aspect of the youths’ immigrant origins. I decided to forgo this path and to spend my time examining what actually occurred throughout this project. Therefore, this study’s slightly revised primary research question is: *In what ways, if any, might participation in devising documentary social justice theatre influence and affect the construction, perception, and/or performance of urban youth identities?* Related questions include:

- How might youth perceive or perform their identities?
- In what ways, if any, do youth who use drama to devise docutheatre practice his/her agency?
- In what ways, if any, does the research process affect the identities of youth?
- How might collaboration in an ensemble setting foster communication between youth and their communities?
- In what ways, if any, does the experience of collectively researching and creating social justice theatre affirm or subvert grand narratives of adolescence?
- What is the role of the researcher-facilitator in this process?

**A note on my use of *urban* as an identifier.** The term urban appears in this study's primary research question as more of a geographical descriptor or demographical marker and to describe the ARs' origins. The term *urban* youth—understood in this dissertation as populations of diverse youth from various backgrounds who reside in densely populated regions close to, or surrounded by, a major metropolitan area (in this case Phoenix, AZ)—seemed the most appropriate. However, I realize this term has been used to essentialize youth in troublesome ways. Kathleen Gallagher (2007) similarly challenges her use of the word. She states: “The rhetoric of urban schools, what teachers, principals, researchers might call ‘urban,’ or ‘multicultural,’ or ‘diverse,’ is generally read by students as poor, nonwhite, and unruly” (p. 10).

Several participants in Gallagher's drama-based ethnographic study evoke relentless binaries when they contrast living in major cities with living in the suburbs. Many of the city-dwelling youth believe that people living in the suburbs are rich, mostly white, and live in “these amazing houses” (p. 10). Gallagher writes that her interviewees

“invite us, as researchers, to pay careful attention to problems and ideas that we bring to the surface in our study and also [force] us to address our assumptions, face our prejudices and admit our euphemisms” (p. 10). I use the term urban for the purposes of supporting data interpretations and focusing this report. As I tell our story, I take into consideration my reasons for using the word as well as my own assumptions.

In the next chapter I continue to identify this study’s key terms and practices and the ways they are used in this dissertation, paying particular attention to the way the ARs and I understood them. I also establish this study’s critical framework and theoretical lenses. First I elaborate on the way Clifford Geertz’s (1973) notion of culture guided my semiotic analysis of video data and then how this notion allowed me to conceptualize the docutheatre culture we created through gathering and dramatizing firsthand stories. I also ground my development of key assertions in the project of cultural studies and its relationship to critical pedagogy so that I may interrogate the ways in which systems of power were represented and/or deployed through the construction of our docutheatre-making culture. I offer my understanding of cultural studies’ distinguishing characteristic of “radical contextualism” so that I can more clearly describe the need to situate the ARs and my experiences in a particular context. I provide analysis of *identity* as this study’s analytic point of departure to support my argument that cultural practices like docutheatre-making are inextricably linked to the concept of *identity* and the practice of *agency*. Finally, I discuss theatre for social justice as the umbrella term for various dramatic practices implemented throughout this project and I explain my application of the word *docutheatricalty*.

In Chapter Three I detail my research and data collections methods. I state this study's key assertions and describe the process by which I heuristically arrived at each assertion. In this chapter I also begin our story. I give detailed accounts of the research site and my first meetings with the ARs. I end Chapter Three by introducing the ARs with the first ethnodrama "The Story of My Name," but not before taking a detour through our first experiences with *identity*.

In Chapter Four I give an overview of the conceptual framework that helped me design and plan the docutheatre devising program curriculum implemented in this study. I describe how I outlined the program before meeting the ARs and then how it transformed as I responded to the needs of the group and reflected on our practice. Chapter Four examines the first part of the docutheatre devising program and includes reports of findings through still images and the ethnodramas "Teen Drama," "Hard to Put Out There," and "Hiding and Exposure, On the Meta." These representations of verbatim data in script form provide greater insight into how we chose the play's topics and developed our research and interview skills.

In Chapter Five I continue with narrative description and commentary of part two of the docutheatre devising program. This includes a discussion about how we transcribed and edited our interviews into the script *To Be What's Not Meant to See*. I share the dramatic techniques we practiced and applied to devise our performance and the obstacles we encountered along the way. In the process, I consider ways I might have improved my facilitation practice. "Hopes" shares the ARs' wishes for their audience and "Masks" dramatizes the characterization of our interviewees. Chapter Five concludes

with analysis of the play *To Be What's Not Meant to See* and the ARs' performances in our staged reading.

Chapter Six begins with the ethnodrama "Talk-back." This script represents our crucial moment of *communitas* with the audience and leads into critique of the final meeting with the ARs, their drama teacher Nina Lake (pseudonym), and their peers. I close this dissertation with my belief that this study's greater significance is grounded in docutheatre's radical contextualism and its potential for profound human connections and self-realizations in the lives of youth and their adult counterparts. Finally, I share the revelations I made about my future practice.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

You will see that I chose to include myself as a character in the ethnodramatic playscripts that I place throughout this dissertation. Saldaña (2003) states: "A problematic choice is the researcher's inclusion as a character in ethnodrama." He goes on to list different roles that the researcher might choose to play in her ethnodramas that could possibly maintain the integrity of her research, though he warns that sometimes the best place for the researcher is "offstage" (p. 223). Perhaps this is so the spotlight can shine on her research participants. I grappled with how to position myself in this research. Ultimately, I decided to "keep it real" and to write the scenes as verbatim as possible—including myself as a character when appropriate.

I allowed myself to "keep it real" as long as I prioritized the voices of the ARs. When I designed and facilitated the docutheatre devising program, I was also guided by an "it's about them" mentality. As I reviewed data, I came to see that in doing so I perpetuated an "us and them" binary (*us* being adult educators, facilitators, leaders, etc.

and *them* being students or young artists). I positioned myself at a safe distance as many well-meaning educators, facilitators, or researchers tend to do when enacting their job duties. For example, I did not conduct docutheatre research for the ARs or offer myself as an interviewee for the play. As you read through the findings of this research, consider what the ramifications of this distancing might be. When I interpret data I comment on the ways I was blinded by my duties and good intentions, so much so that I exerted my power in ways I was unaware of until I reviewed visual data.

What disturbed me the most, however, was that everyone involved in this project, including our audience, revealed something deeply personal, something they were hiding. Except for me. Now, of course this dissertation is all about me since I am the primary voice you “hear.” But is it the “real” me? I want to end by reflecting and sharing my researcher’s positionality as an *autoethnodramatic* monologue (Saldaña, 2011a) in an effort to make this study (and me) as real and exposed as possible. As the ARs told me, “we all hide something.”

### **“Reflexivity & Positionality”**

#### **SETTING**

It’s a bitterly cold evening. A small office tucked in the back of a driving school in New Britain, CT. There are no windows. Only a small desk in the corner with piles of books and papers scattered everywhere. There’s a garbage can overflowing with empty Dunkin Donuts coffee cups and a buzzing fluorescent light overhead. Paul Simon and Bob Marley attempt to drown out the noise.

*(ENZA sits at her desk typing. Every once in awhile she looks up and stares into space.*

*Sometimes she talks to herself quietly; sometimes she bangs her head on the desk in front*

*of her laptop. She gets up and paces until she notices the audience. She takes the chair she was sitting on, turns it around so its back is to the audience, and straddles the seat. She tiredly hugs her arm around the back of the chair, looks up, stands again and speaks.)*

Hey. You're finally here.

I've been here...a long time.

I'm the researcher.

The primary narrator—and sometimes the playwright.

Our story is about to begin.

I will tell you a story about stories.

True stories that became a play about hiding things and exposing things.

True stories that are true because real people told them.

And because they believe in them.

These stories make/break/shape/sculpt/tell/share who we are.

I write this story alone.

Now is the time for me to reveal my “true self,” or at least the truth I choose to reveal today.

This story begins with me locating my place in the space.

Who I am.

Where I come from.

How I think.

First of all, I am obsessed with the “power” of theatre (*power is accompanied by physicalized “scare” quotes*)

Second, I am advantaged.

But I am also a woman.

I am White, but sometimes people tell me I don’t “look” White—whatever that means.

My parents are immigrants from Sicily. You know the little island that looks like it’s being kicked by the boot? (*kicks her foot and chuckles sardonically*)

So yeah, my name “Enza” is uniquely Sicilian, and I have coarse, dark curly hair and a little olive in my skin.

In the ‘burbs of Connecticut sometimes people made fun of my name or asked me:

“So is your dad in the mob!?”

“Did you know that Sicilians are part African?”

When I was little I didn’t get why my dad said:

“Don’t you *ever* ask me that again.”

Agents and casting directors used to call me “ethnically vague.”

As if that was a good thing.

It made me feel like I was vague.

Sometimes I did not feel like I was “White.”

And sometimes I used how I look, or don't look, to my advantage.

So I am absolutely White. And I know my Whiteness *and* my vagueness give me privilege.

I am someone who tries to be aware of her privilege,

And tries to use her power for good (but I'm only human)

I am a dreamer.

And an idealist at heart.

I suppose that sounds funny since idealism is of the mind, reason, or ideals.

I admit it: I have always let my ideas, my mind

Take the lead.

My family says I think too much. (Probably why I've been in school for a hundred and one years instead of on stage or in the theatre where I belong.)

Every human being deserves food, shelter, respect, honesty, love,

Because that makes sense in my *mind*, it is *reasonable*. The right thing to do.

Don't you think?

But, I want to be someone who understands life is more complicated than that.

So I guess I'm also a materialist. Whatever, labels are dumb anyway, amiright? (*a wry smile*)

Uhhhhh....yeah, sorry, sense of humor is a must. (*Turns around and sits on the desk facing the audience, grabs her legs and crosses them underneath her.*)

I am a U.S. citizen, a heterosexual, able-bodied, educated, and middle-class—but at the moment, we live with my parents. (*shrugs*)

Nonno came here with five kids and \$10.

Mom left school in sixth-grade, she's been workin' ever since.

Dad supported us with two jobs.

Mom and Dad have two *homes* now, and they sent me to the best colleges.

First woman on both sides of my family to go to college.

Let alone become a “doctor.” No pressure though. (*uncrosses her legs, takes her shoes off. She sits up straight and onto her hands.*)

I'm an artist, teacher, facilitator, scholar,

Sister,

Wife,

First-time mother. (*stands*)

I wear many masks.

Each one of these masks affects how I tell this story and the ways I work with youth.

Who in this case, are members of many targeted groups.

These kids—No, wait.

These *people*,

Amazed me with what they were willing to share.

Maybe they felt they had to, or needed to, or wanted to

Lay themselves bare.

As I stood safely at a distance.

Hiding beneath many masks (teacher's aren't supposed to reveal things!)

And with good intentions: It's about *them* not me!

Somehow I made it about me and them, us and them, us and them, ussssssss...*(squeezes eyes shut, beat, thinks, takes a deep audible breath, beat)*

This is also a story about the relationship between culture and power.

Power fascinates me, the way it slithers, penetrates, appears, disappears—in all areas of my life.

And maybe you'll think this is lame, or non-scholarly, or whatever but:

This story gives me hope.

Even though it's my job to critique it now (and I don't take my job lightly),

The people in this story give me hope. And courage.

To say what I should have said then:

*(walks downstage and faces the audience)*

Because everyone thinks I'm strong I have to hide that sometimes I'm actually terrified.

But now you can see me, too.

## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW OF SUPPORTING LITERATURE & TERMINOLOGY

Throughout this chapter, I discuss the theoretical underpinnings of this dissertation and review theoretical and practical terms. I begin by explaining how Clifford Geertz's theories influenced my analysis and interpretation of the data corpus, specifically his notion that *culture* is a signifying practice made up of symbolic stories people tell themselves about themselves. During the documentary theatre devising program, I noticed that all of the ARs' perceptions and expressions of themselves were influenced by stories: the personal stories they shared; their reactions to stories of others (in this case their ensemble members and their interviewees); and the stories constructed and shared by their cultures and society. As we practiced drama techniques and established ourselves as docutheatrical storytellers and "story-sharers" we created our own specific culture. I argue that our culture, which was legitimized through the process of creating a play about *hiding* and *exposure*, is inextricably linked to the concepts of *identity* and *agency*.

In this dissertation, I choose to put forth evidence-based assertions derived from analysis of data using qualitative methodologies (refer to Chapter Three). I chose this path of inquiry to discover the value of documentary theatre and its relationship to young ARs pushed to the margins of cultures and society. In the pages that follow, I pay attention to theories that support my key assertions concerning our experiences. One of the themes that emerged through my analysis of various data (including the ARs' playscript) was the idea that *a person hides his or her "true" self because of fear*. A related theme is: *It is more important, or healthier, to be yourself*. It is my goal to engage

the ideas of cultural studies thinkers as I attempt to understand how cultural practices such as theatre with and by youth work as sites for the representation and deployment of systems of power. Moreover, as I share our experiences and interpret data I explore how these systems might determine a person's negotiation of the roles he or she chooses to play (or not play) for fear of retribution or causing disappointment. In this chapter, I also establish how cultural studies' distinguishing feature of "radical contextualism" focuses my critiques and interpretation of data. I draw upon the work of Lawrence Grossberg and his contemporaries to establish my understandings of cultural studies. Henry Giroux's application of cultural studies to critical pedagogy<sup>2</sup> further supports my view that docutheatrical learning environments like the one developed through this project are inextricably linked to culture and power.

Finally, I review some of this study's most critical key terms such as *identity*, *agency*, *adolescence*, *story*, *narrative*, and *docutheatricality* and the terms for its major drama and theatre practices such *social justice theatre*, *Documentary theatre*, and *Devised theatre* (or *devising*). (In Chapter Three I pay more attention to terms associated with arts-based and visual research methods.) Terminology is often complicated and slippery. Rather than offer any one specific or determinate definition for key ideas and methods employed in the research study and this dissertation, I offer critiques and possible explanations to which I am drawn and that informed our research.<sup>3</sup> I purposely take into account the way the youth participants and I understood keywords and dramatic practices throughout this project and the way they are employed in this dissertation

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<sup>2</sup> I use critical pedagogy to mean the educational movement spearheaded by Paulo Freire (2010) that incites learners to become resistant thinkers and active participants in their learning, rather than passive receptacles of knowledge.

<sup>3</sup> When I say "our," I am referring to both my research and the research conducted by the youth ARs.

## Critical Frameworks and Theoretical Lenses

### Critical Framework

Clifford Geertz (1973) wrote that he understood the concept of *culture* as countless interconnected webs of signs and symbols spun by individuals as they play out the dramas of their lives, strands in which people are suspended and that can be untangled and interpreted in the search for important significations (p. 5). For the purpose of this study, I am most drawn to Geertz's (1973) idea of culture as "*a story [people] tell themselves about themselves*" (p. 448). For Geertz, culture is something that can be "read," a type of live narrative representation full of signs and symbols embodying a people's "whole way of life" (p. 436). This correlation between culture and storytelling, established by Geertz, figures prominently throughout this dissertation.

Raymond Williams (1981), writing from a cultural studies viewpoint, also offered the notion that culture is a "signifying system through which necessarily (among other means) a social order is communicated, reproduced, experienced, and explored" (p. 13). This exemplifies the mutual influences cultural studies and sociology have on each other and on this dissertation. Though Geertz and Williams's theories of culture are by no means novel, I find their way of perceiving culture relevant. The idea of *culture* comprised of the symbolic and revealing stories we tell ourselves about ourselves is applicable and useful in this type of dramatically structured arts-based inquiry.

**Qualitative analysis within this framework.** While employing the visual ethnographic methodology and observing hours of video footage including rehearsals and our final performance, a semiotic analysis of the webs we wove within the framework of culture as story proved advantageous. I observed each video as if it was one chapter in

the story of our process. I analyzed the architecture and topography of the research site, the imagery created by the ARs' bodies in space and time, their relationships, the ideas they put forth, their spoken thoughts, their actions and behaviors, and my own presence in the room. This project was perceived as a cultural text to be mined for meanings at both the micro- and macro-levels of analysis. The research I designed is the framing, or containing, narrative; the stories of the youth, their documentary research, and their interviewees are embedded within its narrative borders. In other words, this study is a kind of story-within-a-story or a qualitative-research-study-within-a-documentary theatre-research study (Abbott, 2008, pp. 28-39).

**The stories we told.** Much of this study was, and is, about how storytelling becomes a vehicle for analyses and insight, a way to investigate how young people and their adult counterparts perceive their identities and functions in the world, and how they might connect as human beings. The ARs and I did more than story-tell; we story-shared. ARs exchanged stories with each other, with me and my assistants, their interviewees, and their audience. I illustrate in the coming chapters how a docudramatic script that explores why people choose to hide and the docutheatrical performance (or story-sharing) intervene in the difficult conversations about identity and agency. Through the play's narrative discourse and *mise en scene*, the ARs shared their version of the stories they gathered through interviews and secondary source research. Their audience received the drama and then connected with the performers through their own stories, their interpretations of the drama, and the burning questions asked during dialogue after the performance. And now here I am, through the guise of research, narrating to my audience the story of our process: *the story we told ourselves about ourselves*.

**A note on the ubiquity of story.** It has been my experience, as a teller of dramatic stories in representational theatrical form and a person engaged in the world around her, that narrative is ubiquitous. Humanity's organization of thoughts and memories, our comprehension of our culture(s), of ourselves as human beings, is bound by the stories made and/or told about our lives and the world we inhabit, both in works of fiction and nonfiction, through "true" stories or fantasies. These stories of life—by which I do not necessarily mean biographical tales but rather a process by which a person's life is structured and communicated like narrative—are comprised of a series of events and episodes represented through narrative and transmitted through various types of narrative discourses that communicate deeper meanings through such devices as imagery, metaphor, thought, mood, agents (actors), and actions, to name a few (Abbott, 2008). I consider narrative devices and discourses, or the means through which they are communicated, cultural practices that have the ability to constitute social reality.

Stories can shape the realities that are established and maintained by the consensus of a group. Certain stories can be powerful generators of social and cultural knowledge, especially those grand narratives that philosophers and sociologists like Lyotard (1984) believe legitimize themselves through their retelling (p. xxiii-xxv). Examples of these type of narratives are the story of the U.S. Declaration of Independence that tells *all men* they are created equal, or U.S. American stories of adolescence as a time when emotionally irrational beings must be kept under the guidance and control of all-knowing adults lest they become savages. These stories have a strong impact on peoples' choices or lack thereof. I posit here and show in chapters to come how devising original docutheatre allows the artist to investigate and challenge

these grand narratives while reimagining them for purposes of knowledge, social justice, and human rights.

### **Theoretical Lenses: The Cultural Studies Project**

Put in its simplest terms, cultural studies is the study of contemporary culture and the conditions in which it is produced. Cultural studies has been widely embraced and severely contested by scholars all over the world. Many disagree over its defining characteristics and its objectives (During, 1999; Grossberg, 2010; Sardar & Van Loon, 2005; Siskin & Warner, 2008). Rather than occupy myself in writing about the many debates or critiques surrounding what cultural studies “is”, I hope to engage in the theoretical debates about power, culture, meaning, identity, subjectivity, representation, and agency, all of which are at work in the practice of cultural studies. For purposes of this dissertation, I draw from Grossberg’s (2010) assertion that cultural studies aims for:

[D]escribing and intervening in the ways cultural practices are produced within, inserted into, and operate in the everyday life of human beings and social formations, so as to reproduce, struggle against, and perhaps transform the existing structures of power. It investigates how people are empowered and disempowered by the particular structures and forces that organize their everyday lives in contradictory ways, and how their everyday lives are themselves articulated to and by the trajectories of economic, social, cultural, and political power. (p. 8)

Though Grossberg follows this statement by critiquing whether it sufficiently encompasses cultural studies and the complexities of the cultural studies project, I believe Grossberg’s view provides me with an adequate understanding of how to use theory to

ground my research. This explanation of what Grossberg calls “the heart” of cultural studies also resounds in Giroux’s (2004) writing when he advocates for cultural studies’ inclusion in discourses of critical pedagogy:

[C]ultural studies becomes available as a resource to educators who can then teach students how to look at the media (industry and texts), analyze audience reception, challenge rigid disciplinary boundaries, critically engage popular culture, produce critical knowledge, or use cultural studies to reform the curricula and challenge disciplinary formations within public schools and higher education. (pp. 60-62)

Giroux and Grossberg’s views on cultural studies further guide this study’s data and assessment of its emergent themes.

As a drama and theatre pedagogue, I constantly strive to inspire people to think critically, ask questions, and creatively push the boundaries of dominant ideologies. My intentions for doing social justice theatre are similar to those of Grossberg’s reason for doing cultural studies: to reproduce, struggle against, and transform the existing structures of power using the tools available in drama and theatre. I do so with the knowledge and understanding that theatre, with youth or adults, can represent culture and produce culture, represent power and become a weapon of power. In other words, I am aware that as I work to provide youth with the tools to dismantle power structures that inhibit them, I am also teaching them how to use their own blueprints, possibly coated with the remnants of the structures before them, to reconstruct these structures.

**Culture studies and critical pedagogy.** I argue that environments of teaching and learning are inextricably linked to culture and cultural studies. In his writing, Giroux

(2004) calls for an understanding of critical pedagogy that moves beyond conventional educational environments into nontraditional locations of learning such as the media and the arts (or a docutheatre program for example). Giroux (2004) suggests pedagogy should be the “defining principle of a wide ranging set of cultural apparatuses” and not just something that happens in academic settings. He argues that “pedagogy is central to any viable notion of cultural politics and that cultural studies is crucial to any viable notions of pedagogy” (p. 62). He explains

[M]any cultural theorists acknowledge the primacy of culture’s role as an educational site where identities are being continually transformed, power is enacted, and learning assumes a political dynamic as it becomes not only the condition for the acquisition of agency but also the sphere for imagining oppositional social change. As a space for both the production of meaning and social interaction, culture is viewed . . . as an important terrain in which various modes of agency, identity, and values are neither prefigured nor always in place but subject to negotiation and struggle, and open for creating new democratic transformations, though always within various degrees of iniquitous power relations. (p. 60)

Giroux’s explanation further allows me to theorize how our documentary theatre-making program worked as a pedagogical tool that produced culture while inspiring a type of cultural criticism that questioned how identities are performed, exposed, hidden, or continuously transformed, and how power is enacted through this process.

**Radical contextualism.** More than just a practice that interrogates power structures and cultural constructions, cultural studies is distinguished by what Grossberg

(1994, 2010) calls its *radical contextualism*: “the very nature of relation between culture and power depends upon the particular context or site into which it is attempting to intervene” (1994, p. 6). Giroux (2004) claims this contextualism is radical because “the very questions [cultural studies] asks change in every context” (p. 65). In other words, though it is important to note (whether it is obvious or not) that there are power dynamics at play in the construction, perception, or expression of youth identities, or in the spaces in which they make docutheatre with me as the facilitator, it is necessary to move with and then beyond this observation to situate our experience in a particular context to more clearly understand the intricacies of our particular experiences in relation to other youth cultures and their functions in society. As a qualitative case study examining one local phenomenon, this study’s structures of meaning—or our stories—are always considered culturally (and historically) specific. I believe it is important to contextualize our experiences so as to exemplify how unique and complicated youth and their stories might be. At the very least, I hope to inspire provocative questions and conversations around the practice of this type of drama and theatre work with youth in different contexts.

### ***Identity as a Point of Departure***

I believe *identity* is a central concept in this dissertation. The ARs’ conceptions, constructions, or expressions of “self”—what I refer to as the fluid notion of his or her *identity process*—were often examined throughout the process of applying documentary theatre techniques to investigate what and why people hide or expose. Furthermore, *identity* is a common theme that emerges from the original script and performance of our play *To Be What’s Not Meant to See*, with *subjectivity* and the possibility of *self-*

*realization* appearing as secondary ideas. In future chapters I share findings and analysis that support these claims.

### **A Note On the Multistoried Self**

I do not advocate for theories of fixed or stable, always the same, or universal identity processes. However, in this dissertation I want to move beyond the idea of a person as “multi-identified.” As you read this and future chapters, I request that you consider the possibility of a person being comprised of one multistoried self throughout his or her lifetime. This study led me to view the youth and myself in a continuous process of writing and rewriting individual life narratives that are “true” because we believe in them. This viewpoint now influences my writing and thinking of *identity*.

I ask that you and I travel through the story of this research study contemplating the notion that each of us has our own life narrative (metanarrative) comprised of multiple short stories (micronarratives) with many sections and chapters. Sometimes all these parts connect to each other and sometimes they do not; we experience numerous events and conflicts, play or suppress many different roles, and interact with multiple individuals, cultures, and societies who effect us on many levels within various settings. We are always who we are but not necessarily who we have been or will be. As our narrative arranges and produces our subjectivity, we are in a constant state of beginning, ending, and transforming dependent on how our narrative is being communicated and read within a particular context until inevitably the narrative comes to a close.

### **Identity Matters?**

Brubaker and Cooper (2000) argue that “[i]dentity’ . . . tends to mean too much (when understood in a strong sense), too little (when understood in a weak sense), or

nothing at all (because of its sheer ambiguity)” (p. 1). Further, the overwhelming amount of attention that has been paid to the concept of identity adds to its elusiveness. Though people might be able to provide definitions for what the word *identity* means—perhaps describing a basic understanding of personality traits, the roles a person plays in his or her careers, families, or cultural and social groupings, abilities or ways of expressing oneself, or simply a word that points to the range of a person’s likes and dislikes—it is almost impossible to analyze or describe the identity of another, including his or her group memberships and identifications (age group, race, ethnicity, class, gender, sexuality, religion) in a way that coherently or responsibly encompasses the entirety of his or her constantly evolving idiosyncrasies and always shifting complex circumstances.

Brubaker and Cooper (2000) express their mutual belief that many scholars might have had their fill of conversations about identity by the 1970s, even though analysis of the concept had only just begun. In the 1980s the term was once again rejuvenated (if it ever really faded) by political and theoretical discourses on race, gender, sexuality, class, and power structures, otherwise known as identity politics. Brubaker and Cooper ominously state, “[t]he ‘identity’ crisis—a crisis of overproduction and consequent devaluation of meaning—shows no sign of abating” (p. 3). This may be because people need to address their states of being, often in relation to others, to better negotiate their environments. This seems especially true during tumultuous or challenging times, perhaps the reason for the familiar linkage between the concept of identity and the idea of *crisis* (Erikson, 1968; Lawler, 2008). During periods of individual or social change, for emancipation or survival, or in the pursuit of making sense out of tragic events or social injustices, philosophical questions about the existence of humanity often lead to more

specific questions: “Well, what does it *really* mean to be ‘White’ or ‘American’?” “What was it about his character (or identity), or lack thereof, that led him to murder so many innocent children?” “Why would she hide that about herself?” “Why would they choose to bully someone so seemingly defenseless?”

It is debatable whether the topic of identity, of the individual or of the collective, has become an overworked, foggy, scratched lens through which those involved in disciplines such as psychology, sociology, anthropology, philosophy, politics, arts, or even law enforcement have attempted to view and understand the human condition. I agree with Stuart Hall’s (2000) declaration that “the theorization of identity is a matter of considerable political significance” (p. 29) and as such needs to remain in the forefront of conversation, especially when working in communities with marginalized groups such as youth whose stories tend to be downplayed or ignored for many reasons, not the least of which is that the period of childhood has been socially and culturally constructed as a constant state of powerlessness and confusion compared to that of a stable adulthood. It is precisely because the analysis and interpretation of identity, as a philosophical idea or tangible process, is so complicated and constantly in flux that I believe it must be continuously questioned and investigated, especially through research and dialogue, regardless of how challenging or flawed the resulting conversation might be.

### **Identity: The Influences of Society and Culture.**

**Sociological viewpoints.** The role of society and culture in shaping the identity of a person is highlighted in the field of sociology and influences how I understand and discuss identity in this dissertation. Sociologists such as Erving Goffman (1959) explored how individuals construct, express, or present their identities within society with

references to theatre and performance. Goffman uses dramaturgical tools to compare human behavior to theatrical presentations in which people perform social roles as they interpret and internalize both the “expressions [they] *give* and expressions [they] *give off*” (p. 2), making meaning of their identities through “planned” and “rehearsed” social interactions and subconscious role playing.

More recently, Steph Lawler (2008) takes a similar stance in her book *Identity, Sociological Perspectives*. She begins her rationale by sharing a story provided by a research participant in one of her studies. Lawler then demonstrates how this woman, through sharing her story, “engaged in processes of *producing* an identity through assembling various memories, experiences, episodes, etc.” (p. 11) Lawler argues that identities are “‘made up’ through making a *story* out of *life* [original emphasis]” (p. 11). People are constantly engaged in processes of interpretation and intertextuality; they interpret and adopt images and happenings of the social world as they recall personal memories. Eventually all this information becomes material for his or her identity narrative. Lawler theorizes that a person’s identity is always influenced by the events of her social worlds and the individuals with whom she identifies. These other people’s stories are inevitably bound to her own. She explains that all stories must have characters and action or transformation, and she draws upon Paul Ricoeur to describe how the processes of emplotment serves to configure and actualize a story of a life, thus establishing the identity of the teller. Lawler implies that identity is produced through the intricate and hermeneutic process of taking seemingly unrelated events and episodes of

social life, interpreting their meanings, synthesizing them, arranging them into a coherent plot structure and then transmitting them through various forms of narrative discourses.<sup>4</sup>

**Cultural studies viewpoints.** Cultural studies thinkers also seem to infer that culture and cultural objects have a hand in the processes of identity: “Cultural studies has been, as we might expect, most interested in how groups with least power practically develop their own readings of, and uses for, cultural products—in fun, in resistance, or to articulate their own identity” (During, 1999, p. 7). Additionally, Hall (2000) argues that the “concept of identity does not signal that stable core of the self, unfolding from beginning to end through all the vicissitudes of history without change; the bit of the self which remains always-already ‘the same’, identical to itself across time” (p. 17). The contexts in which identities are conceived, constructed, or enacted are always changing; therefore, a person’s experiences are always transforming and growing depending on his shifting social and cultural contexts. Like Hall, many cultural studies theorists view identities as increasingly unstable and fragmented, uncertain in the face of globalization and the technological age, “never singular but multiply constructed across different, often intersecting and antagonistic, discourses, practices and positions . . . subject to a radical historicization . . . constantly in the process of change and transformation” (Hall, 2000, p. 17).

What cultural perspectives on identity seem to agree on is that people are comprised of “more” than a stable, all encompassing, or basic identity. I know that I take on different roles to perform, or wear different masks, depending on the social or cultural

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<sup>4</sup> Lawler (2008) includes a footnote mentioning the debate over whether ‘story’ and ‘narrative’ are the same thing. While she says that she uses them “more or less interchangeably” (footnote, p. 10) I take the position shared by many narratologists that they are two different things: story is the chronological events and narrative is the way in which these events are represented and then transmitted through various narrative discourses (Abbott, 2008, pp. 1-27).

context and the way I perceive myself: Sicilian in my family, U.S. American in school, mother in my home, drama facilitator at work, and friend at the bar (to name a few). The decisions I make about what “mask” I wear to perform these roles is determined by my choices which are consciously and subconsciously determined by the status quo. What this study reminds us (me, the ARs, their audience, and this dissertation’s audience) is that masks not only perform, they also conceal. In order to perform one mask, another must be hidden.

### **“Adolescent” Identity**

Much of the conversations the ARs and I had revolved around the experiences of people of various ages. However, when the ARs spoke from their own experiences they almost always referred to themselves as “teenagers.” Since the ARs are the central characters of this dissertation, I choose to concentrate on the experiences of teens. All the ARs are “teens” which means they fall within the culturally constructed period known in the U.S. as “adolescence.” For this conversation, I consider teens or adolescents to be between the ages of thirteen and nineteen.

**A look at Eriksonian influences on this study.** Erikson (1968) coined the popular term *identity crisis* after working with World War II trauma victims who “through the exigencies of war lost a sense of personal sameness and historical continuity. They were impaired in that central control over themselves for which, in the psychoanalytic scheme, only the ‘inner agency’ of the ego could be held responsible” (p. 17). He later applied his findings to “severely conflicted young people whose sense of confusion is due, rather, to a war within themselves” (p. 17). According to Erikson (1968), adolescence is a time for extreme inner turmoil and crisis of identity (p. 17). Though Erikson’s theories might be

considered outdated or controversial, I invoke them here because while reviewing my participant observation fieldnotes I came across a story shared by Alexander (one of the ARs) that reminded me of Erikson's ideas. Alexander (pseudonym) describes being bullied because he identifies as bisexual. In his story, he shared that he experienced a "war inside [his] head" over who he "is" and who he is "supposed" to be. I saw a recurrence of these ideas in the other ARs' stories and was deeply intrigued by one of the AR's possible topics presented for our play, "Life is war."



**Figure 2.1 Stock Image: "Identity confusion."**

Alexander's story reminded me of my past experiences with Erikson and led me to some Internet research on Erikson's fifth stage of psychosocial development: *identity* versus *role confusion*. For Erikson, this occurs during the period of adolescence when the teenager desperately seeks to establish his or her identity. I discovered an article providing information about this Eriksonian stage by educator Kendra Cherry (2014) on *About.com*, a popular information site authored by "experts" of multiple topics in various fields, à la *Wikipedia*. The information about this stage of adolescence was exemplified with the stock image shown in Figure 2.1. I do not want to purposefully trivialize the real struggles experienced by teens; and I am not ignoring the shaky reliability of online sources such as *About.com* and *Wikipedia*. I only suggest a specific reading of an image I found intriguing, if not troublesome. This image of an androgynous youth wearing all black and who appears almost vampire-like, with dark circles under the one eye he or she

is exposing, invokes a familiar likeness (at least it is familiar from the media sources I have viewed) which illustrates an overly emotional, brooding, and dangerous adolescent who perhaps self-mutilates or is on the verge of suicide, and most likely listens to destructive music with hateful lyrics. Perhaps Cherry means to imply that this is the Eriksonian version of “adolescence.”

***Hailing the Eriksonian “adolescent.”*** Youth culture scholar Nancy Lesko (2012) states: “Teenagers appear in our cultural talk as synonymous with crazed hormones, as delinquents, deficiencies, or clowns, that is, beings not to be taken too seriously” (p. 1). Lesko goes on to describe the U.S. American notion of teenagers as the wicked stock characters in the culturally situated narrative of childhood (p. 2). I question to what degree this assessment of teens as overly emotional, troubled, confused, lost, dangerous, or not to be taken seriously, is grounded in theoretical musings or hypotheses such as Erikson’s idea of teens being “at war with themselves.” I am also curious if, how, or when people who fall between the culturally constructed age-range of thirteen and nineteen are “hailed” into the societal roles Lesko mentions above.

Althusser (1971) claims that people’s identities are produced by the ideological systems they function within or are governed by such as religion, education, family, politics, and cultures. Identities are then woven into society’s dominant systems by these various forms of ideology. One of Althusser’s more popular theories includes that of *interpellation*, which claims identities are summoned into being with a symbolic “Hey you! Come here, try/believe/do/BE this.” Ideological objects (like images of teens used by adults on informational websites) potentially “create” observers who are appointed as subjects with restrictions on what they should or should not comfortably express

(privately or publicly) about their identities (pp. 162-177). Taking Althusser's ideas into consideration, I question the correlation between the youth pictured in Figure 2.1 and some of the youth who participated in this project (a few who are pictured in Figure 2.2 participating in an ensemble-building exercise). For example, I noticed that the ARs share *some* physical resemblances with the girl in the picture above and to other stock images of "typical" teenagers I might find online or in the media. I also observed that many of their stories include struggles associated with being a teenager.



**Figure 2.2 The artist-researchers: Group Count ensemble game.**

Have theories of adolescence such as Erikson's actually worked to produce adolescent identities as angst-ridden and adolescence as a time in a person's life marked by agonizing inner conflict between who she "is" and what she is "supposed" to be? After conducting this study I am inclined to answer, "Yes." Though after observing the complex lives of the people involved in this research project, I also know it might not be so simple as to pinpoint these theories as the sole contributors to the shaping of teen identities. I continue this conversation in future chapters when I share the process of choosing a play issue or topic and as I interpret the ARs personal stories, behaviors, and the eventual docudramatic script. I concentrate on the way our life story-sharing supports, perpetuates, or challenges grand narratives of what it means "to be a teenager" or "to be yourself" in Phoenix, AZ (and maybe U.S. America).

## **Identity and Agency**

In narratology, the word *agent* is a synonym for the word *character* and refers to an entity with the ability to perform actions (Abbott, 2008). In this dissertation the agents include the ARs, their drama teacher, their interviewees, our audience, and me. When I speak of our *agency* I imply our capacity to perform actions in our life narratives, and when I refer to *agentic practice* I mean the complex processes of reflecting on our circumstances and then using the tools at our disposal (research, story, drama, and theatre) to act upon our worlds for the purposes of self-realization and reclamation of personal power. Throughout this dissertation, I attempt to demonstrate through arts-based research findings how my perception of agency moved beyond dualistic notions of “acting upon” or “not acting upon” our circumstances and those of “accommodating” or “resisting” cultural or societal dominance and toward an analysis of the symbiotic relationship between the study’s agents and their complex social and cultural circumstances.

**The possibility of agency.** As a result of my analysis of this study’s primary source data, I take as a given that identity processes are influenced by material circumstances. The circumstances of the ARs and their interviewees include living in a society where a White capitalist patriarchy continues to marginalize people based on race, ethnicity, class, sexuality, gender, age, religion, or culture and where stereotypes found in the media are assumed “real.” This is evidenced by an Arizona legislature that targets immigrants of color or attempts to give certain people the right to discriminate because of their religious beliefs and countless fashion magazines or “pop” stars that determine what it means to be “beautiful.” The ARs often proclaimed frustrations

associated with living in a society that privileges heterosexuality and particular images of what it means to be “normal.” Data also corroborate that familial relationships and the status quo determine how the ARs and the people they interviewed choose to perform their identities. What people think profoundly affects his or her “true self” and what “should” be expressed or “needs” to be concealed. If this is so, then I wonder what power people have over their own lives. My time with the ARs made me question the capacity we have to act upon our worlds or to develop our selfhoods and practice free will, particularly when we are paralyzed by fear of judgment or being ostracized by the people who are supposed to love us the most.

These kinds of questions have been asked often during debates over the prevalence of structure or agency in the shaping of a person’s identity and its processes. There are many sociologists, for example, who seem to think it is not a question of either/or, but more of an interplay between the two (Berger & Luckman, 1966; Bourdieu, 1977; Giddens, 1984; Grenfell, 2008). Berger and Luckman (1966) call for a dialectal relationship between society and its people (unfortunately using some irksome patriarchal language) where one generation of people constructs a society that then socializes or produces the next generation. They evoke a spiral image:

[I]t is important to emphasize that the relationship between man, the producer, and the social world, his product, is and remains a dialectical one. That is, man (not, of course, in isolation but in his collectivities) and his social world interact with each other. The product acts back upon the producer . . . The objectivated social world is retrojected into

consciousness in the course of socialization . . . *Society is a human product . . . Man is a social product.* (p. 61)

I mention sociological notions of an ongoing, cyclical, symbiotic relationship between people and society to suggest the possibility of young people exerting power over their identities even within the structures that produce them.

First of all, by using the tools for devising docutheatre to explore social issues and our play's topics (*hiding* and *exposure*), the ARs engaged in a form of agentic *praxis*. Freire (2010) defines *praxis* in *Pedagogy of the Oppressed* as "reflection and action upon the world in order to transform it" (p. 51). Freire encourages oppressed peoples to become active participants in their educations, to acquire a critical awareness of their own condition so they may, with their allies, become agents for change. As the ARs and I investigated the ideas of hiding and exposure through personal stories and research, we made discoveries about what people hide (aspects of their identity, feelings, beliefs, possessions, etc.) and why people choose this course of action. In the process we also made discoveries about ourselves and what we are willing to expose and to whom we are willing to expose ourselves. The ARs employed the principles of theatre and dramatic structure as modes of action to briefly liberate themselves and our audience by choosing to reveal themselves despite the restrictions imposed on the expressions of their identities.

Secondly, I believe the ARs and their interviewees take action or take back some of their power through the decisions they make about what to hide, where or how to hide it, and to whom they reveal themselves, despite the feelings of powerlessness that provoke them to hide in the first place. Antonio Gramsci (1971) used the term "hegemony" to

describe a process by which culturally diverse people are manipulated into consensually accepting the dominant class's worldview as common sense—such as the belief that heterosexuality is the “norm” or the perception of women as “weaker” than men—and he theorized that this is done without coercion or brute force. Though it seems that hegemony may be at work when people consent to hide portions of his or her “self” for fear of disrupting the norm, it also seems that the “act” of protection through hiding is an agentic practice. The “act” of facing these fears through theatrical expression seems to me a performance of agency as well.

### **Review of Key Drama and Theatre Practices and Theories**

In this section I describe the drama and theatre theories and practices that influenced the docutheatre devising program I crafted and implemented for this study. These practices conspired to produce this study's arts-based research.

#### **Social Justice Theatre**

The foundation of this research was the implementation of a docutheatre devising program consisting of established theatre practices often classified as *theatre for social change* to see if, and how, the identity processes of teens revealed themselves. I prefer to use the phrase *social justice theatre* (SJT), even though *theatre for social change* might be a more recognized or accepted delineator of this type of work, and will use this phrase throughout this dissertation to describe our work. However, as I discuss the different SJT techniques we used I may use *theatre for social change* when I refer to someone else who uses it in his or her work or writing. For our purposes *social justice* is defined as the view that all peoples deserve basic human rights and opportunities (economic, political, cultural, physical, etc.) and that people have the fundamental right to challenge systems

that serve to oppress them or keep them in subordinate positions because of their social groupings (including age, ability, sex, race, class, gender, sexuality, and religion) (Hardiman & Jackson, 2007, pp. 35-65).

The operative word *change* in *theatre for social change* is a contested term. The word's problems are often the topics of discussion in classrooms and at professional conferences. In 2012, Pedagogy and Theatre of the Oppressed focused their conference theme on interrogating the ways the word *change* has been co-opted and appropriated to suit particular, and perhaps questionable, needs.<sup>5</sup> Ethically, I do not believe in deliberately “changing” any of the people I work with or work for; I do not have the authority or the ability to write or rewrite anyone's narrative but my own, even though I may appear as an influential character. Rather, I choose to celebrate people's established communities and cultures and support any changes they choose to make *on their own*. I prefer to use theatre as a method of raising awareness of positive and potentially problematic social and cultural circumstances that the people I work with feel are relevant and important to them and their communities.

Cohen-Cruz (2001) describes *theatre for social change* as “the crucial interaction of art and social circumstances” (p. 95). She proposes elements which comprise a “constellation” of theatre for social change: “People already engaged or engageable with specific issues, aesthetic strategies that are compelling to desired audiences, strong alliances with political or community organizations, sufficient material support, and synchronicity with the energy of the times” (p. 95). This “constellation” guides my

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<sup>5</sup> PTO is a non-profit organization whose missions are to “challenge oppressive systems by promoting critical thinking and social justice” (“Call for Proposals,” para. 1) and to host conferences based on the pedagogies of Augusto Boal and Paulo Freire.

pedagogy and practice of SJT. During our first meeting, as I explained my reasons for facilitating documentary theatre as a technique of SJT, I continuously referred to Cohen-Cruz's five points and I encouraged the ARs to do the same as we devised their performance. In this section I refer to SJT as the umbrella term for a conglomeration of dramatic practices used in this program, led by documentary theatre and devising theatre techniques (interchangeable with the phrases collective creation, play/theatre-making, or playbuilding). I share details about what happened as we worked with these techniques in the coming chapters.

**Documentary theatre.** I use the term *Documentary theatre* or *Docutheatre* to historicize the genre of reality-based theatre, and the lowercase *docutheatre* when referring to the techniques for making theatre out of primary and secondary research sources. Docutheatre possesses the ability to present different versions of reality that potentially challenge dominant ideologies and power structures. Though docutheatre techniques do not necessarily *have* to be a way in which oppressed peoples or their allies challenge these dominant systems, its potential for doing so is high. Reinelt (2009) argues that “we live in theatricalized times. The contemporary world, with The United States at the forefront, dramatizes its exploits and its romances, its wars and its diplomacy, its major crimes and misdemeanors, its sports and entertainment—these latter two, performances by definition” (p. 70). Reinelt specifically looks at the way public events become performance through documentary theatre and film. She suggests the enormous power of performance to shape or challenge ideology and to function as knowledge:

Theatrical tropes and dramaturgical structures help organize and clarify reality. Performance analysis tools can help unlock the complexities of

certain public events . . . remak[ing] and shap[ing] the raw materials of public events to imagine something new and at the same time to anchor the new vision in concrete material reality. (p. 83)

Following Reinelt's rationale, by employing the tools to devise docutheatre, youth and adults potentially gain new knowledge and the ability to act upon their worlds, critique communities, cultures, and current events as they research, analyze, reimagine, interrogate, and rewrite realities. However, it is important to note that many debates have been sparked over the controversial function of "truth" and "objectivity" in Docutheatre. Various critics of tangible realities or one identifiable "truth" call for constant assessment of this type of theatre and for continuing conversations about the ethics of representation (Saldaña, 2011a; Brown 2010; Hammond & Steward, 2008).

Docutheatre gained new popularity in the U.S. over the last two decades with the work of artists such as Anna Deavere Smith, Tectonic Theatre Project, Culture Clash, Eve Ensler, Jessica Blank, and Eric Jensen. Docutheatre plays, based on living (or once living) people and events, have found a way to raise society's awareness of important issues such as violence against women, hate crimes, corporal punishment, racism, and events such as the murder of Matthew Shepard in 1998 (*The Laramie Project*), the Columbine High School shootings in 1999 (*columbinus*), and the landmark trial surrounding marriage inequality and California's Proposition 8 in 2008 (8). Some of these plays have seen lasting political and cultural impact. Eve Ensler's *Vagina Monologues*, for example, sparked the annual occurrence of V-Day. Volunteers and college students across the country produce benefit performances of Ensler's play to raise awareness and money for the anti-violence cause for women ("About V-Day," 2014). *The*

*Laramie Project* helped shed light on the lack of hate crime legislation that, along with the efforts of Shepard's mother and film and media interventions, led to the passing of The Matthew Shepard and James Byrd, Jr., Hate Crimes Prevention Act of 2009 ("Hate Crimes," 2009).<sup>6</sup>

Saldaña (2005, 2011a) and Wake (2010) discuss the difficulties of finding one fixed definition of what I have been referring to as *Docutheatre* or *docutheatre*.<sup>7</sup> This may be a result of the many terms used to describe this type of theatre, or because of its grassroots nature and the inaccessibility of unpublished scripts created in community centers, amateur theaters, or classrooms (Saldaña, 2011a, p. 16). Both Saldaña and Wake acknowledge that a definition of this type of work depends greatly on the individual style of the artists and researchers whose goal it is to make theatre "solidly rooted in nonfictional, researched reality—not realism, but *reality* [original emphasis]" (Saldaña, 2011a, p. 14).

*A spectrum of reality theatre.* Caroline Wake (2010) offers what she calls a "spectrum of reality theatre" to describe various types of research-based theatre.<sup>8</sup> I borrowed Wake's "spectrum of reality theatre" to introduce Documentary theatre to the

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<sup>6</sup> James Byrd, Jr was an African-American man killed in 1998 by white supremacists who dragged him for miles with their car.

<sup>7</sup> Other terms found in the literature related to ethnotheatre and ethnodrama include: "scripted research," "research-based theatre," "research as performance," "ethnographic performance text," "ethnographic drama," "ethnodramatics," "performance (auto)ethnography," "generative autobiography," "performative inquiry," "public voice ethnography," "conversational dramatism," "theatre as representation," "performance anthropology," "performed ethnography," "reflexive anthropology," "performative social science," "ethnodramatology," "narradrama," "docudrama," "social drama," "metadrama," "autodrama," "metatheater," "documentary theatre," "interview theatre," "ethnographic theatre," "transcription theatre," "verbatim theatre," "presentational theatre," "factual theatre," "reminiscence theatre," "theatre of re-enactment," "living theatre" "verbal art," "non-fiction playwriting," "performative writing," "ethno-mimesis," "natural performance," "everyday life performance," "conversational performance," "docu-performance," "self-revelatory performance," "ethnoperformance," "theatrical documentary," "everyday theatre," "ethnostorytelling," "autoperformance," "informance," "theatrical research-based performance," "research staging," "mystory," "life writing," "stand-up storytelling," "stand up theory," "performed theory," "embodied methodological praxis," "dramatic commentary on interview data," "heritage theatre," "oral history performance," "historical reenactment," "testimonial theatre," "life review," "ethnotainment," and "reality theatre" (Saldaña)

<sup>8</sup> Also refer to Beck, Belliveau, Lea & Wager (2011) for their "spectrum of research-based theatre" which offers a qualitative researcher's perspective of ways to define subgenres in the field.

ARs. Documentary theatre was the only expression I knew for this genre of theatre when it first became an interest of mine, so it has “stuck” with me. I use Wake’s definition because I find it clear and precise and in line with my own practices and understandings. The spectrum includes six subcategories: *Autobiographical* plays that are written by and about the author who also performs the material; *Community* plays made by, with, and about communities who most often perform their stories; *Verbatim* plays using “word-for-word” arrangements of interviews conducted by playwrights and actors; *Documentary* plays which are a hybrid arrangement of primary and secondary sources unaltered in content though edited in form; *Tribunal* plays that attempt objective reporting of facts found in official transcripts of court proceedings; and *History* plays that take liberties with the facts although they are based on them (also known as the based on a true story “BOATS” category) (pp. 6-8).

*Ethnotheatre and Ethnodrama.* Saldaña (2011a) prefers to use the terms *ethnotheatre* and *ethnodrama* to describe reality-based theatre, in part because of his proclivity for theatre and qualitative inquiry (p. 16). With descriptions similar to Wake, Saldaña delineates distinct approaches to *ethnodramatic* playwriting such as: *Ethnodramatic Adaptations of Documents and Published Accounts, Original Autoethnodramatic Work* and *Collective Creation of Ethnodrama-Devised Work* (pp. 16-30). For my purposes, I refer to the term *ethnodrama* to describe my transcriptions and arrangements of the ARs’ and my spoken words and behaviors (culled from video data) into dramatic script form as a way to represent significant research findings and underscore the voices of my creative partners.

In their forward to Saldaña's (2005) *Ethnodrama, An Anthology of Reality Theatre*, Denzin and Lincoln share my passion for the dramatization of research: "This form of critical, collaborative inquiry privileges the primacy of experience, the concept of voice, and the importance of turning inquiry sites into spaces where democratic public discourse can take place . . . creat[ing] the conditions for an emancipatory democratic politics" (Saldaña, 2005, xi). Often this type of representation of findings encompasses the true narratives of those who are typically silenced or unnoticed.

*The search for a responsible docutheatre.* Arguably, the most difficult task involved in devising docutheatre performance or in constructing a docudramatic script includes surveying numerous interviews and secondary sources and making the inevitable decision of what story to tell and how to tell it responsibly and interestingly. The ARs found the interview process thrilling, but when it came down to deciding what interviews to keep and conceptualizing how we might turn so many events, words, ideas, thoughts, feelings, emotions, etc. into a "good" theatrical event, our heads began to spin. This process, which also involves the tedious and time-consuming task of transcribing interviews into written word, becomes incredibly challenging when ARs hold themselves accountable for maintaining realities of the living people they interviewed and producing an impressive theatrical product. I know that we are not the only group of ARs who struggled with this. For example, I recently was an audience member at a moving docutheatre production devised and performed by Hartbeat Ensemble's Youth Play Institute in Hartford, CT where teens used interviews and research to tell a story of immigration. After the performance, I asked the cast what they found most challenging about their process: "Definitely it was trying to decide which interviewees to keep, which

story to tell, we had so many good ones. And trying to make sure we didn't tell a person's story wrong." Their remarks were familiar since the ARs in this study shared similar feelings.

Some artists claim that as a theatrical craft docutheatre inevitably requires *creating* something out of both primary and secondary sources. This implies the artistic liberties taken to turn a person's story into an interesting piece of theatre. Hammond and Steward (2008) mention various artists who stake claims to their artistry, comparing the words of real people to the real stone Michelangelo once molded into legendary sculptures (p. 10). Hammond and Steward do not advocate for a documentary theatre devoid of ethics, yet people are not "stone." According to Martin (2006), "the paradox of a theatre of facts that uses representation to enact a relationship to the real should not be lost in the enthusiasm for a politically viable theatre" (p. 13). I believe artistic liberties taken with a living person's story need to be grounded in a staunch commitment to remaining as closely as possible to the reality of that particular person's "true" story, regardless whether the intentions of the artist are to raise awareness of oppressive acts or to use theatre to positively change societal ills. This is fundamental to the process, especially when the audience has been led to believe they will see and hear the stories of real live people. In agreeing to participate in this project, the ARs had to also agree to commit to this type of docutheatrical storytelling.

*Docutheatricality.* In the coming chapters I hope to illustrate the ways we struggled to turn the research the ARs conducted into a docutheatrical event. I choose to borrow one of the many possible definitions of the term *theatricality* provided by Davis and Postlewait (2003): "A way of describing what performers and what spectators do

together in the making of ‘the theatrical event’” (p. 23). I play with the term *docutheatricality*, in some ways like Saldaña (2011a) employs the term *ethnotheatricality*, as I describe what we did to transform our research documents into a theatrical event shared with spectators.

The word *theatrical* has come to describe the negative aspects of an ideological theatre that presents itself as realism without foregrounding its rhetorical apparatuses (such as the imaginary fourth wall or the existence of the actor’s subjectivity behind the mask of the character). For some, the word theatrical is synonymous with the kind of over-the-top, excessive, or sensational theatre we might see on Broadway. There are some who challenge this idea of theatre as spectacle and instead argue that *theatricality* should refer to the methods used in theatre that reveal to the spectator the ways theatre is *theatre* and not *life* so they might actively view performances more critically (Davis, 2003, p. 153). This becomes all the more interesting when applied to docutheatre considering its complicated relationship to the “real” and the questions often posed about the way it “should” be presented to an audience. For our performance, the ARs and I chose to foreground the *docutheatricality* of our performance by speaking aloud the names of interviewees and the dates the interviews took place when performing monologues and scenes. The ARs also chose to “break the fourth wall” and interact directly with their audience on more than one occasion.

**Devising theatre.** Docutheatre is a circumstantial theatre practice, dependent on location, time period, event, experience of interviewees, the agenda of the ARs, etc. It is often devised by a collective of actors working with a specific set of a documents rather than a single playwright’s imagination. Collaborative creation of original theatre, or

*Devising Theatre*, can be understood as a practical methodology for creating Documentary SJT. Govan, Nicholson & Normington, (2007) advocate for the method's intrinsic ability to expand the language of performance: "The practice of devising has been instrumental in enabling theatre-makers to develop artistically satisfying ways of working by stretching the limits of established practices and reshaping their creative processes" (p. 4). This practice of "stretching the limits" gained much momentum and notoriety among the group theatre collectives of the 1960s. These artists experimented and deconstructed traditional theatre arts. Collective creation became classified as a method for creating SJT in part because of its subversion of mainstream theatre practices.

These experimental theatre companies investigated methods that stressed the significance of the actor's self in performance and in communal creative processes such as those explored in workshops led by Joseph Chaikin of The Open Theatre. In some ways, theatre devising becomes a metaphor for writing and rewriting a socially and culturally constructed identity through exploration of the performer's *self* in performance. Furthermore, according to Alison Oddey (1994) the individual garners a sense of self through belonging:

The devising process challenges every group member to confront the work, to engage with it individually at different levels, as well as develop a sense of group cooperation, affiliation and unity. . . . The primary appeal is to make a personal statement within a group context, to feel that one is part of the making of a theatrical experience, not an interpreter of something already written. (pp. 24-29)

When devising, youth are placed at the center of the creative process as they are liberated from the adult playwright (though facilitated by the adult practitioner) or the traditional director. They become dramatists who honor their own issues and experiences.

In recent years, various models for collective creation of original theatre have become popular in educational and youth theatre. Theatre for youth practitioners, such as myself, choose the devising process for various reasons: youth can bring multiple viewpoints to the process; there is a greater possibility of youth empowerment through application of their experiences to create their own work expressed from their own voices; a creative freedom from the written text; and the practical logistics of experimental theatre production that does not have to rely on elaborate staging or securing performance rights. Lang (2002, 2007) finds that “collective creation does provide its participants (students and professionals) with opportunities to listen to each other, to let go of individual glory for the benefit of the group, and to experience the thrill of creating art as an ensemble” (p. 103). This proved true in our experience as well. To devise our docutheatre performance, I shared Theatre of the Oppressed exercises and games, improvisation exercises, creative drama, and physical theatre techniques. These practices and techniques also offered opportunities to survey the documentary materials and explore themes and personal experiences.

### **Concluding Thoughts**

In this chapter I described how Geertz’s ideas about culture influenced my analysis of this study’s data. I also explained how cultural studies provided theoretical lenses through which I analyzed data and the culture the ARs and I created through story-

sharing and devising and presenting our play. In future chapters I continue as the narrator of this case study. I relate the themes of our personal stories to those that emerged through the play *To Be What's Not Meant to See*, paying attention to the ways our identities were or were not manifested and the power dynamics at play. I also function as a medium to share the personal stories of the ARs and those they gathered through their docutheatre research. Finally, I hope to demonstrate the broader impact of this type of docutheatre devising program in traditional and nontraditional learning environments.

## CHAPTER 3

### METHODOLOGIES: A MULTIMODAL APPROACH

In a recent interview, Dr. Patricia Leavy, sociologist and proponent of arts-based research, was asked to discuss her book *Essentials of Transdisciplinary Research: Using Problem-centered Methods*. She explains,

Universities and research institutes are organized around a disciplinary model of knowledge building. This means that different fields are separated from each other . . . Most contemporary problems and issues do not fit into the domain of one discipline . . . most contemporary issues of import have multiple dimensions and require researchers from different disciplines to come together. (Arana, 2013, “What is your book about?,” para. 1)

As an interdisciplinary theatre practitioner I agree with Dr. Leavy. Life is too complicated to investigate or comprehend from only one perspective. This is why I chose to implement more than one mode of qualitative inquiry and various techniques to make docutheatre. It is why I attempt to intertwine the voices of the ARs with my own.

In this chapter, I explain the multimodal research approaches used to gather, present, and represent findings. Three specific qualitative research genres were adopted for this study: arts-based research, visual ethnography, and case study. I describe all three genres and share the paths to each. I detail the various methods used to collect and analyze data and the devices used to present and represent findings. I also include the key assertions I developed through data analysis. Descriptions of the project’s beginnings and

the research site are included, as is an introduction to the participants in the form of a short ethnodrama entitled “The Story of My Name.”

## **Research Methods**

### **Arts-Based Research**

Shaun McNiff (2008) explains that arts-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 the researchers and the people that they involve in their studies” (p. 29).

Collections such as *The Handbook of the Arts in Qualitative Research* (Knowles & Cole, 2008) and *Arts-based Research in Education: Foundations for Practice* (Cahnmann-Taylor & Siegesmund, 2008), provide multiple studies of diverse experiences and approaches to arts-based research while pointing to more and more artists, researchers, and educators such as myself drawing upon this mode of inquiry to interrogate various phenomena.

This study employs arts-based qualitative research to examine the youth participants’ (ARs) artistic processes and unique circumstances, with regards to their identity processes, as they collaborated to make docutheatre. The artistic product, a play entitled *To Be What’s Not Meant to See*, is a collection of original monologues and scenes about *hiding* and *exposure*. Over the past two decades, various arts-based and arts-informed studies have been conducted to investigate the experiences of youth who participate in drama or theatre-based experiences. Several of these studies use ethnodramatic or autoethnodramatic playwriting to represent significant moments or the researchers’ personal experiences with youth (Conrad, 2005; Goldstein, 2001; Goldstein,

et al 2014; Goldstein & Wickett, 2009; Sallis, 2008; Sun, 2008; West-Olatunji, Baker, & Brooks, 2006). Selected studies describe youth's experiences with devising plays (Bates et al, 2001; Campbell & Conrad, 2006; Chappell, 2006). Some engage youth as artist-researchers themselves (Fine et al., 2004, Thoms, 2002).

**Why arts-based research?** Arts-based research challenges academia's scientific ways of knowing and takes research across its borders into personal and communal locations (Finley, 2008). This subversion is exciting, both from a researcher's perspective and that of a practitioner of theatre for social justice, and is almost reason alone to adopt this genre of qualitative research for a study of this nature.

Many scholars and researchers are often found advocating for arts-based research or at the very least engaging in arguments surrounding the substantiality of artistic or performance-based research (Barone & Eisner, 2012; Denzin, 2003; Leavy, 2009; Saldaña, 2011). Eisner (2008), a pioneer and promoter of this type of research, explains that art is traditionally recognized as "ornamental or emotional in character" rather than as a valid process for gathering objective knowledge (p. 3). Eisner supports a symbiotic relationship between art and qualitative research. He suggests that art teaches a particular way of "reading" the world and its produced images; he also says that "the arts develop dispositions and habits of mind that reveal to the individual a world he or she may not have noticed but that is there to be seen if one knew how to look at it" (p. 11). Eisner further points out contributions of the arts: sensory awareness, empathy, a fresh perspective, and emotional literacy and connectivity. I learned most of what I know about humanity and myself through my experiences as a theatre artist. Arts do provide an exceptional way of viscerally and sensorially seeing and understanding the world.

Despite this, arts-based research is still uncommon in the academic world where literal forms dominate (Barone & Eisner, 2012).

### **Visual Ethnography**

I investigated the prospect of the visual in my arts-based qualitative study through an informative course in Visual Ethnography because I wanted to be certain to capture important moments even when in role as the distracted drama facilitator. Visual data figure prominently in this study in support of arts-based inquiry and arts-informed expression. The iterative process of viewing and reviewing video footage of each rehearsal provided me with rich participant observation fieldnotes, observations of the individual's behaviors (including my own), opportunities to interpret cultural signs and symbols, and verbatim text.

Visual Ethnography employs the visual—such as photographs, video, artwork, film, web-based media, and maps—as a way to capture and understand cultural practices and social realities. Anthropologists, social scientists, and educational researchers have noted the enormous potential of visual media; they also mention that, despite such groundbreaking work as that of Margaret Mead, Gregory Bateson, and Malcolm Collier and John Collier Jr., visual research remains elusive and neglected by many researchers who privilege the written word to document fieldnotes, interviews, and codes (Collier & Collier, 1986; Derry, 2007; Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2011; Knoblauch, et al 2008; Margolis & Pauwels, 2011; Mead, 1995). Heath, Hindmarsh, and Luff (2011) state:

If the key principle of qualitative research is taking the participant's perspective seriously and prioritizing the resources on which people rely in accomplishing their everyday actions and activities, then a technology

that enables the repeated, fine-grained scrutiny of moments of social life and sociability would seem to provide, at worst, a complement to the more conventional techniques for gathering ‘scientific’ information, at best, a profound realignment in the ways in which we analyze human activity. (p. 3)

They go on to explain that they find this “neglect” of visual media “particularly curious when [they] consider that soon after the development of instantaneous photography in the 1830s, implications for the analysis of human and behavioral sciences were recognized” (p. 3). I venture to say there are various reasons for this “neglect.” Visual media is always already constructed by the viewer, as is the medium by which visual data are represented and then presented, often through multiple editing sessions using assorted forms of editing equipment. The visual is continuously viewed through multiple lenses of interpretation, both literally and figuratively. Therefore, the “problem” of subjectivity may become an issue for certain researchers pursuing scientific or empirical results (Knoblauch & Tuma, 2011; Mills, Durepos, & Wiebe, 2009).

As this is my first venture into the field of Visual Ethnography, I admit I am a novice only beginning to understand the various methods and conflicting ideologies about the use and/or misuse of visual data. In the past, I documented my students’ work through video or photography for my own private memory box or professional portfolio, never thinking of these stills or video as research findings. Now I see that the visual is abundant and recording technology can be incredibly advantageous in the gathering and documenting of arts-informed data. It made sense for me to incorporate this research genre into this study. I only hope to integrate myself into the “growing corpus of

qualitative research” (Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2011, p. 5) that has begun to emerge in the last twenty years or so to highlight the utility of the visual.

**The relationship between Theatre and Visual Ethnography.** All genres of theatre and theatre-making intrinsically involve the production of images by performing bodies. This makes theatre’s relationship to visual ethnography an interesting one. Visual research practices allowed me to see how moments in time—such as when youth might be personally affected by each other and their dramatic processes—might be captured for purposes of data collection and deeper analysis. As a theatre researcher and educator, I worry over ways I can responsibly capture the improvisational nature of my students’ work. I often contemplate how to preserve the fleeting images produced by the ideas, cultures, and communities developed through collaboration on a theatrical project. Video and photography captured certain elements of the ephemerality intrinsic to participation in theatrical experiences. Furthermore, video recording equipment provided the opportunity to collect rich data through participant observation fieldnotes and transcriptions that are difficult to document while facilitating docutheatre devising and directing rehearsals.

**Recording equipment.** Each of the meetings and rehearsals for this project were videotaped with a Canon VIXIA RF300 camera that was mostly fixed to a stationary tripod. Occasionally, I traveled with the camera to capture private moments between individuals during small group work. I chose to keep the camera stationary because a fixed camera “enables the researcher to record activities without having to anticipate events and it provides a consistent view of the stream of action” (Heath, Hindmarsh, & Luff, 2011, p. 40). A fixed camera made it possible for me to focus on facilitating the

drama work while observing the performances of the ARs, though in a physically active drama rehearsal there are some challenges that arise with using a fixed camera. There were times when I did not notice the action moving away from the camera's field of vision until later when I reviewed the footage. Still images were taken using a Canon Powershot ELPH 115. Additional stills were captured from video using iMovie. Stills exhibit key moments when ARs drew upon theatre skills and practices to create and perform the docuscript and assist in narrating our experience.<sup>9</sup>

### **Data Collection**

The ARs' final written script and performance, our group open dialogues, and the video capturing each day's research and drama work, are this study's primary data sources. I observed each group member's participation and behaviors in artistic games, exercises, and activities, and the creative artwork they produced in rehearsals. I then wrote observer's comments and analytic memos in my journal immediately after each session to establish preliminary findings. These observations served as reference points when watching video at the end of each week. I used these reference points to find and index major and significant events in participant observation fieldnotes that were eventually coded for deeper analysis. In addition to facilitating docutheatre devising, I conducted several open dialogue sessions where youth shared stories, conversed about their responses to various dramatic activities and theatre practices, organized their

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<sup>9</sup> Originally, I planned to also utilize the *photovoice* process of collecting visual data. I want to mention this because *photovoice* is an excellent method that engages research participants as experts in their own lives and includes providing them with photographic and video equipment to record their experiences (Burriss & Wang, 1997). It is a mode of data collection more aligned with the process of participant-generated visual narrativity. Lack of resources and time prevented me from giving the artist-researchers cameras, topics, questions, and/or themes and then asking them to collect visual evidence of their individual experiences. It was with great regret that I chose to forgo this process in lieu of more pressing matters. Though some of the ARs photographed or videotaped their interviewees to help them more authentically represent the interviewee's character and story, most of their time and energy were focused on interviewing and transcribing instead.

creative choices for the play, and reflected upon their personal experiences with the social issues we explored, particularly the concepts of *hiding* and *exposure* put forth by their script. Open dialogue sessions functioned similar to focus groups, though more informal, conversational, and collaborative in nature; no single person was forced to speak if he or she did not feel comfortable sharing. Key observations and statements made during open-dialogues were also reflected upon in my journal and then collected through participant observation fieldnotes culled from video recordings.

Participant research journals, drawings, and the comments and messages written between the group members on Facebook are considered second-level data sources. The ARs were asked to keep research journals where they were to reflect privately on their experiences in writing or through visual art. In the first few sessions I provided prompts for the ARs to respond to, as they felt comfortable, in their individual journals. Unfortunately, it became difficult, if not impossible, to procure any commitment to journal writing. Two of the teens consistently completed their journal entries, but most would “forget” or find it a nuisance since they had mounds of homework to complete for their other classes. At the end of our second rehearsal, I asked the ARs to write about or visually represent through drawings social issues they were either personally invested in or felt strongly about investigating, and to then explain why they made these choices. Luckily everyone completed this assignment. These entries gave me a better understanding of the participants and provided the group with possible topics for the play.

Eventually, I stopped asking for journal entries and found it more effective to focus on using the journals to record and transcribe interviews since the ARs were extremely dedicated to this process. Since I was unable to connect with the ARs by

responding to journal entries, we created a Facebook group page for communication purposes. This was more successful. Social media became a way to share photos, video, and research documents between the ARs, the school's drama director Nina Lake (pseudonym), and me.

### **Data Analysis and Key Assertions**

My analyses of the data corpus provided me with enough insights to propose the following evidence-based key assertions and subsequent assertions:

***Key Assertion 1:** Participation in devising documentary social justice theatre influences and affects the construction, perception, and/or performance of urban youth identities through profound connections made with interviewees during the interview process and through the collection of true stories that provide new information and rare opportunities for self-reflection and self-realization.*

*Assertion 1: Of all the docutheatre methods, youth are most passionate about gathering as many interviews as possible from people they relate to, whom they believe can shed light on an important issue, or whose lives they feel they can improve by sharing their stories through theatre.*

*Assertion 2: Though young people are challenged by the choices that need to be made to transcribe and edit an interview, they are passionate about maintaining the integrity of people's true stories.*

*Assertion 3: Teens enjoy making documentary social justice theatre because they feel they can more freely be themselves while making an impact on their worlds.*

***Key Assertion 2: Portions of the roles urban youth play in their identity narratives are disguised or hidden—purposefully, reluctantly, and/or subconsciously—in order to appeal to friends, families, or the codes of dominant culture.***

*Assertion 1: Urban teens struggle with the realities of their genders, sexualities, racial classifications, socioeconomic disparities, and authority figures.*

*Assertion 2: Teens cope with struggles by taking control of how they hide or express themselves and the roles they play in their various communities.*

*Assertion 3: Teens might not discuss certain aspects of their identity narratives unless specifically asked, especially if this aspect does not seem relevant to their lives in the present moment.*

Due to the limited time spent in the field for this study, and because of the small number of participants whose experiences I was able to observe, I am most comfortable putting forth what Saldaña (2011) calls “summative statements. . . generated from an interpretive review of the data corpus and illustrated through narrative vignettes” (p. 119). I reviewed the data repeatedly to test the credibility of the assertions I generated as I sought to confirm or disconfirm evidence that might point to specific outcomes of participation in the devising program and its relationship to youth identity processes (Erickson, 1986; Saldaña, 2011, pp. 119-127). I also looked for key linkages among all collected data, visual or otherwise, to find similarities between the experiences of the youth participating in the study. According to Frederick Erickson (1986), whose chapter outlines principles of assertion development, a key linkage “is of central significance for the major assertions the researcher wants to make . . . [a key link] connects up many items of data as analogous instances of the same phenomena” (p. 34). Finally, I

synthesized all the data and documentary evidence collected and critically analyzed our findings within my critical framework and through cultural studies lenses before arriving at assertions.

As mentioned, I used an interdisciplinary approach for analyzing both primary and second-level data sources. The In Vivo coding method was chosen to highlight the participants' voices and the Process coding method was used to underscore their actions and behaviors (Saldaña, 2009). Both methods were used to code participant observation fieldnotes and verbatim text gathered from the video (during drama work and open dialogues) and my journal entries. Themeing the Data was used to discover phenomena put forth by the participants' written script, their few journal entries, and our online activity. I must note that, because of the amount of visual data collected, over 20 hours of video and 150 photos, and the multiple modalities used to gather and analyze data, video data underwent *macro level coding* (Barron & Engle, 2007, pp. 27-28) in lieu of utilizing a more empirical sequential analysis or transcribing each moment to moment (Knoblauch & Tuma, 2011, pp. 414-430). Guided by my research journal observations and analytic memos, I viewed and reviewed video and ensuing fieldnotes and then chose major or significant events when participation in dramatic activities, open dialogues, or our staged-reading of the script specifically touched upon this study's major research questions (Barron & Engle, 2007, pp. 27-28).

The docutheatre script was analyzed through a two-tiered method. First, I drew upon my experience with textual analysis and the methods of renowned acting theorist Konstanin Stanislavski. Taking into consideration what I believed to be the characters' main objectives, I separated the scenes and monologues into *beats*, moments of action

when the character used a new tactic to achieve her greatest need (Stanislavski, 1989). I then coded each beat. I focused on a holistic approach to semiotically interpret the signs and symbols presented through the live and recorded performances of the staged-reading of the script and the images the ARs represented (live and on video) during exercises, when in role, and when participating in open dialogues. These interpretations were recorded in my research journal, participant observation fieldnotes, observer's comments, and analytic memos.

All data were coded with regard to indicators that participation in the docutheatre devising model affects identity processes of urban youth and for recurring themes concerning identity and agency. Halfway through the process and after first cycle coding, I used analytic induction to generate preliminary assertions concerning the teens' experience with docutheatre and their perceptions of identity. After first cycle coding, I sorted codes into phenomenological categories representing recurring ideas and themes such as "*Identity means. . .*," or "*Hiding is. . .*." Assertions were then solidified once specific key linkages and recurrences were discovered.

### **Arts-based and Visual Representation and Presentation of Findings.**

**Ethnodrama.** Saldaña (2005, 2011a) defines *ethnodrama* as a process often centered around the creation of a dramatic script based on the experience of a qualitative researcher and her research participants. Ethnodramatic scripts consist of significant selections of narrative collected from interview transcripts, participant observation field notes, journal entries, personal memories and experiences, and/or print and media artifacts such as diaries, blogs, television broadcasts, newspaper articles, and historic documents. *Ethnotheatre* describes the process in which the artistic craft and techniques

are used to mount the *ethnodrama* on the stage (Saldaña, 2005, 2011a). The goal of this type of representation “is to investigate a particular facet of the human condition for purposes of adapting those observations and insights into a performance medium” (Saldaña, 2005, p. 2). As I mentioned in Chapter Two, I refer to *docutheatre* when discussing the work created by the ARs and *ethnodrama* or *ethnotheatre* as genres of arts-based inquiry.

When I first realized I did not care to introduce the ARs by writing a simple or reductive, all-encompassing summary of their physical appearance, ethnic backgrounds, or socioeconomic statuses, I decided it was necessary to present certain moments filled with important data as ethnodramas. The ARs worked determinedly to write a documentary play and create a docutheatrical performance that honored the true stories of the people they interviewed and the research they uncovered. I believe it is best to represent our stories and to reveal a thing or two about our personalities, histories, and experiences with this process in similar ways. The ethnodramatic method is utilized whenever possible to illustrate crucial moments and highlight important data. I am optimistic that through this mode of representation the voices of the ARs will resonate prominently and clearly throughout this research report. Detailed vignettes, literary constructs, and still images also support assertions and illustrate the greater significance of research findings (Saldaña, 2011, pp. 146-159).

**Meant2see.com.** Pea and Lemke (2007), in *Guidelines for Video Research in Education*—a highly recommended report consisting of a wide range of scholars uniting to develop standards for using video in research education—emphasize the visual researcher’s duty to “[m]ake available to the audience of the research report a sufficient

example of the video data on which the reports' argument is based, to allow the audience to assess the quality of the argument based on the data" (p. 41). Along with turning transcribed video events into short ethnodramas or giving "play-by-play" detailed descriptions of major or significant moments of analyzed video (Barron & Engle, 2007, p. 29), the visual data gathered throughout this project is made available through an online website I have created with the permission of the participants and their guardians per the Arizona State University Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board. Visitors to [www.meant2see.com](http://www.meant2see.com) are able to access video clips, still images, research documents and sources, and summaries of events. Visitors may also email me with questions or comments.

## **The Research Site**

### **Fostering a Creative Partnership**

I embarked on the journey toward finding young people to work with by researching high schools in the Tempe and Phoenix Union High School districts. I decided to reach out to students in these districts because of their proximity to the ASU campus and because I wanted to meet young people whose roots grew out of the same urban community in which I lived, studied, and worked. Since I was offering a *free* theatre program to high school students, I believed my search would be simple. Each day I researched a potential site and its demographics. It was important for me to work with a group of diverse youth from multiple cultural and ethnic origins so that I might observe varied perspectives. I contacted English, Social Studies, and Theatre department teachers, the usual suspects for potential extracurricular drama and theatre programming. I sent out emails that read something like this:

Hello!

My name is Enza Giannone. I am a PhD candidate under the direction of Professor Johnny Saldaña in the department of Theatre and Film at ASU. . . . I am currently seeking a group of 10-20 young people who are of immigrant origins to participate in a free and low maintenance documentary theatre research project and I believe [insert school name] might be a great place for me to assemble and work with this population. . . .

I then followed up with phone calls resulting in many voicemails, most of which were unanswered. To my great disappointment, my emails were met with little to no response. One educator asked me to clarify the timing of the project, but she never responded to my reply. I had high expectations for the magnitude of this research project, and I was quickly losing hope that it would happen before the deadline put forth by my dissertation prospectus. Finally Nina Lake responded. She was the only teacher who continued correspondence with me and she showed genuine interest in the project. Lake, as the students affectionately call her, teaches Theatre Arts and English and directs the school plays at Giant High School (GHS—pseudonym).

Lake and I decided to meet before I officially attempted to recruit the participants for the project. She suggested I work with the students during their 9<sup>th</sup> hour, a voluntary elective class period. The students are strongly encouraged to choose and attend one of these elective classes to raise their GPAs and build their credentials for college. Lake informed me that her drama students were in the middle of rehearsals for their fall performance and once the show opened there might be the need and interest for a new

project. She was intrigued by the idea of theatre for social justice and wanted to introduce her students to a new genre that might raise awareness or challenge the norm. I felt immediately that I had found a kindred spirit. Everything went smoothly until our first in-person meeting when we discussed the participants I intended to recruit for the project.

During our previous phone meeting, I explained my original desire to recruit students of immigrant origins or descent, and my interest in working with youth who had little to no experience in theatre or who came from other academic departments. Lake understood why I might want to work with this particular type of student and agreed over the phone to assist me in my search. On that day in August, however, she excitedly told me I did not have to look further than some of her own drama students whom she felt fit the description of “youth of immigrant origins.” She suggested this was a less complicated road to travel since it would be difficult to find non-drama students willing to commit to a theatre project for the entire duration. Her students would be more reliable. A few weeks into the project, this promise of reliability did not necessarily prove true since one of the ARs quit the program without notice at the halfway mark. I touch upon this in future chapters.

### **Awaiting the IRB**

The study was finally approved by the Social Behavioral Institutional Review Board, at Arizona State University’s Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, on September 29, 2012 (SBIRB Protocol #1209008295). It took almost seven months and multiple revisions of the Social Behavioral Application for the research protocol to pass through the SBIRB (Appendix A). This was due in part to semantics (the difference between keeping information *anonymous* versus the preferred *confidential*) and the

confusion I may have caused explaining documentary theatre as both a dramatic method *and* a research protocol. I innocuously referred to this study as a research-study-within-a-research study. This made the reviewers wonder who the research subjects actually were; they questioned whether the human subjects interviewed by the student participants for our play would be protected. I provided them with an explanation of the ethics of docutheatre and the steps practitioners and artists must take to protect interviewees, including specific procedures and written forms (Appendix C).

We were unable to begin the project until the first of November 2012, over two months after our first meeting. When Lake and I finally spoke again she confessed that she was still very interested in the project but needed to apologize because she was unable to invite me to partner with her and the students for longer than six weeks due to new scheduling conflicts. I was concerned this may not be enough time. In my prospectus I had proposed a program lasting a minimum of three to six months. Despite this, I was past my deadlines. More importantly, I wanted to work with Nina Lake, a woman whose story I found intriguing and whose teaching style I respected.

### **Becoming a Case Study**

I immediately scheduled a meeting with my dissertation chair to discuss whether a project of this length could still be considered a substantial contribution to our field. I worried my study might not yield enough generalizable, transferable, or substantial findings or theories. My chair reminded me there are many ways qualitative research attempts to uncover human conditions. It is the researcher's responsibility to substantiate her research through in-depth analyses of the data and the arguments developed through

her writing. He suggested I might look at this qualitative study as an arts-based *case study*. In *Fundamentals of Qualitative Research*, Saldaña (2011) states:

The purpose [of a case study] is not necessarily to develop an argument for how the single case represents or reflects comparable individuals or sites. Unlike studies that research a large number of settings or participants to gather a broader and more representative spectrum of perspectives, the case study in and of itself is valued as a unit that permits in-depth examination. (p. 7)

One moment influenced by unique individuals and rife with their varied experiences has the potential to produce many units of data, raise awareness, and ignite debate, much in the same way the one-time only performance of a theatre for social justice play might. Considerable information can be revealed about the human condition just by observing the smallest interactions between people (Saldaña, 2011, p. 8). I was excited to discover these revelations. This study may be considered an observational case study because most of the data were gathered through my observations of one specific group of people coexisting in a particular place and time and undertaking a collaborative task (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 60).

### **Giant High School**

The school's community falls within the city limits of Phoenix. As I drove to meet Lake, I was surprised by the pastoral quality of the area. I passed cotton fields, horse farms, and fruit stands. Like most of the areas comprising the Phoenix Metro area, strip malls and housing developments were also scattered along the way, exhibiting the commercialization of many rural areas in the state of Arizona throughout the years.

Amidst the fields, mountains, open land, Target store, and Starbucks are the buildings comprising GHS. The high school is fairly new, opening its doors to students in 1999. I was immediately impressed by the magnitude of the school's building structures and the expanse of its campus. Having graduated from a small New England suburban high school with a graduating class of 180 students, I found GHS's size daunting. At present, the number of students has reached 2,411. A security officer, who drove me in a golf cart to the Performing Arts building, explained this number is constantly in flux. An open enrollment policy allows Arizona students to attend public school whether or not they live within the school's district. This policy and the transitory population of Phoenix may contribute to new students registering well into the school year and to the wide diversity of the students' individual

**Figure 3.3 The drama room.**



circumstances. Currently on their website, the school ranks its demographics as 67.19% Hispanic, 3.48% Anglo, 15.30% African American, 2.94% Native American, 1.78% Asian, and 1.78% Other.

My awe of the school's size was equally matched by how impressed I was with the Performing Arts wing. This building houses the Instrumental Music, Choir, Dance and Theatre concentrations. Inside the building are a choir room, an instrumental band room, practice rooms, dance studios, an auditorium, and the drama classroom. Though the auditorium is standard by my experiences, with a proscenium style stage and poor sound quality, the theatre students are fortunate to have the ability to access both the

stage and the auditorium at their convenience. Nina Lake brought me on a tour which included the stage's incredible wing space and, even more remarkable, the large scene shop; GHS's shop is larger than those found in some of the professional theatre buildings I have worked in over the years.

The majority of the teachers in the Performing Arts department are professional artists themselves. For

example, the choir director performed as "Maureen" in the national tour of the Broadway musical *Rent* and Nina Lake is a professional stage manager and novelist. Though I tend to

**Figure 3.4 Another view of the drama room.**



want to share theatre and drama with schools that are lacking in these areas, I heaved a large sigh of relief the day I was first introduced to GHS. Considering I almost did not find a school to partner with, I was pleased to be somewhere with excellent facilities and with educators and an administration that value the arts.

**The “dream” drama room.** The drama classroom is in the Performing Arts building to the right of the main office. It is unlike any drama classroom I have yet to see in a public high school; it is both a classroom and a small theater space. I was excited by the space from the moment I entered. The room is large with cinderblock walls and fluorescent lights in rows on the ceiling. Some of the lights are covered with various colored gels giving the room a warmer feel. There are three entrances and exits. To the right of the main entrance, nestled in the wall, are double doors leading to the auditorium

used by Lake and the students with whom I did not partner. This wall is also covered with posters of past performances or what thespians call “show posters.” These are mostly

drawings and advertise such

performances as *A Midsummer*

*Night’s Dream, Little Shop of*

*Horrors, Macbeth, The Pirates of*

*Penzance, and The Crucible.* There

is also a bulletin board on that wall



Figure 3.5 A view of Nina Lake's desk area.

with announcements for Lake’s Drama and English classes. To the left of the main entrance door is Lake’s desk and an area with a small couch and video projector. To the left of Lake’s desk are two filing cabinets, an artificial plant, and another door. The room is broken up into two areas. The main area on the right, closer to the main entrance, is full of desks set up in groups of four. I usually find this arrangement odd in a theatre classroom. Desks take up the space in which dramatic movement needs to happen and they ultimately symbolize traditional learning that may not support creative or experimental drama. Nevertheless, like Lake, many drama teachers also teach English or Social Studies in their rooms and desks are considered a necessity for studying these subjects. In this instance, because of the room’s stage area, the desks were less restrictive and proved a useful resource.

Against the back wall are four bookcases filled with scripts and English literature and grammar textbooks. Another door on this back wall leads to a small control booth with a control console, lightboards, and soundboards. To the left of the back wall is a

small stage. The stage is a small proscenium raised about a foot off the ground. Stage walls, floors, and platforms are all painted black. Speakers are attached to the proscenium arch, and there is a small lighting grid with eight different lighting instruments over the center of the stage.

On the first day of the project, as I sat waiting to meet Lake's students for the first time, the stage was covered with random objects: a row of theatre seats, flats, a torn lounge chair, another artificial plant, and a box full of costumes left over from an earlier haunted house. Offstage left I saw a large storage space with some set pieces, props, lighting equipment, a washer and dryer and shelves. This really is a wonderful space. It can easily be transformed into a theater space with traditional audience rows and it contains all the media and equipment needed to produce a play. The auditorium and scene shop are easily accessible. I believe it encourages theatre students to view drama and theatre as both a theoretical and performance process. They are able to rehearse in the performance space and easily transition into table-work at their desks only steps away. The room was ideal for the purposes of our project. It provided us with a rehearsal and performance space together with a space to conduct interviews, share research, and edit and revise interviews into script form. In many ways this was my "dream" space.

### **The Artist-Researchers (ARs)**

Lake and I agreed I should work with her students three days a week for fifty minutes during the students' 9<sup>th</sup> hour. The offer to work with the students during a graded class period seemed like a great incentive for attendance, except I was hesitant about the grading aspect. I do not believe a researcher, or guests of any kind, should cross the line into grading territory. It becomes an ethical dilemma because the grades a student desires

or receives can affect the ways in which she responds to the person in power assigning the grade. This potentially results in disingenuous behavior or otherwise complicated relationships between teacher, student, and guest. Nina and I compromised. She was responsible for grading the students and I simply provided a progress report for her to take into consideration the way she felt best.

I arrived on the first day before the students' 9<sup>th</sup> hour. During our previous conversations, Nina said I could take the students who agreed to work with me and she would take the rest of her class and work on one-act plays in the auditorium. When I walked in on the first day, she asked that I work with all her students so that everyone received information about the project and understood why they might not be included. This was not the first time I found myself responsible for more young people than originally discussed or promised by a teacher or organization leader. I was prepared to work with all twenty of her students. The purpose of this first meeting was to provide the students with information about what the project entailed, what I had to offer, and the type of partnership I hoped to establish with them.

**Meeting Lake's class.** I gathered the students into a circle and led them and Lake through a game to get everyone better acquainted and so I could learn names. The stage area was extremely cluttered and we had to squeeze into a section of the classroom area for the activity. Immediately the youth started to giggle and lose focus. I do not think they were expecting to participate in any activities. Further, as we gathered into a circle, Lake admitted she "NEVER plays theatre games" with the students. This struck me as a peculiar statement for a drama teacher to make, though it might explain why some of her students became overly excited and others giggled nervously.

Though the students were mostly familiar with each other, I needed to learn their names. The game *Group Juggle* involves a group standing in a circle and passing any kind of soft, light, but never bouncy, ball around a circle. Each time the ball is passed around the circle participants throw and receive it from the same person, saying his or her name on each throw, and establishing a repeated pattern. They continue the pattern over and over again with a steady pace and rhythm, and work as a team toward a steady flow as more balls are introduced. I mention this game since you might find it useful but mostly because it was necessary for me to speak to the drama students about judgmental reactions to people accidentally dropping balls. Reactions ranged from disgust and ridicule to fear and panic. At one point I asked the students to silently reflect upon the game and how it might feel to be yelled at for making a mistake and dropping a ball. I then asked them to imagine there was an audience watching. This seemed to help a bit and we were at least able to keep all the balls in the air for a couple of revolutions around the circle without any comments.

**So, what are we doing?** The students returned to their desks and I shared detailed information about my research study, the partnership I was proposing, the purpose of a dissertation, the genre of docutheatre, and the responsibilities of the students partnering with me. Once the informational session was over, I thanked the entire group and asked the students who considered themselves of immigrant origins to meet with me quickly so I could record their names and give them binders containing important documents and information. Each potential AR received a black binder containing the following, in order of appearance: a project calendar, important forms (including SBIRB consent and assent

forms—see Appendix B), a section for their research journals, and a project glossary for reference.

When I arrived for the second meeting, Lake informed me three of the eight teens interested in the project were not in school. Since almost half the group was missing, it seemed to make more sense to spend the second day with the entire class discussing the process of devising docutheatre and showing video clips of professional and nonprofessional Docutheatre performances. The students seemed to gain a stronger understanding of the genre through these examples. I asked what they noticed about the commonalities between the examples or the aesthetic of docutheatre. One of the eventual participants in this project, Monroe,<sup>10</sup> raised his hand and responded with an observation about the minimalist quality of the production elements. When I asked why he thought most of the production values were minimal he replied, “The performers wanted the audiences to focus on the words?” Of the five potential participants originally present, all brought their signed consent and assent forms. This amazed me; in the past, I have often asked multiple times for forms to be returned to me by students. They seemed excited about the project and one eventual AR, Lacey, came up to me at the end as she walked out and said thoughtfully, “I like this. This is cool. I like this.”

**(Finally) Meeting the ARs, or our first story-sharing.** I met and familiarized myself with the seven teen members of the docutheatre-making team during my third trip to GHS. I facilitated an activity called *Story of My Name*. This simple “getting-to-know-you” activity yields remarkable personal narratives; it has become my traditional first-day of class or program activity, regardless of the setting. I will not describe every activity,

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<sup>10</sup> Pseudonyms are used throughout to protect the confidentiality of all the study’s participants

game, or exercise I facilitated in as much detail as I am about to describe and critique this one. However, I believe dramatic activities, games, exercises, or creative moments necessitating critical inquiry, or yielding important pieces of data, deserve more in-depth description, analysis, and interpretation. Furthermore, I elaborate on practices I believe may be useful to you when crafting programs similar to this one. My examination of this activity also serves the purpose of introducing the ARs.

I borrowed *Story of My Name* from Sara Clifford and Anna Herrman's (1998) book, *Making a Leap, Theatre of Empowerment*. Clifford and Herrman describe an "Icebreaker" they call "Name on Paper," which asks members of a group to write his or her name on a sheet of paper and "then speak to the group about it, such as what it means, if they have a nickname they prefer, [or] a story connected to it" (p. 41). I mostly facilitate the activity as they describe, though I do tend to slightly transform guidelines depending on the class or workshop, and to suit the needs of the group. I provide different colored markers and explain that participants can use any color to sign or draw their names in any way they care to express themselves. I almost always ask the speakers to share information such as age, grade level, theatre experience, favorite play, or place of origin. I provide a large piece of paper and ask group members to listen to each story intently and fully. I also ask members to observe the way people physically sign their names and how they specifically recount or perform their stories (e.g., hand gestures, facial expressions, and vocal inflections) so they may learn details about a person's histories *and* so they are able to comment on what can be learned about a person's disposition through the embodiment of personal stories.

Each time I facilitate this activity I am met with protests or self-critical comments: “My name is boring”; “I don’t have a cool story”; “I don’t know why I was given this name”; or “I hate my name!” I usually reply



Figure 3.6 Name drawing.

by asking participants to consider the motivations for these feelings or the reason someone might not know anything about her name; I ask participants to tell us something about a nickname they might want us to call them instead. I always provide the option to use middle names or last names. I am flexible and allow any personal story inspired by the idea of names. To this day, I have never experienced a situation when a person did not tell an interesting, revealing, or entertaining story about herself and some aspect of her name, regardless of how long, detailed, or intimate. For our purposes, I asked the ARs to draw names on individual pieces of paper (Figure 3.6). I was then able to collect the papers as documents for further scrutiny and investigation. This also ensured that everyone’s story was told in the fifty-minute class period. Though we did not watch each other in the process of individually signing or drawing our names, we were able to get to know each other from the more intricate drawings produced and from the sharing and presentation of both story and drawing.

**A detour into identity, or “What’s in a name?”** This question is infamous, asked by a young Juliet while protesting her lover’s scandalous patronym. As one of

Shakespeare's most famous characters she argues, "that which we call a rose/By any other name would smell as sweet" (Wells & Taylor, 1988 p. 345, lines 84-86). In this moment Juliet is desperate, a love-struck youth who passionately exclaims her belief that what a person is *called* is irrelevant; to her it only matters who they *are*. Romeo would still be Romeo even if he changed his name to Claudio or Jeff. I do not completely agree with Juliet's reasoning or her denouncement of the importance of names as integral parts of a person's identity narrative. I know my name has had a strong impact upon certain aspects of who I "am." Years ago, the "Name on Paper" activity immediately spoke to me, a young woman with mixed feelings about her culturally-specific (and unusual) name, who often struggled as a youth with the moniker her parents forced upon her at birth. I take this detour before introducing the ARs because this activity immediately set the stage for our docutheatre devising program. Whether I intended for this to happen or not, this became a place where we examined who we "are" and "why," a space to interrogate (and maybe disrupt) the impact culture and society has on the way we express ourselves, beginning with the precise moment we are given our proper names.

Many cultures and religions emphasize the importance of names and their meanings through elaborate traditions and ceremonies. Besides making it easier for the nurses to find a baby in the nursery the day they are born, naming is ritual. Naming begins a child's journey as a member of his or her family and society. Recently my son was baptized and the first question the priest asked his father and me was, "What name do you give your child?" With this name he was initiated into our religion through the baptismal rites. This ceremonial bestowal of name and identity created a symbolic contract between culture, religion, society, and the individual, who in this case was my infant son.

Jacques Lacan (2004) places importance on the process of naming in his explanation of subjectivity, or the formation of the *I*. Lacan suggests that identity is something already in place from the moment the parent(s) chooses a child's name and labels her with it before the child is even aware or able to determine who she is or wants to be. He draws upon concepts of linguistics to explain that culture "could well be reduced to language" and says that infants are born into a culture with a system of language that

Exists prior to the moment at which each subject at a certain point in his mental development makes his entry into it . . . the subject, too, if he can appear to be the slave of language, is all the more so of a discourse in the universal movement in which his place is already inscribed at birth, if only by virtue of his proper name. (p. 448)

For Lacan, the culture a person is born into determines his identity before, or as soon as, he is born.

Responses to Lacan's ideas include those by Judith Butler (1990), whose theory of performativity goes beyond Lacan's theories by claiming that identities are constructed through performative and repetitive speech-acts that produce a subject such as the bright-eyed doctor's exclamation of "It's a girl!" Butler suggests that "[t]he subject is not determined by the rules through which it is generated because signification is *not a founding act, but rather a regulated process of repetition* that both conceals itself and enforces its rules precisely through the production of substantializing effects" (p. 198). As I understand Butler, a person's identity is first formed by the language that names them and then through the *doing* of "stylized repetition of acts" prescribed to the type of

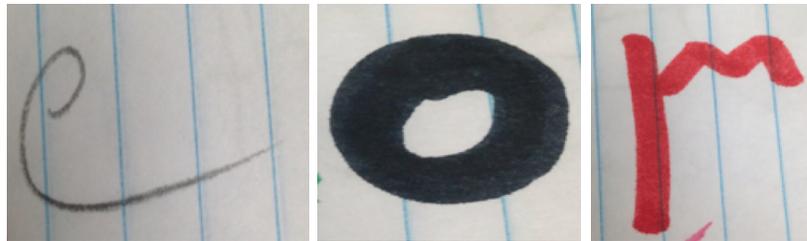
name, or identity, by sociocultural and political codes. In other words, *Jessica* has been delineated as a girl's name and girls act a certain way, so *Jessica* acts in that certain way. It is not the given name itself that determines a person's identity or subject position, but how it is continuously used through various speech-acts, performed first to identify a child, and then to inscribe his or her gender, race, ethnicity, or place in the family or society.

I want to believe Juliet's romantic notion that our symbolic hearts and souls are intrinsically our own to control, though I have a sneaking suspicion I might not be the same person on the same journey if my name was *Jessica* or *Ashley*. My parents purposely gave me my grandmother's name and it was the way it was or was not used by teachers, friends, and other community members that first made me different and painfully self-conscious, and then the way it was praised by agents and casting directors for its uniqueness that made me memorable and more self-confident. Nevertheless, I want to believe as I have matured I have appropriated my name in such a way that it has become a part of *me* rather than me a part of *it*. I want to believe that I am more than my naming, and that the naming of my ARs is only one major event shaping the narrative of their lives.

**Introductions: "The Story of My Name."** More than anything, the *Story of My Name* activity celebrates the impact names have on a person's life as a major event in the greater narrative of his or her life. It recognizes that each person has her own distinctive narrative, even if she shares the same name as another person in the group. The final section of this chapter is about introductions. *Story of My Name* is an activity I facilitated during our first official rehearsal. I have chosen to highlight our experiences with this

activity as a way to introduce the ARs and it is the first of several ethnodramas found in this dissertation.

It may seem strange to focus heavily on ethnodramatically representing the ARs with an activity whose premise is names, especially when considering names have been changed (or “hidden”) in this study to protect confidentiality. The ARs names have been changed but the kernels of their stories have not. I asked the ARs to choose pseudonyms that they each believed connected to his or her name story for use in this dissertation. I worked tirelessly to ensure the stories remain as close to the tellers’ realities as possible without jeopardizing anonymity. For instance, in Monroe’s name story he is very specific about the symbolic way he represents his personality through the unique drawing of each letter of his name and the color marker he uses (Figure 3.7). I describe his stylistic choices in his own words, but I am not specific about which letter he describes.



**Figure 3.7 Letters from Monroe's name drawing.**

Saldaña (2011a) suggests the researcher-playwright also take on the roles of actor, director, and designer to create a piece that is both suitable for the stage and aesthetically pleasing (p. 71). He recalls a popular saying in the theatre, “Theatre is life—with all the boring parts taken out” (p. 69) when he advises future playwrights to create both truthful *and* entertaining theatre. Saldaña illustrates how a 310-word verbatim interview can be “distilled” and “condensed” into a 117-word monologue that captures the voice of the interviewee without boring the audience (pp. 69-72). Below I venture to do the same. I

edited the ARs' words to avoid revealing any identifiers, while still maintaining the integrity of their narratives. I try to entertain you, my audience, in the process. In the production notes and stage directions I also mention design elements. I describe clothing, positioning in the space, physicality, and the name drawings held in an AR's hands as he or she speaks to the group. Future ethnodramas follow similar conventions, though this is the only ethnodrama that introduces us with detailed character descriptions. Each of the ethnodramas is crafted from verbatim dialogue transcribed from video. They are moderately edited for form and dramatic style.

### **“The Story of My Name”**

#### **CHARACTERS**

CHARLI, junior, attractive and she knows it, wears make-up, has long, straight and neatly combed dark hair and light tanned brown skin, wears a flowery dress, a cardigan, and sandals

CHRISTOPHER, sophomore, soft-spoken and well-mannered, has dark brown skin, his hair is dark and cut cropped to his head, wears a clean sweatshirt and jeans

BREEZY, senior, a boisterous, short, round young woman with glasses, brown skin and dark brown hair with bright red streaks throughout, it is tied back tightly in a ponytail with tendrils hanging over her face, wears black jeans and a black hooded sweatshirt.

ALEXANDER, freshman, he has a big innocent smile, wears skin-tight, mint-colored jeans tapered at the bottom and has longish blonde hair that hangs over his forehead into his eyes in the style of “emo” hair, he wears a black knit hat and his bangs are sticking out onto his forehead

MONROE, sophomore, has a soft and soothing voice, wears skin-tight jeans tapered at the bottom and skater-type sneakers, has dark hair that is dyed blonde and green in the front, it is dark, long, and wavy, drooping around his eyes and ears so that it makes him appear elfin, he has brown skin, wears black eye-liner and a couple of necklaces.

LACEY, junior, talkative, has light café con leche skin, thick dark long hair with blond streaks in the front, it is gathered to the side and over her shoulder, she runs her fingers through her bangs often, they are long and cover a portion of one side of her face, she wears shorts and a long sleeve buttoned-down shirt and black-rimmed glasses.

KIARA, junior, confident, a leader, pale skin, her hair is tied in a low ponytail held with a “scrunchie,” green-dyed tendrils messily hide portions of her face, she wears cargo pants and a tank top that is a little too tight and reveals her bra straps, her school ID is around her neck.

ENZA, the facilitator, 34, has dark curly hair and is about seven months pregnant, wears black jeans and a black and grey t-shirt.

## **SETTING**

The Drama Room, Giant High School, Phoenix, AZ. November 7, 2012, 2:45 p.m. It is fall in Arizona.

## **Notes**

Some of the teens tend to speak with a raised inflection at the end of their sentences. This is indicated with question marks that do not necessarily ask a question in the grammatical sense, but rather indicate something else: dramatic pause, searching for commiseration

(“Are you with me on this?”), or they might serve as symbols of the teller’s own insecurities or uncertainties. The song mentioned in this script, “What’s In a Name?” can be heard on YouTube:

<http://www.youtube.com/watch?v=uCpvDEflVH4><sup>11</sup>

### **Preshow**

*(Lights come up on the drama classroom. It is quiet. There is a pool of light over the classroom’s stage area, which is painted black and covered with old flats and random theatre-related objects. A small group of people sits in a circle on the stage. Six teens are seated sprawled on the floor using markers and pencils to draw their names on a piece of white paper. CHARLI, who wears a skirt even though she was asked to wear clothes to move comfortably in, sits in a chair. One-by-one, markers and pencils are put down and individuals speak quietly between themselves. Some discuss scholarship applications. This goes on for a few moments.)*

*(The facilitator, ENZA, sits at the apex of the circle in a big red cushy armchair the teens set up especially for her. There is a camera set up on a tripod connected to a power source. It remains stationary throughout.)*

ENZA: So we’ll go around the circle and you can show us your drawings. You can explain yours if you want, but you don’t have to. You can just show it to us and we’ll take it all in. So remember how I told you that I am named after my Nonna who passed away a few years ago and it’s my only connection to her? And I was always embarrassed to tell people in my suburban town my name because they always made a face like it was weird? Now it’s your turn to tell us a story you want to tell. Oh and

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<sup>11</sup> I also tried to choose a song that was similar to the style of music appreciated by the ARs.

remember to tell us how old are you, what grade are you in, and where are you from.

*(she turns to the person sitting to her right)* Would you mind starting?

*(CHARLI nods, she is the first to begin her story. At first she is shy, giggling and touching her hair, crossing and uncrossing her legs. KIARA watches her and listens. LACEY is also watching but continues to play with her hair. MONROE sits very still with his legs crossed and tucked underneath him, he also observes and listens intently. CHRISTOPHER plays with his pen and though he seems to listen, his eyes keep moving, traveling up to CHARLI and then back down to his paper. He puts his pen down and fidgets with his hands and clothes. BREEZY looks at her paper; she slyly keeps working on her drawing of her name. So does ALEXANDER, though he looks up every once in awhile.)*

CHARLI: OK, um...So my name is Charli and—

ENZA: Show us... *(she motions to the paper on CHARLI'S lap)*

CHARLI: *(laughs)* Oh yeah. *(She picks up the paper and turns it toward the group. She touches and preens her hair. She does this often throughout. Her name is neatly drawn, in traditional cursive using a bright fuchsia pink marker. Her letters are written largely and right in the middle of the page. To the right of her name is drawn a single daisy-like flower growing out of scribbled grass. The flower and grass are the same bright fuchsia pink. Her voice has a sing-song quality with vowel sounds drawn out.)* Uh, I'm a junior in high school and I'm from California, but my family is from Sinaloa, Mexico. Ummm...my mom's father? His name was Charlie and—

LACEY: His?

CHARLI: (*laughs*) Yeah, his. And it was spelled C.H.A.R.L.I.E. (*she spells this in the air with her finger*) He died when my mother was pregnant with me. (*fidgets.*) And her and my aunt (*pronounced "ant"*) had this whole feud, for whatever they did, so when she had a daughter my mom wanted one. But she got a son. So, eleven years later, when she was pregnant with me my mom was so excited when she found out it was a girl! And then her dad died. My cousin's name is Charlene. So Charlie is the base of it. My aunt was like, "Ha, ha, I win at the name game!" Well, my *mom* was like, "Well, I'm just going to name my daughter flat-out Charlie and *I'll* win." And my aunt was like, "No. You. Don't," tah,rah,rah. (*She laughs. She grows more animated as she tells us about this dramatic feud. The rest of the group becomes more engaged, giggling and laughing. It is clear she is affected by their interest*). My mom wasn't really sure about it. She was always flippy-floppy with those decisions, so... When she was about seven months pregnant she went to Hawaii and saw this really pretty flower. It's pink and it's really sharp and it's pointy. And it's called... a Charlé flower! And my mom thought it was just the most *beautiful* flower ever. Then my mom went to a psychic. Some psychics in Hawaii? They give you a flower as your personality and everything. So, my mom went. *And...* she got the Charlé flower! (*embellishing with her hands*) And my mom was *soooo* in *love* with that flower! (*pause*) Um... they made water out of it, and, after I was born, when I was born? She named me Charli. She thought it was the most perfect thing ever, and for the first few months she wouldn't give me regular water. She would give me Charlé water, like in my milk and everything.

MONROE: I feel boring now.

LACEY: Wow, I never thought about names like that.

CHARLI: (*excited*) I'm like, the only one who got a cool name. My sister's name was, like, picked out of a book and my brother was just named after my dad.

ENZA: Thank you, Charli. It is so great to meet you all and hear these stories. (*She turns to CHRISTOPHER.*) Ready?

(*Everyone is watching and listening more intently than when the activity began. The fidgeting is down to a minimum.*)

CHRISTOPHER: Yeah. (*He sits up straighter. He's still on the floor, legs crossed. He keeps picking up the paper to show us and then putting it down. He has chosen to forgo the markers and to draw his name in pencil. The lettering is all capitalized, with the first and last letters embellished with bold, round strokes flaring out at the ends. The letters in the middle are written in block lettering with smaller strokes and flares at the ends. His writing is smaller in size and only takes up the very top of the paper. The answers to the questions he was asked to speak about during the storytelling portion of the activity are also written on the paper in pencil next to his name on the top right-hand corner. This lettering is small with similar embellishments as his name but includes both upper- and lowercase letters.*)

CHRISTOPHER: My parents named me Christopher because I had this Tia, and her name was Phelicia Trista (*other female names using the letters in the pseudonym "Christopher" might be substituted here*). She passed away with breast cancer and so, uh, they decided to make up her name into one creative word. (*He use his hands to describe, as if the name is a tangible thing in front of him and he is physically deconstructing it and constructing his own name*) So they took the letters and put a space between, um like, a ways from, um, ok, here, look. (*He picks up the paper*) Ok,

so, right here is the “C” and then the “Ph” and the “I,” the “T, R.” And then they just put it together like that. *(Puts the paper down slowly, shifts his legs and sits back.)*

Yeah...so...*(quietly)* that’s how I got my name.

ENZA: That’s such a unique story too. Thank you. And what grade are you in?

CHRISTOPHER: Ten.

ENZA: And where are you from?

CHRISTOPHER: Oh, uh, my mom is from Sonora, Mexico.

ENZA: And, what about you?

CHRISTOPHER: Here. I was born here.

*(ENZA smiles. She motions to BREEZY who is next in the circle.)*

*(BREEZY shifts her body a bit, but stays lying down while she talks. She picks up the paper and shows us her drawing. It is covered in angular lines of blue and black marker with very little pencil drawn in. Her nickname is highlighted in larger lettering. The other letters on the page are almost illegible. There are also some drawings in black marker. One looks like a microphone. The rest are unrecognizable. There is what looks like a scripture number written in black. On the bottom right-hand corner is written her full name in small-penciled letters. Her style is graffiti.)*

BREEZY: Uh...this is my pit-chure, *(laughs at her own silliness)*. I hope you can read it.

ENZA: You can read it to us if you want.

BREEZY: Oh, just that, what I spelt out was...what I’m mixed with so... *(she mumbles, at times she is difficult to understand)* I’m Brenda. I’m a senior. I was born here in Phoenix, AZ. My folks...I think they were born here? But I’m not sure? I don’t know anything about my family except what I mixed with.



Figure 3.8 Charli's name story.

ENZA: What's that?

BREEZY: Black, Native American, Italiano, and Mexican. I get the African-American from my mom, Italian from both of my parents, Native American from both sides, and Mexican from both of them. Um, uh, well, my Dad decided to name me after one of his ex-girlfriends. So, it was either that, or Nicanora. *(chuckles to herself)* I hate that name.

LACEY: *What* was it?

KIARA: *(sarcastically)* See, now that's a good name.

*(Everyone laughs)*

BREEZY: My mom was high on pain pills! She was like, "I like Nicanora!" I was like, thank you daddy, thank you! *(laughs)*

ENZA: So...do you live with your parents?

BREEZY: Um...I have my own house, but my dad lost his so he's trying to move in with me.

ENZA: Were your parents both born here in the US or....?

BREEZY: Oh, well they say they're born here, but...I always ask them. They just say,  
*(in an authoritative voice, mocking parents)* "Don't ask me these questions!" And I'm  
just like, "OK!" *(throws hands up in mock defense)*

*(Everyone laughs)*

BREEZY: Currently, I'm recording and starting my own business. I'm recording music.  
Um, I have a nickname that a lot of my family and some really close friends call me,  
and it's Breezy and that's what I've been using to record—

*(Someone walks into the room and interrupts BREEZY by asking for the drama teacher)*

LACEY: *(to BREEZY who is visibly annoyed.)* Oohhh, I thought you were gonna just  
like, get up and like—*(she makes a motion with her fist against her hand)* I was like,  
dang girl!

*(Everyone laughs except for Alexander. He remains quiet but takes everything in with a  
slight grin on his face)*

BREEZY: Ha. Um...I have a scripture verse here *(points to drawing)* which is Romans  
8:38-39. It just shows that um, I'm a Christian and, uh, I have been seriously for two  
years. And um, I have been graffitiing since I was five. I learned that from my brothers. I  
have a total of sixteen brothers. I'm the only girl. My youngest brother, me and him are  
eight years apart. We hardly get along, but we just fight over family things. They told  
my mom that she wasn't going to be able to have anymore kids after her last baby. She  
was seven months pregnant, and she had a miscarriage? They told her she couldn't have  
any more kids because she kept losin' em. Um, my dad started to, you know, he started  
to turn to Christianity. He says you know, the doctors said, "she's gonna be a boy, she's  
gonna be a boy." Three times the doctors said I was gonna be a boy! Um, when I was

born, my dad said he saw a shining light put on me. He says that ever since then, he says he kept on, he kept on, praying more and more and readin' the Bible and looking to God. He says that God—he gave, he, *gave* me to Him.

*(Everyone is very intent on what she is saying. The room becomes very quiet.*

*ALEXANDER breaks the silence.)*

ALEXANDER: *(apologetically, smiling shyly)* Mine is a little bit of a strange story.

ENZA: *(smiling)* Ok, shows us your drawing, tell us where you're from, where your family's from.

ALEXANDER: My name is Alexander Avi Alon.

LACEY: That's awesome.

ALEXANDER: And basically what it means, if you notice—*(He picks up his paper and points to his drawing. Alexander has chosen purple marker and pencil for his name drawing. His paper is the only one used vertically, in portrait style, with his name written in large letters starting at the top of the page and ending a bit below the median. His lettering is connected script with many large round loops. In the first line is his first name. Beneath it are his last and middle names, separated by a drawing of the Star of David. In the top corners of the star are drawn small moons mirroring each other; in the middle corner of the star are drawn crucifixes and in the bottom corners are stars. Underneath the Star of David and his middle name is written the word "Contradiction" in much smaller lettering and encased by quotation marks. This word is in pencil except for the "t," which is crossed in purple marker and the quotation marks. One quotation is in pencil and one in purple marker. This word is written in more traditional cursive as are the small purple letters written at the very bottom which*

*read, in this exact way: "My name comes from my grandpa who was a Archeologist."*  
*He holds the paper up almost the entire retelling.)*

ALEXANDER: It's four different religions. It's Christianity, Catholicism, Lutheranism, and Judaism. And basically in times of World War II? There were three brothers? Which was my grandfather and his two brothers. Alexander was my grandfather, and Avi and Alon were his brothers. And basically they were all divided in World War II because one was Jewish, and so he tried to escape the clutches. That was when in Nazi Germany a Jewish name would mean danger. And, Avi was basically, he was, he became, I don't know how to say this, but he became a Nazi. And then I was named after Alexander, because he was the one that came to the United States and joined the Army? And he was the one that fought *against* his brother in a, uh, a *really* tragic war. And so I was named after those three. And they are all sort of different religions. And then my mom was born in Munich, Germany and my Dad was born in Hampton Beach, California? And I was born in Jerome, AZ, which is on top a colony of mountains. Um, uh, I only really have one nickname I was given back in the fourth-grade, because I am German-Jewish? So people started calling me the Contradiction? Which I still think is messed up (*sardonic laugh*). So yeah, I was born after my three grandfathers.

LACEY: That's a really cool story, actually.

KIARA: I feel, all, lame now.

ALEXANDER: Yeah so when I was born it was kind of strange because my dad could never understand my mom. My mom had, she still has, a very thick German accent. When I was born? She was saying, "My beautiful darling, my little angel," (*he finally puts the paper down and becomes very animated, talking with his hands for emphasis,*

*imitating his parents voices and giggling*) My dad thought she was calling me the drunken mistake!

*(KIARA rolls her eyes.)*

MONROE: *(hand over his mouth)* Oh, my, Gahhd!

ALEXANDER: *(cracking himself up)* And my dad was like, “Stop saying that!” You were not drunk during it!

KIARA: Perfect.

ENZA: *(chuckles)* And you’re a freshman?

ALEXANDER: *(quietly nods his head)* Yes. *(clasps his hands and rocks back and forth)* I hate being a freshman.

*(MONROE takes his opportunity to jump in.)*

MONROE: Well, uh my name is Monroe. *(picks up paper, puts it back down without really showing it)* I don’t really have a cool story. Well, my dad was born somewhere in Mexico. I don’t know where. My mom was born here and I was born here. And um, *(he pats his paper which is on his binder, on his lap)* well, each of the letters, they describe me basically. *(He looks down and points to each letter as he speaks. His name sits in the middle of the page. Each letter is written in a different color, except the first and last are both in pencil. The letters are medium-sized and separated. Each letter is represented in a different style or font.)* The, the, first letter is cursive because it’s me being sensitive, yeah? And the “O,” it represents—you know how the “O” has a hole in the middle of it? *(He draws this out in the air with his hand.)* To me that’s like saying, the frame, and people can see past me, and not really, like, see into me, you know? Like they get some of who I am? But not all of me. This red squiggly one, I drew it like that

cause, um, like, I can be kinda crazy and not afraid to talk sometimes, and that's like, a downfall of mine. This one is pink because that's the loving side of me, and this last simple and flat one is about me being **present** (*hits paper and binder with both hands for emphasis. He uses his hands to indicate in the following sentence*) Not looking too far back, not looking forward, but just like, **present**. (*pause, a sudden change of mood*) And, um when I was little they thought I was gonna be a girl! (*he laughs*) There's, like, a picture of me. You know those little, like, like, bathtub thingys? Mine was pink! Oh yea, I'm a sophomore.

*(There are people coming in the room. CHARLI shushes them.)*

LACEY: You guys are all crazy! (*She picks up her paper, looks at it and then turns it so everyone can see. Her name is written in blue and there are large letters covering almost the entire page. Each letter is separate beginning with an uppercase and loopy letter "L," ending in a lowercase "y" with an even loopier tail. All of the other letters on the page are strong, clean, and commonplace, no loops. Beneath her first name is written her middle name. It is underlined in a penciled zig-zag. Next to her middle name is her nickname, written in quotes: "Lace."*) I'm a junior and my parents were born in Mexico. They known each other for, like, ever. They grew up with each other and they were meant to be with each other. That's what my dad said, so... He left his, what was supposed to be his wife, like, he left her completely! And he was like, "Uhhh, I don't want to get married with you anymore." So he went with my mom. My mom was like, "Ehhh, awright." Like, uh, she was literally like, "Um, we're going to Arizona right?" And he's, like, "Yeah." She's like, "Alright, I'll get married with you." (*laughter from the group*). But, I'm the youngest. Of all of them. And, I don't really

have anything, like, special about my name. Like, I guess my mom says I was—well my dad he’s really light-skinned, he’s pale. They said because I was really light, and I was smallest, I seemed like, pretty fragile all the time. Cause I was sick before I came, like one month after I was born I got really sick and they didn’t know if I was going to make it, blah, blah, blah....So she says it kind of fit me perfectly because I was always kind of fragile, like my health I guess, and lace is fragile and it’s light so she called me Lacey. But I’m kinda like the opposite. I’m kinda, like, crazy. And...my mom calls me by my middle name in Spanish when she’s mad at me. You know she’s mad when she calls me by middle name!

ENZA: Your grade again?

LACEY: I’m a sophomore.

KIARA: You’re a junior.

*(Laughter)*

LACEY: OH, Yeah, I’m a junior!

*(KIARA is last. Time is running out and there is pressure for her to get her story in before it’s too late.)*

KIARA: *(KIARA’S name is written in bold red marker. She has drawn each letter separately in large swirly patterns. Her name is written in large upper- and lower case letters that are left-justified and slanting down toward the lower right of the paper. Beneath her name are her middle and last name initials. These letters are not nearly as swirly but still a bit embellished. Next to the initials is written her nickname in quotation marks: “Ki.” She puts the paper down, confidently leans back and supports herself on the palms of her hands.)* Ok. So. Kiara. I’m a junior. I was born in Pembroke

Pines, FL and my dad is from Venezuela, but the majority of my family is from Cuba. But uh, I don't know, my name is just like, I don't really like my name cause everyone calls me Kara when they first see it and it pisses me off cause I don't like it. I had a step-mom that called me that once and I got really evil. *(everyone laughs, she chuckles.)* She did it cause it pissed me off. But, uh...It was really spur of the moment because at first my mom liked Caitlin? And I'm really happy she didn't cause I would've hated that more, cause it's soooo...white girl, so—

CHARLI: *(feigning her idea of a “White girl’s” snobby accent)* Blonde hair, I go to a preppy school? *(flips her hair)*

*(Giggles come from the group. At this time other students are starting to come into the room and garbled voices are heard throughout the rest of Kiara’s story.)*

KIARA: Yeah. Anyway, everyone at the hospital was naming their kids Caitlin, and she was like, “Annnnd, I change my mind.” And apparently I have an old gold thing from my grandmother on my mom’s side that said Caitlin too and my mom was like, “Nope, her name is Kiara.” And, Ki? Because I hate Kiara, so I tell people to call me Ki.

ENZA: Wow. Thank you for your stories. Every time I do this activity people say they don't have good stories but once again, you all proved me right, ha! I feel like I know you so much better and I hope after hearing my story you feel like you know me better too. It's really great to meet you all and I'm so excited to work with you. The final thing I want to tell you about quickly is Image Theatre. Let's close today by communicating with our bodies through frozen images. How do you feel right now?

*(In the final moment the lights dim on centerstage and come up downstage, Airbone Toxic Event’s “What’s in a Name?” starts to play. ENZA remains where she is and does*

*not come downstage, she models an image with her arms thrown up in the air and a huge smile on her face. Each of the group members slowly turns and one-by-one faces outside the circle, walks downstage, and looks out to the audience. In a wave-like motion beginning with CHARLI, they each express their feelings through a silent image using their bodies. When they complete their images they stand frozen neutrally. CHARLI yawns with her whole body. CHRISTOPHER'S image is also a yawn, but his is smaller and more restrained, only expressed in the top half of his body. BREEZY throws her hands up, her head is pointed up to the sky and cocked to one side. She shows "raising the roof." ALEXANDER stands with his hands shoved in his pocket, head hanging low. MONROE smiles kindly with his arms stretching out in front of him. LACEY shows what looks like nerves, her hand to her mouth as she bites her finger. Finally KIARA doubles over as if throwing up.)*

*(Lights and sound fade away to black.)*

## CHAPTER 4

### GHS DOCUTHEATRE DEVISING PROGRAM, PART I

After meeting with Lake to discuss her needs and what she believed were the needs of her students, I envisioned a conceptual framework for making original docutheatre (refer to Figure 4.9). My intention was to include four components in this framework—*Community Building, Brainstorming & Decision-making, Skill Building, and Application of Skills*—that might generate rich data (for me and the ARs) and materials for making *A Youth Devised Play*. I wanted to prioritize the needs of the youth and to be flexible and open to discoveries. However, the educator and facilitator in me knew that on that first day I needed to be prepared for any potential questions the GHS drama students might have concerning the program. Moreover, I wanted to be clear about potential artist-researcher responsibilities should anyone choose to participate.

I moved forward with what I felt were my best intentions to visualize an adaptable and inclusive conceptual framework where each component might build upon or enhance the one previous and become embedded in the one before and after. I then designed a devising program based on this framework, its four main components, and its final result. In this chapter, I begin by demonstrating how the program was structured *before* meeting the ARs. Though the program I designed transformed when finally put into practice, I believe it is important to provide an overview of the conceptual framework and devising program, even the plans that were eventually discarded, for two reasons: to contextualize my analysis and interrogation of what actually did happen during our six weeks together and my role in this process; and to raise possible questions you might consider asking

when critiquing my work with the ARs or before constructing similar programs of your own.

When the youth approved of the devising program, after I shared it with them at our first meeting, I felt comfortable proceeding with rehearsals. In the second half of this chapter, I discuss how my implementation of this docutheatre devising program affected everyone's behaviors, including my own, on multiple levels. I then begin to trace the *actual* trajectory of the program as I draw upon my analysis of data, framed by the frameworks I established in Chapter Two, to interrogate the role(s) I juggled and the choices we made. I expand on the ways the original program necessitated flexibility and change to meet everyone's needs within this particular context and the ramifications of these changes. Throughout this chapter, I return to the notion of culture as story to continue my analysis of identity and agency in relation to our docutheatrical journey.

### **Conceptual Framework for Making Docutheatre With and By Youth**

As I share our drama, theatre, and research practices, I do not mean to present a handbook for facilitating social justice theatre or docutheatre devising with and by youth (though my descriptions of games, exercises, activities can sometimes inadvertently read this way). There are many other texts written for such purposes that are invaluable for developing similar kinds of programming (Boal, 1995, 1998, 2002; Bogart & Landau, 2005; Clifford & Herrmann, 1999; Govan, Nicholson, & Normington, 2007; Johnstone, 1989; Kelin, 2005; Knight & Schwarzman, 2006; Neelands & Goode, 2000; Norris, 2009; Oddey, 1994; Rohd, 1998; Saldaña, 2011a; Spolin, 1986; Wagner, 1999). I humbly refer you to them instead. I drew from all of these texts when conceiving the framework

for this project and, subsequently, the docutheatre devising program and rehearsal plans I implemented at GHS.

As I refer to these texts I consider Boal's (2002) advice to those facilitating his methods: "the choice of method depends on the nature of the group, the occasion and the objectives of the group . . . indeed nothing . . . is obligatory" (p. 176). Most of these authors (practitioners themselves) encourage artists, facilitators, community-leaders, and educators to apply dramatic practices and theatrical theories at their own discretion. I believe any artistic endeavor that labels itself social justice theatre (or perhaps any artistic endeavor that is also pedagogical or community-engaged) requires keen observation of the group's needs and constant respect of the voices of each and every diverse group member.

This chapter modestly presents dramatic and research activities you should feel free to regard as stimuli or points of departure for your own processes, if you so choose. I divulge some anecdotes you might relate to and empathize with or that might become new or substantial knowledge, and I confess facilitation challenges you might consider sidestepping. It is important to me to be as reflective and honest about my roles in this project as possible, and I welcome critique (which readers are encouraged to provide on this dissertation's companion website, [www.meant2see.com](http://www.meant2see.com)).



**Figure 4.9 Conceptual Framework for Making Docutheatre With and By Youth.**

### **Clarification of Devising Terms**

I spent a considerable amount of time facilitating games, activities, and exercises throughout the devising program. Though there are times these three terms were used interchangeably by the ARs, I tried to use the words *game* and *exercise* to delineate the dramatic work. I explained the difference to the group with a discussion of Boal’s influence on my practice. Boal (2002) explains his use of the words *games* and *exercises* in the following way:

I use the word ‘exercises’ to designate all physical, muscular, movement, (respiratory, motor, vocal) which helps the doer to a better knowledge or recognition of his or her body, its muscles, its nerves, its relationship to other bodies, to gravity, to objects, to space, its dimensions, volumes, weights, speed, the interrelationship of these forces, and so on. The goal of

these exercises is better awareness of the body . . . a ‘physical reflection’ on oneself . . . the games on the other hand, deal with the expressivity of the body as emitter and receiver of messages. The games are a dialogue, they require an interlocutor. They are extroversion. (p. 48)

Boal goes on to discuss that there are times when the intentions of games and exercises overlap (p. 48). Due in part to the reactions associated with *Group Juggle*, I led a discussion concerning preconceived notions about games (not necessarily our own but those of adults or peers): they might be considered a waste of time by some or overly competitive to others. I explained that my goal was to facilitate games and exercises as a way for us to have fun and play together and a way to collaboratively practice and sharpen our drama skills. I then explained that *activities*, on the other hand, might not necessarily seem useful for developing theatre or drama skills, at first. If we took a second look, they might be rather valuable and theatrical. These activities included the *Story of My Name*, for example.

I encouraged the ARs to consider everything they practiced as possible tools for constructing our performance. Even a seemingly “silly” game or a nondramatic activity has potential for performance. Most of the time these words (*games, exercises, activities*) were only useful for the organization of my own thoughts or rehearsal designs rather than strict or binding labels used to categorize everything we did in a rehearsal. I may refer in this dissertation to a convention using one of the above terms when absolutely necessary to make clear differentiations. However, I try to conflate the three terms into the phrase “devising tools” or simply the word “tools” when possible.

### **Component: Community Building**

From the conception of the framework, I believed ensemble building tools were essential to the formation of a cohesive artistic collective whose members felt safe enough to take creative risks and share deeply personal experiences. Games such as *Group Count* encourage the group to cooperate and tune in fully to the energy of the group.<sup>12</sup> Theoretically, these types of games can support the development of trust and camaraderie among members of a group, including the facilitator. I planned for community and ensemble building to constitute the first steps in our process. However, I did aim to encourage our community to continue to grow as the project progressed and the collective continued to work together toward the common goal of the theatrical performance.

### **Component: Brainstorming & Decision-making**

During the early stages of the program, I planned to ask the ARs one or more of the following questions:

- What do you want this play to be about?
- What social issues are you affected by, or do you care deeply about?
- What do you want an audience to hear, see, or think about you/us/your communities/the world?
- What do you think is important to research or learn more about? What kind of new knowledge about an issue do you want to produce or raise awareness of through your research?

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<sup>12</sup> *Group Count* can be used to build the ensemble and encourage concentration. Without giving verbal or physical cues, a group of at least three or four is asked to close their eyes and to work cooperatively to count to a certain number without anyone speaking simultaneously. If this happens the game immediately starts back at number one.

- What have you always wanted to ask the adults in your life/your friends/a celebrity/etc. but never felt you could?

I imagined facilitating structured brainstorming games and activities such as stream of consciousness writing or drawing in response to the above questions, small group discussions about current events or what's "trending" on the Internet, or something more spirited like *Alphabet Relay*.<sup>13</sup> I planned for the ARs to narrow their ideas down to a small list of three to six possibilities and for us to take a vote, through a democratic and anonymous process, on the definitive focus of the piece. This component then includes the group sharing personal experiences with the play's chosen topic and gauging his or her level of comfort with, or enthusiasm for, the topic (or issue) before moving forward.

### **Component: Skill Building**

This component incorporates practicing the skills needed to devise a performance through four foundational drama and theatre techniques I find generate a great deal of material for constructing a playscript or performance: *improvisational theatre*, *creative drama*, *physical theatre*, and *Theatre of the Oppressed* (TO). While these techniques produce many devising tools, they also potentially develop various social and cultural literacies and interpersonal skills. This section includes a description of the research skills needed to devise docutheatre.

**Drama Skills.** *Improvisational theatre* is the primary tool for devising this type of performance. The research sources do provide material, however a script or staging do

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<sup>13</sup> This is a relay race where two groups are arranged in parallel lines in a face-off to see which group can be the first to quickly brainstorm words from A-Z that they associate with a certain idea, topic, theme, etc. Competitive games such as these can lead to hurt or frustrated feelings so I planned for extra time to facilitate open dialogue and reflection before and after implementation. I also prepared myself to operate with an even more heightened awareness of the groups' readiness for such games.

not exist at the onset of the project and everything is spontaneous or “made up as you go.” Additionally, through improvisation games and exercises, a person can experience what it feels like to be fully aware in the present moment since he never knows what information his scene partner will provide; consequently, the performer may also realize how crucial it is to fully listen to his scene partners and consequently his collaborators. Imaginations are exercised as objectives are creatively pursued in an improvisation exercise or game. The lesson learned from the primary rule of improvisation, *Yes, and?*, is arguably the most important to the devising process: *Don't say no. Accept your partner's offer, enliven your imagination, and "go with it."* It was important for me to include the rules of improvisation in the development of the program because of their applicability to the creation of scenes and monologues for our play, but also because I was curious how they might apply to the challenging but crucial collaborative moments of the devising process when many diverse minds must come to mutual agreements.

Next, I planned to facilitate *physical theatre* and *creative drama* methods such as pantomime and character walks. Previous experience with these movement techniques as a facilitator and actor led me to consider the utility of these methods and their potential to construct new somatic languages for making theatre and communicating with audiences of diverse cultures and multiple intelligences. I have seen professional and amateur performances employing these techniques in ways that add visual appeal and aesthetic value (in my opinion) and I wondered if this might be true for our performance. I also hoped to discover whether techniques such as these, which tend to challenge structures that privilege the mind over body, might impact the ARs' identity processes. Moreover, with consideration to theories such as those of Bertolt Brecht (1992) and Boal (1979),

experimental theatre forms assist the artist-researcher as she avoids any claims to docutheatre's objectivity by making the "facts" of documentary theatre appear less natural; this can also highlight realism's potential to make dominant power structures appear natural.

Last but not least is Boal's (1995, 1998, 2002) arsenal of *Theatre of the Oppressed*. Boal is renowned among theatre artists and educators for forging crucial interactions between art and society with various marginalized and oppressed communities using the theatrical tools comprising his arsenal of Theatre of the Oppressed (TO). I have a particular passion for Boal's arrangement of interactive theatre games and exercises. Boal's TO techniques challenge power structures and the status quo; they provide spaces for exploring human experiences and analyzing social issues.

Some practitioners believe TO techniques should be practiced only as a way to rehearse possible revolutions against oppressive systems of power (which is the primary reason I facilitate TO). I never had the pleasure to meet Boal, but I would like to believe that he did not intend for such rigidity. From the onset, I considered TO techniques integral to the devising program. This feeling was intensified when Lake expressed that she was first attracted to my proposal because of my background in social justice theatre and her desire to use TO techniques with her students. I expressed my belief that TO techniques allow artists to critically explore and reflect upon a play's issue while actively deciding how to communicate in theatrical and purposeful ways. For the program, I intended to facilitate *Image Theatre*, a technique Boal first used to overcome language barriers, as a way to explore the experiences of the ensemble and the themes of our play, build scenes, and create staging. Similar to tableaux, this technique involves the creation

of “frozen” human statues made by an individual or the group reflecting spontaneous inner thoughts and feelings in response to a word, idea, or theme. I also thought it might be interesting for the youth to consider images as starting points for devising scenes or as their own self-contained moments of theatrical staging. I was enthusiastic about the possible discoveries the ARs might make and for the data I might find as we practiced all four of these techniques and reflected on our work.

**Research skills.** It is also necessary to discuss and practice research methods and interview protocols during a docutheatre devising program. My objectives were to share my personal views on the importance of producing new knowledge for the purposes of social justice and human rights, to discuss how and where research might be conducted, and to explain the difference between primary and secondary sources. I was prepared to discuss interviewing skills and ethical interview protocols such as interview release forms and how to gather secondary sources (books, newspaper article, photographs, videos, web materials, books, songs, etc.) in the library, in schools or at home, on the Internet, or through other community resources. I also decided to have a conversation about how to synthesize large amounts of research. Each week, I planned for the ARs to share their findings, attempt transcribing, and practice using the rules of dramatic structure to edit interviews into a piece of docutheatre.

### **Component: Application of Skills**

As I continued to prepare the program details before the start of the program, I imagined this component would involve everyone laying their transcribed interviews and secondary sources on the floor, on a table or tables, or on the walls and making choices. I also planned to ask the ARs to make a list of all the creative techniques and devising

tools in our metaphorical docutheatre-making toolbox and to explore at least one or more of the following questions in small groups as they applied drama skills to theatricalize their research:

- What, or whose, story or stories are you just bursting to tell?
- What techniques or devising tools will help you tell your story/stories in the most theatrical and interesting way possible?
- How will you communicate your views on this issue/topic/idea(s) while still remaining “true” to our interviewees and research? Of all this research, what is most important for you to keep to achieve this?
- What type of conversation do you want to have with your audience(s)?

### **Component: A Youth Devised Play**

Most of the devised docutheatre performances I have observed do not fulfill the rules of traditional theatrical productions (recall Monroe’s comment about focusing on the interviewee’s “words”). So, I imagined that ours might not include elaborate lighting, set construction, costuming, or memorized lines.<sup>14</sup> For this kind of process it is important to encourage the ARs to concentrate on their interviewees’ words and for the facilitator to place equal emphasis on the ARs’ processes and the presentation of their efforts so they might embrace their journeys without feeling pressure or performance anxiety. As I designed this docutheatre devising program, I constantly reminded the theatre artist in me that creating a fully mounted spectacle was not my primary objective (although as you will read later, she does not always care to listen).

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<sup>14</sup> If time and money are a luxury, and unfortunately I knew neither of those were in this scenario, and the ensemble wants to do “more,” then I most definitely encourage you to work with youth to memorize lines and design a more elaborate production that still maintains the integrity of the play’s research and narrative(s).

**Closure.** After the performance, I thought it best have one more meeting. If possible, I hoped we might reflect on our project, the experience of working together as artists and researchers, and how it felt to engage with our communities in this particular way. I was curious how the ARs might respond to the program once our goal was reached, and I knew from past experiences that a debriefing might be necessary to unpack the broader impact of social justice docutheatre on us, our interviewees, and our audience members.

### **(Pre-planned) GHS Docutheatre Devising Program**

After making initial decisions about which components might (hypothetically) be the most generative of research data and tools for devising docutheatre, I developed the devising program and outlined possible procedures for each week of the six-week program. The nineteen-day program was roughly sketched in this way:

#### **Mondays and Wednesdays (2:35-3:25 p.m.):**

- Community build
- Skill build and learn theatre and drama devising tools; reflect on our experiences
- Brainstorm, make decisions about, and explore our play topic or issue
- Practice and apply all drama skills; conduct interviews

#### **Friday “Think Tanks” (or table work) (2:35-3:25 p.m.):**

- Review research methods and devising tools
- Reality check: Time together to dialogue, ask questions, reflect, share research, discuss artistic visions, transcribe and edit

I skipped the rigidity of a minute-by-minute schedule and did not pre-plan session designs for each day of rehearsal. In this case, since I had already planned enough

without the participants' input, I thought it best for the exact course of each day to be informed by the previous days' outcomes. I took a deep breath, and with the knowledge that I had done all my homework, conceded instead to be a reflective practitioner and to remain open to new discoveries or challenges that came our way.

### **The (Actual) GHS Docutheatre Devising Program, Part I**

I now use narrative description, short ethnodramas, and visual data to share vignettes and images that illustrate what occurred when I tried to implement this program. I pay attention to events and devising practices that support my assertions and exemplify the greater significance of my research findings. For the purposes of reporting this research I separate the program into two parts (see Chapter Five for Part II). In this first part I report outcomes of the first half of the program, which included community building, choosing the play issue, and learning and applying research skills. More significant findings are represented through visual data and three short verbatim scenes. "Teen Drama" and "Hard to Put Out There" are both titled after categories that eventually contributed to this study's Key Assertion 2 (refer to Chapter Three). "Hiding & Exposure, On the Meta" and a photo collage of the ARs practicing interview skills contributed to Key Assertion 1. "Teen Drama" dramatizes what conspired when we chose the play's topic; "Hard to Put Out There" shares excerpts of the ARs' personal stories of *hiding* and *exposure*; and "Hiding & Exposure, On the Meta" involves the ARs in a discussion about the interview process.

#### **Building an A.R.C. (artist-researcher collective)**

The plans I wanted to execute changed immediately. I did not see these changes as major setbacks. However, my fear of time quietly implanted itself like a seed in my

psyche. In the coming weeks, this seed would slowly grow into an unruly and thorny bush that affected my role as facilitator in ways I became more aware of as I analyzed video data (more on this in Chapter Six). To recap from Chapter Three, I led a theatre game call *Group Juggle*, explained the research study, and described the genre of documentary theatre. I also outlined the responsibilities of those who chose to participate in the program. I did not believe that I had lost two days of research, but I was concerned that two days of community building with the eventual group of seven ARs might be compromised.

I decided to consolidate my plans for the first few days of the program since I did not feel I was able to devote more than one entire rehearsal to community building alone like I had planned. I went with my instincts and chose to facilitate the *Story of My Name* activity. We also participated in an open dialogue about behavior the ARs deemed acceptable, such as respect for everyone's opinions, and an agreed to discuss problems openly with the permission of individuals or the group should they arise. In lieu of spending two or more entire rehearsal periods devoted to community building, I chose to facilitate warm-up games and exercises in the first ten to fifteen minutes of each rehearsal whose objectives included uniting the ensemble and focusing the groups' energy and individual levels of concentration. We also began every rehearsal with "check-ins" and "check-outs" where everyone was given the floor to share how they were feeling or where they were "coming from" mentally in the form of a word, physical action, or some combination of both.

During the first few check-ins I noticed how open the ARs were with each other and me. They shared freely and seemed to trust the process immediately. Perhaps this

was due in part to their previous connections. All had participated in drama or worked with Lake at some point, though not necessarily at the same time or on the same production. The camaraderie was present from the onset though, as was the physical affection that I have come to expect from those who participate in drama. Despite the ease with which everyone seemed to get along, there were times when commitment was inconsistent. Often at least one person was missing from rehearsal or had to arrive late or leave early. When I tried to schedule extra rehearsal time, which of course was not obligatory, only one or two ARs could commit (though some of the reasons for this had to do with outside forces such as family engagements).

Halfway through the program Charli stopped attending. I am still unsure as to why. I attempted to reach out to her on Facebook but I did not receive a response. Lake's reaction was, "Don't take it personally, she quit the play too. I think she had to get a job." I could not help but wonder if she might have stayed had she felt more connected to our collective. I still wish she had approached me with any difficulties she might have encountered, though I respect that she made the choice that was best for her. Despite this disappointment mid-program, I believed we had developed a rapport that would continue to grow stronger.

### **Choosing a Direction For The Play**

As part of my effort to consolidate the first few days of the nineteen-day program, I asked the ARs to brainstorm ideas for our play in their research journals for homework instead of taking the time to brainstorm as a group like I planned. I provided them with four questions: *What do you want this play to be about? What social issues are you affected by, or do you care deeply about? What do you think is important to research or*

*learn more about? What do you want to raise awareness of through your research?* I emphasized that it was necessary for them to complete this “homework” so we might stay on schedule and choose our play’s direction by the end of the following week. Everyone but Christopher came prepared with research journals at the next rehearsal; Christopher shared his ideas in the present moment during the open dialogue when everyone shared their journal “entries.” I hesitate to call these entries, because each of the ARs had written little more than a list of issues rather than the thoughtful passages I was looking for in response to the above questions. Nevertheless, this portion of our process produced exceptionally rich data for this research study. The following scene, “Teen Drama,” is transcribed verbatim from video data. It combines moments that occurred during the rehearsal when ideas were shared and the following rehearsal when the issues and ideas were then voted upon.

### **“Teen Drama”**

#### **SETTING**

The Drama Room. November 9, 2012, 2:55 p.m. Everyone is present.

#### **Notes**

The beginning of this scene borrows a convention called Choral Speak, also used by the ARs in their performance of the play *To Be What’s Not Meant to Be*. Choral Speak emphasizes a variety of voices to highlight the meaning of the words (Neelands & Goode, 2002, p. 76). The actor playing a specific character should speak the line labeled with the character’s name. Otherwise, there are no rules. This beginning moment should be fashioned in such a way as to accentuate what is being said and the mood of the piece. Actors do not need to follow line breaks and should speak when the spirit moves

them. The actors should “riff” on the lines, so to speak. They should learn all the lines so they are able to play with line-sharing. They must work together and listen to each other so they can explore timing, repetition, rhythm, volume, vocal intonation, coloring, etc. Interruptions or silences are acceptable if they happen naturally. It might be helpful to consider the lines on the right-hand column as coming from one character: THE GHS ARTIST-RESEARCHER. Each performance of this Choral Speak is like a game, it should always feel new but the words and story should always remain the same. (I have offered suggestions for how to delineate lines should this prove to be a challenge for performers.) I suggest that the movement or staging in this first moment is choreographed so the actors are able to focus on playing with the lines. However, the movement should affect the Choral Speak choices and vice versa. Finally, during the curtain speech audience members should be warned that moments such as these engage them in the action. If they want to avoid being touched by the actors they should be given the option to sit toward the middle of the house or to remove themselves if necessary.

*(The actors step off the stage and arrange themselves in a circle facing each other around the audience (who sit in the middle). The lights rise in the house as the actors turn to their right and slowly walk in a circle. [At the start of this movement sequence ALEXANDER starts to speak, everyone follows in Choral Speak]. The actors begin by making eye contact with someone across from them in the circle who serves as a focal point for the entire sequence. In unison, they begin the ensemble exercise “12 Steps.” They decide together without verbal or physical cues when to take 12 steps in one direction of the circle (one foot in front of the other) and then when to turn to the left, they walk 11 steps and then turn back to the right, 10 steps and turn, 9 steps and turn,*

*and so on until they take 1 step, no step, and then freeze staring at each other with a neutral mask. Whatever happens, they must reach 1 step and stop with their attention on the actor across from them. With each turn the actors' speed increases a notch until the circle eventually feels chaotic. This has an impact on the spoken dialogue. Some actors begin to lose count; they bump into each other or the audience. The speaking and movement should stop simultaneously at the end.)*

*(ENZA stands outside the circle and at one point counts aloud to "help" the actors stay on track.)*

**ALEXANDER**

**Artist-researcher (AR) 1**

LGBTQ, teen suicide, the story of Tyler

Just, like, struggle.

Clemente, Teen drama.

**AR 2**

**CHARLI**

Like the stuff we have to deal with in life.

Gang violence, drug abuse.

**MONROE**

LGBTQ. Troubled teens.

**AR 2 & 3 & 4 & 5**

**LACEY**

Survival. Trying to survive.

Pet population, animal abuse, hidden

abuse,

**AR 1 & 5**

Why people don't speak up.

The problems, like average teens get.

How disabled people see life.

The world is going to end, images of war,  
moments of war.

**AR 6**

It's like how teenagers struggle all the time

with, like, your body.

**KIARA**

All that teenage stuff.

Problem with the education system, the  
media promoting things they shouldn't.

Teen pregnancy.

**AR 7**

What everybody said.

**BREEZY**

Graffer's life's, gang life, musician's life,  
family life,

**CHRISTOPHER**

**ALL**

Teenage love life.

They all have to do with like teens

How their love works, what they do, how

**ALL**

they cheat, how they mess up their minds

It's like fitting in.

to get other people's attention.

**ALL**

Trying to deal...

Like, trying to deal with

being who you are.

*(Everyone freezes and remains frozen.)*

**ENZA:** *(Grabs her research notebook which sits on the apron of the stage. She faces the audience and jots down some notes.)* Hmm, “All that teenage stuff.” “Troubled teens.” “Teen pregnancy.” “Teenage love life.” “Teen drama.” *(She puts her notebook and pencil down and looks up).* Ok, everyone. Let’s vote. *(She walks upstage and sits in the big red chair.)*



**Figure 4.10** Sharing and consolidating possible topics and issues.

*(As soon as the group hears “Let’s vote” they quickly unfreeze, grab a piece of paper out of their pockets, and walk upstage. CHRISTOPHER exits.<sup>15</sup> Each remaining actor folds the piece of paper, gives it to ENZA, and arranges him or herself on the floor at the foot of the big red chair. As she receives a piece of paper, ENZA opens and looks at it.)*

**ENZA:** *(Looks to the group. She holds the pieces of paper and reads off the one on the top.)* LGBTQ issues got 3 votes. Life is war: 1 vote. Troubled teens: 1 vote. Teen depression: 1 vote. Drug abuse: 2 votes. Gang life: 1 vote. Dream interpretations: 1 vote. Teen drama: 1 vote. Dating violence: 1 vote. So, LGBTQ issues got the most votes. Are you sure that’s where you want to go?

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<sup>15</sup> Christopher was not present the day we voted.

LACEY: It's good because it can cover a lot of other things, like teen depression or suicide.

KIARA: Or teen drama. *(quietly)* But, I don't know...*(a troubled look on her face)*

ENZA: Well, let's think. I want you all to be sure. What pops into your head, an idea or theme, when you hear the list? Close your eyes this time when you listen. *(she reads the list again.)* LGBTQ issues, life is war, troubled teens, teen depression, drug abuse, gang life, dream interpretation, teen drama, dating violence.

*(The next lines are spoken quietly, introspectively, by all. Some keep their eyes closed for a bit.)*

LACEY: They all have to do with, like, teens.

KIARA: The problems, like average teens get.

BREEZY: Survival, trying to survive.

LACEY: It's like fitting in. It's like how teenagers struggle all the time with, like, your body.

ENZA: What do you think Monroe?

MONROE: What everybody said.

ALEXANDER: Trying to deal...like, trying to deal with being who you are.

ENZA: Well...remember we talked about maybe going with a broader umbrella topic that might cover more ground? So, could teen survival capture it? What if our play was about the day in the life of an American teenager?

ALEXANDER: Well, I want to focus on a more focused topic than just being a teenager because that's still very broad and—

KIARA: *(in an accusing tone)* Well, then what would you want to focus on instead?

ALEXANDER: I mean, LGBTQ issues won the vote.

ENZA: You're right, Alexander.

KIARA: I just don't feel like I can relate to LGBTQ issues because I'm not part of that group at all, you know. It makes me, like, I don't know....(*trails off*).

CHARLI: Enza? I have to go.

ENZA: Ok, Charli. Before you go, do you have any input on the list?

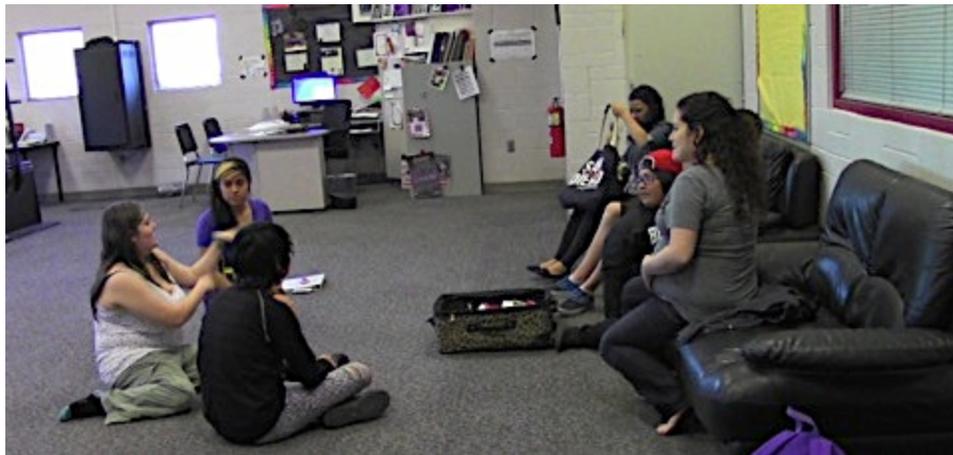


Figure 4.11 Voting day.

CHARLI: It's a good list. (*everyone laughs*) I'm ok with whatever, just not dream interpretations. (*she exits.*)

ENZA: (*continues*) It's important to me that you all feel happy with the direction of the play. We can talk about what it feels like to be a heterosexual ally to the LGBTQ community, Kiara, if that's how you see yourself or, something else I was thinking of was that some of the things you guys are talking about have to do with not being able to be who you are, or who you want to be.

LACEY: Yeah, like, having to hide your sexuality and like, who you love and stuff.

MONROE: Basically, like teens hiding, like, their issues. How you think people will take it when they find out.

LACEY: (*clasps her hands*) Ooooh, yeah! And like, exposing yourself can be really scary. Like, people just won't accept you because it's not who they see you as, it's like, I see you as this and you're going to stay like this, but in your true self, you're just like, I'm somebody else. Like you're you, but juss', like, you have to be different people.

ENZA: So what I'm hearing you say is that maybe we can just explore the ideas of hiding and exposure? Why people feel like they have to hide and what they feel they can or can't expose?

(*Silence. Everyone is thinking about the option. Heads begin to nod*)

MONROE: (*smiles*) I like it.

ENZA: Alex, I know that you don't want to have a broad topic but maybe you can be more focused by zeroing in on interviews with members of the LGBTQ community and their allies about these ideas?

ALEXANDER: (*quiet, he nods his head*). We have to go Enza, times is up.

(*Blackout*)

**“Tampering” with the vote.** I left that day deeply troubled. I had a feeling that Alexander was not pleased and I knew that I might have something to do with it. I went home and watched the video. In the heightened moment of decision-making, my concern was to mediate disagreements and appease everyone's wishes for their play. However, I might have subconsciously imposed my authority by asking the question, *Are you sure that's where you want to go?* In the moment I asked the question to evaluate the group's

reactions to the voting results. Nonetheless, by asking the question I might have encouraged the ARs to doubt the voting results: *Are we sure?* I also disregarded the voting results because I noticed Kiara's discomfort. As I watched the video, I wondered why I chose to react in that way. Kiara had already established herself as a leader. She was one of the oldest in age and the most experienced in theatre. Perhaps my reactions were due in part to my fear of losing her respect or that she might quit if I did not heed her response. Or I felt sympathy for her because she was dealing with a stomach illness at the time and because, as a clever but insecure second generation adolescent female who struggles with the pressures of her family, she reminds me of myself in some ways. I did indeed feel all of these things, but I am not sure if any one feeling led to my actions, or if it was simply my innate desire to want to please everyone. Whatever the case, I had tampered the voting process in a way I wanted to avoid.

Some may think it is impossible for a facilitator to remain completely neutral in this case, while others might believe it was my "job" to mediate potential disagreements and find a way to unite the group through this decision-making process. Certainly, my own subject position was bound to impact the outcome of our voting and my position as leader to affect participant responses. I will also concede to voting practices being inherently flawed. However, anonymous voting seemed the least confrontational and most proficient method at the time. Whatever the case, I might have avoided the imposition of my power by just being there to listen and asking the group to facilitate the discussion about the voting results without my input or interruptions. As I continued to watch the video, I also realized the sheer necessity for providing ample time to brainstorm, to reflect on issues and their importance to the individual, and to share personal connections. Only then can a

group begin to make informed choices for the play's direction. In the future I will also consider setting aside time to research potential issues or topics *before* a decision is made as well as after.

Unfortunately, my decision to consolidate the first few days of the rehearsal may have compromised my previous "good" intentions. I felt pressure to rush the process for fear of not achieving the end goal of performance, even though I convinced myself it was because I wanted to prioritize community building. If I had paid more attention to my own conceptual framework, I might have remembered that community building is not something that happens in one or two sessions. It is ongoing. Taking the time to share and reflect openly on issues during the brainstorming and decision-making component of the framework can work to make people feel closer as they tell stories about their personal experiences, sometimes as much or more so than a physical game, exercise, or activity. This became evident to me during our open dialogues and check-ins for example. I realize now that my choices in the first week of rehearsal were manifestations of the conflicting roles I was playing: researcher, facilitator, artist, and educator. Though the educator, facilitator, and researcher in me knew the final product was not the main goal of this project, the artist in me did not want to disappoint the ARs who were excited to perform docutheatre similar to the plays I showed them the first two meetings. I also was worried about disappointing Lake, who had taken a chance on me and who I had promised an exciting script she might develop further after I left. I continue this discussion about the roles I played in this process and how they conflicted in the last two chapters.

**Making amends.** I took to our Facebook group that night and told everyone that the concepts of *hiding* and *exposure* were not obligatory. They did not have to be the guiding forces for the creation of our play if everyone was not comfortable with them, or if someone wanted to object in private for any reason. I asked them to contemplate their thoughts and feelings and to share them if they were able in a private message or at our next rehearsal. There were no responses to my post. I decided if there were no objections or proclamations of loathing at the start of our next rehearsal (which there were not) that it was best to move forward and explore the concepts of hiding and exposure with *Story Circles*. *Story Circles* is a timed activity that asks participants to sit in a circle facing each other and to take turns sharing personal stories. Everyone is given his or her allotted time to share a story. No one is forced to speak and if a person wants to pass she can. If she changes her mind and decides she does have a story to tell then she still has an opportunity to do so at the end. During *Story Circles*, it is more important to listen than it is to speak (O’Neal, n.d.).

At the very least, I hoped the ARs might be able to decide whether they believed their stories concerning hiding and exposure were stimulating enough to transform into theatre. I also wanted to see if an activity such as this would provide further entry points into lived or shared experiences. Everyone agreed to participate in *Story Circles* to explore the concepts of hiding and exposure and to assess whether they wanted to move forward with these ideas to the next step in our process. I asked the ensemble to form two simultaneous storytelling circles to save time and to ensure that every story was told before the bell rang. Group one was asked to tell stories inspired by the word *hiding* and group two by the word *exposure*. Since there were two groups telling stories, I was

unable to capture each complete story on video. I traveled with the camera and recorded clips of each person in moments of story-sharing. The following scene, “Hard to Put Out There,” shares these moments.<sup>16</sup>

### **“Hard to Put Out There”**

#### **SETTING**

The Drama Room. November 14, 2012, 2:45 p.m. Kiara is missing today due to illness.

#### **Notes**

The style of this scene is modeled after the Tectonic Theatre Project’s *The Laramie Project*, a play that influenced our devising process. The style is a montage of juxtaposed moments where individual interviews, conducted at different times, are pieced together to put characters with different viewpoints in a kind of symbolic dialogue with each other concerning an event or theme so as to shed light on the many aspects of that event or theme.

*(The actors are seated on stools scattered around the stage. They face the audience. They begin in darkness. Each time an actor speaks he or she is lit by a solitary pool of light that remains until the end of the scene.)*

BREEZY: My parents didn’t know.

MONROE: When I got older I was okay letting people know, except for my family.

LACEY: I didn’t appreciate being Christian. But then I thought if they were okay with it, maybe I could tell my parents who I really was.

ALEXANDER: I told everyone.

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<sup>16</sup> After the *Story Circle* activity we constructed a list of common themes found in everyone’s story. “Hard to put out there” was one of these common themes.

LACEY: And then I started thinking about it differently. People started making comments.

CHRISTOPHER: Because he was not a good person to take care of the kids. He didn't show responsibility, he didn't buy us food, he didn't buy us diapers. So my mom left him for my stepdad. He was in the military. She took him in. He was homeless, so she made him food and stuff. A few months passed and he asked for her hand, so they got married. When I barely turned six years old, that's when I found out that he was my *stepdad* from my cousin.

CHARLI: Her mom died, actually on Thanksgiving 1998. When she was two. And she is—this time of year is always really hard for her. And she's always really good about hiding it.

BREEZY: Being out there in gangs. I always had to run and hide from the cops, you know? Stay out of trouble. People didn't think I was—they never knew anything I was hiding.

CHRISTOPHER: I said, "I love you dad" and she was like, "Why you saying I love you when he's not even your real father?" I was shocked.

ALEXANDER: Most of the people were fine, except for the people who really didn't like me. So they spread it around the whole school. I'd be walking in the halls with a really good friend of mine and people'd come up to me, and basically say get on your knees and stuff like that. I'm from a hillbilly town, where it's just pure white. No racial difference. Everyone's pretty much the same. White and straight. So to hear a gay person, no, a bisexual person—it's like, you know, let's make fun of this kid. I moved

to Phoenix because of all the bullying. And I found the drama club. Things got better in Phoenix.

BREEZY: It took me a long time to get out. To be a better person.

LACEY: This year, in the beginning of the month, people started to ask questions, “Oh,

are you okay?” And it was something she was trying to hide because, how do you say “My mom died this month,” and not have people look at you and feel sorry for you? She didn’t want to feel exposed in that way. She wanted to keep it to herself.



Figure 4.12 Alexander listens to Charli's story.

MONROE: I’m just afraid of, like, people just, like, even trying to hurt me in any which way. But, like, in the middle of 8th grade, or after it? I just couldn’t keep it in anymore.

*(Pause. All the lights slowly begin to fade to black.)*

**The “power” of story.** Daniel Kelin’s (2005) *To Feel as Our Ancestors Did* demonstrates Honolulu Theatre for Youth’s oral history projects with schools and their communities. Kelin shares his experiences with youth who devised theatre based on their collected oral histories. He writes,

Stories are powerful modes of communication that not only validate our own experience but also connect us to family, culture, and community. Sharing stories of our past helps us put our lives into perspective, making sense of who we are and what we can accomplish. By sharing stories of

themselves and their family and creating original stories of their own, students not only gain a sense of self and their peers but also begin to discover how shared experiences bind us together as humans. (p. 40)

After this shared experience, everyone did seem more united. I walked around the room videotaping and keeping time while they shared stories. I observed how closely everyone listened to the quiet and introspective voice of his or her peers and how deeply engaged they all were with each other's stories. Alexander, who often became distracted or seemed to purposefully ignore directions, was absorbed in each of his partners' stories while Christopher, who barely spoke, expressed himself in ways I had not expected. Jack Zipes (1995) asserts that because stories tend to focus on "issues and conflicts . . . [people] form a bond of understanding" (p. 8) that can positively affect the entire group dynamic. After each person shared his or her story, the ARs analyzed common themes found in their stories and asked each other to clarify certain events. Through this process the ARs seemed to fashion a new relationship. It is possible that through the telling and sharing of specifically themed stories they identified with each other in ways most of them had not thought of doing in past encounters.

Concurrently, through the shaping and telling of their stories, the ARs "proclaimed themselves as cultural beings [whose] voices echo[ed] those of others in the sociocultural world" (Dyson & Genishi, 1994, p. 4) and began to construct the culture of of "us" as gatherers of hidden identities and catalysts of human connection. The outcomes of choosing the play's topic and the *Story Circles* activity, along with the *Story of My Name*, further led me to consider the correlation between teen identity processes, narrative, culture, and power. At this stage of the program, I pre-coded and reflected

through analytic memos (Saldaña, 2009). It was around this time that I realized how significant storytelling and narrative were to our process: the docutheatrical narrative constructed through the devising process; the stories everyone involved would share to arrive at our script (us and our interviewees); and the social and cultural narratives that might shape the identity processes of the youth, their interviewees, and my relationship to everyone as this program's leader.

As I listened to the ARs stories and their lists of possible topics and social issues, I recognized constructs of the grand narrative of the U.S. American adolescent. I wondered if the same stories the teens used to proclaim their identities and establish their cultures were also legitimizing their roles in dominant narratives about “troubled” teens “at war with themselves,” or whether adolescence just happens to be a psychologically and physically confusing time in a person's life (in this case, a U.S. American-living-in-an-urban-environment-in-2013-kind-of-life). I identified several moments where the ARs exhibited insecurities, confusion (especially in their roles as sexual beings), or otherwise shared struggles they were dealing with in their lives at home and in their social circles. Even the name story activity—where most of the youth shared at least some feelings of pride and respect for their names and family histories and cultures—produced In Vivo codes like “Contradiction,” “I hate my name,” “I'm kinda the opposite,” and “I hate being a freshman.”

My data analysis eventually led me to consider that *urban teens struggle with the realities of their genders, sexualities, racial classifications, socioeconomic disparities, and authority figures* (Key assertion 2, assertion 1) and that *portions of the roles urban youth play in their identity narratives are disguised or hidden—purposefully, reluctantly,*

*and/or subconsciously—in order to appeal to friends, families, or the codes of dominant culture* (Key Assertion 2). Even before we settled on exploring the ideas of *hiding* and *exposure*, the most intense of the ARs’ struggles



**Figure 4.13** Lacey and Breezy listen to Monroe’s story.

appeared to include not being able to be true to themselves and/or being forced to suppress one of their social or cultural roles to appease an outside force or to avoid physical or emotional damage.

**The final decision.** After *Story Circles* we assembled once again as a whole group and discussed our feelings about the direction of our play. I was surprised there were no objections. I asked the ARs the following questions: *Did they see the possibilities inherent in the process? Were they trying to please me, their leader? Or did those who seemed unhappy with the voting process realize he or she didn’t care enough to object?* They were mostly unresponsive at first, though ultimately some responses included (in this order):

- “There are a lot of different stories about hiding.” (Breezy)
- “Yeah, I was surprised. I kinda dig this.” (Lacey)
- “I guess it could work if we ask the right questions.” (Alexander)

Monroe raised his hand. He said that he was excited about our themes so he drew a picture of how the ideas of hiding and exposure made him feel (a response to a journal prompt only he completed). He showed us his drawing but did not want to provide an

explanation. I asked if he approved of the group sharing how the picture made them feel or what they might see in his drawing. Some of the descriptive words provided by the group included: hurt, broken, embarrassed, being laughing at, alone, and trapped.



**Figure 4.14 Monroe's visual response to the concepts of *hiding* and *exposure*.**

I can never be sure why the ARs agreed to pursue investigation of people's perceptions of hiding or exposure. Perhaps it was to please me or because they believed they had to accept what they thought I wanted. As I continued to watch video, I realized that, despite my efforts, there were certain power dynamics at play between the ARs and me, the leader (and also in many ways the teacher), that were deeply rooted in the teacher-student binary. It did not matter how many times I said they were not required to raise their hands in open dialogue or where I tried to stand in the circle or sit in the room, the ARs always arranged themselves in such a way that placed me spatially in a position of power. There were numerous times, including during the above open dialogue, where I sat alone and the ARs congregated in front of me, at my feet, or at a distance from where I was. Though sometimes they were just being respectful of my health, I was shocked

when I noticed in one video that Breezy was sitting next to me during an open dialogue (Figure 4.16) and then made the clear choice to move to a chair in front of me when Kiara vacated it.

Despite what I observed in the video, it is possible that the ARs truly did begin to connect to the ideas of hiding and exposure. The visual data and my observations point to their growing attachment to each other's stories of hiding and exposure and then to their passion for gathering and sharing the responses and stories of their interviewees.

### **Docutheatre, Ethics and Procedures**

That day, after *Story Circles*, we discussed how we might research the play's guiding themes.<sup>17</sup> We discussed the difference between closed and open-ended questions. This led to a conversation about what it might be like to interview people about the ideas of hiding and exposure. Monroe commented: "It might be scary or weird for people to tell us what they are hiding, or to *expose* themselves," at which point everyone laughed at the idea of people removing clothes and "exposing themselves." Monroe composed himself and then asked if he was "allowed" to interview someone familiar. I said interviewing a friend or family member was acceptable, but only if the interviewer was prepared to hear information he might not necessarily know or "like" about that person. I do not believe that the AR should be restricted or told who is acceptable to interview. First of all, it limits their creativity and powers of investigation and second, it limits their potential interviewees since many young people only have the time or resources to interact with people they know.

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<sup>17</sup> By their secondary education most young people have participated in some type of research project. However, I never assume anything, especially if I am not familiar with the youth's past experiences. I suggest you review why you believe research is important, how and where participants might conduct research, and the difference between primary and secondary sources (which only half of this group was able to distinguish).

Our conversation ultimately led to questions about representation and ethics in Docutheatre. I heaved a great sigh of relief when, after I asked if documentary theatre was really “real,” Lacey said, “Well yeah, I mean, no? I mean, like, it’s theatre so like, it’s our play about someone’s interview, kind of?” Some of the others did not grasp this completely. I explained that since we were going to gather the interviews and turn them into theatre we might have to edit the person’s words for dramatic effect or clarity. I asked them to commit to being as accurate as possible in reporting their research, but to understand that since they were making theatre it was reasonable to be creative with their dramatizations of research sources as long as they were upfront with each other and their audiences about the creative liberties that were taken with these sources. I highlighted this point with the story of Mike Daisey, a solo performer who wrote and performed the play *The Agony and Ecstasy of Steve Jobs*.

Mike Daisey’s play claims to be comprised of factual accounts of Steve Jobs’s life and the inhumane conditions of factories in China that produce technological devices used worldwide. Daisey claimed he interviewed the factory workers about their harrowing experiences. Recently, Daisey’s work received widespread attention when certain “facts” of his play were proven false, even though he demanded that Playbills at each of his performances include the statement, “This is a work of nonfiction” (Glass, 2012). I explained to the ARs that, though quite a few controversies such as this one surround the idea of a “make-believe” theatre that presents itself as factual, I continue to be drawn to its potential to communicate intriguing and thought-provoking observations about our societies and cultures—but only when it is done by artists who commit equally to the truths of their research sources *and* the quality of their play. I then asked: “Who

might be affected, or hurt, the most in a situation such as the Mike Daisey case?”

Christopher thought it was the audience. I definitely agreed, but wondered aloud whether others were affected by Daisey’s choices. After what seemed like a long silence, I asked about the factory workers. Monroe was the first to reply: “Oh yeah, because no one would know what story to believe, so like, are they really suffering?” I decided to take that comment and move forward.

**Avoiding cultural tourism.** Derek Paget (1990) metaphorically compares documentary artists to cultural tourists. In the metaphorical practice of “cultural tourism,” a particular culture is commodified and consumed by the docutheatre artist-activist for her own purposes—like a tourist on vacation in an exotic land with a camera around her neck—rather than celebrated and revered. Though it was not my intention to intimidate the ARs with the Daisey story so they might emulate my ethical beliefs, it was necessary for them to know that I was operating within a specific paradigm. Before I proposed this research, I had already committed to avoiding cultural tourism as much as I possibly could in my artistic and scholarly research endeavors. Surely I was (am) walking a very thin line as I observed the youth with my own camera around my neck. This is why I always wanted to inform them about my research goals, why I constantly contacted them on Facebook (and still check-in with them), why I created a dissertation website they might visit to approve of my research choices, and why I want to give them equitable space in this dissertation.

That day, I also shared my *Docutheatre Code of Ethics* (Appendix D). I created it for myself before the project began to help me walk that line.<sup>18</sup> I asked the ARs to think of other ways we might “stay true” to our interviewees and their personal and potentially painful or embarrassing stories. Alexander offered, “Not forcing or pushing someone to talk about something they don’t want to.” We also discussed the possibility of inviting interviewees to rehearsals and final performances and having an open dialogue with them about how we told their stories. We also considered making sure the audience was aware that we were actors and not the actual people we interviewed by doing such things as writing a note in our play program or having a pre- or post-performance discussion with the audience.

Finally, I asked them to think about whether they felt comfortable with the moral codes I was asking them to maintain. They approved unanimously and I agreed to support them as we arranged, edited, and performed their research sources. We ended our rehearsal by creating an interview consent form based on examples I borrowed from journalism and qualitative research (Appendix C). I advised the group to request that the interviewees review and complete the interview consent form immediately after the interviewer clarified the project goals and before he or she asked one question. Interviews were not considered without a consent form. There were no exceptions. Though journal entries were incomplete and I had to consistently push for transcriptions and responses to my posts on Facebook, no one ever forgot to give me signed consent forms.

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<sup>18</sup> Unfortunately we did not have time to create our own ethical code for this project. I recommend if you do have time for this (and I will make the time next time) to craft one with your artist-researchers so they feel more ownership and can establish their own moral beliefs.

**Application of skills: Interviewing.** Some of the ARs were nervous about the interview process so at our next rehearsal we created a sample script to help everyone introduce our goals for the play and explain our interview protocols (such as the need for a consent form) (Appendix C). Together, we organized a list of possible interview questions (Appendix E). I then assigned partners to practice introducing themselves and their project, completing the release forms, and interviewing each other. Over the next two rehearsals I photographed the ARs interviewing themselves and their peers in the other half of Lake's 9<sup>th</sup> hour drama class. This process informed this study's Key Assertion 1. Therefore, I believe it is necessary to provide you a discussion along with a photo collage of the ARs at work (Figure 4.15).<sup>19</sup>

We reconvened the last ten minutes of rehearsal to discuss the ARs' reactions to interviewing. Kiara asked if they were allowed to stray from the list of questions: "I felt like sometimes Alexander was focusing on his paper more than me." I turned to the rest of the group. Breezy shared that since they had used recording equipment (their cellphones) her and Monroe referred to the list as "a starting off point" and then "just talked." I encouraged everyone to consider his or her interviews informal and conversational due to the nature of our project. What Kiara noticed was how important it was to her to feel like Alexander was listening. As long as the ARs listen fully, do not start asking interviewees about something that does not pertain to the play, or force them to answer a question he or she is not prepared to answer, then it is acceptable and actually desirable to ask interviewees spontaneous follow-up questions. These types of questions are necessary if something interesting or potentially "dramatizeable" necessitates further

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<sup>19</sup> Due to SBIRB research protocols I am only able to include photographs of the artist-researchers interviewing each other and not their classmates.

elaboration. I explained that the list of questions was for the ARs' own security and not a strict format to follow.

Lacey, who partnered with Christopher, spoke next, "It's a little awkward, like, if you don't know someone really well, or they don't say a lot." Alexander followed, "Yeah, especially if you're trying to write down everything they say. I don't know about that part." Their points were valid. I closed our dialogue for the day by expressing my belief in their abilities to make their interviewees comfortable and for finding what Kelin (2005) calls interesting pieces of information or "golden moments" (p. 63).

"Remember," I said, "everyone is different. Some people are talkers and some people are not. It's ok. Trust that you will get what you need. And please, try to use your phones or whatever recording equipment you have to record your interviews. It will help you so much. If that's not possible, borrow someone's, borrow mine!" I then said it was possible for them to practice listening and writing what seemed most "golden"; however, this does take a significant amount of practice.<sup>20</sup>

**Appeal of the interview.** At least one of the ARs came to me with a release form each rehearsal. I received a total of twenty-three release forms; this seemed like a high number since I did not come to expect any other homework. There was something about interviewing that appealed to the ARs. Monroe and Breezy asked me multiple times if they might include just one more interview after we made the decision to end our research and compile what we had into a script. Perhaps, in some ways interviewing is

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<sup>20</sup> It was my intent to provide the artist-researchers with the technological equipment necessary for this project. I applied to several funding sources to no avail. Luckily, most of the youth had cellphones or digital music players they were willing and able to use for this process. I advise anyone taking on a project like this to provide these items if possible.

more exciting than other research methods. As an innately curious and social person, the interview process is one of the main reasons I am drawn to docutheatre.

For some of the ARs, conducting an interview was easier than sitting alone in a library, in front of the computer, or writing in a somewhat outdated journal form. Interviewing provided the ARs with the same satisfaction they felt while listening and identifying with the stories told by their peers in *Story of My Name* and *Story Circles*. I refer back to Kelin (2005):

Through the interview process, students share in the world of the informant, becoming a part of it and investing themselves in it, making the interviews a very active form of learning. The interviews can also be a wonderful exploration or even introduction to some of the students' own family history and culture or community. (p. 62)

It has come to my attention through many introductory papers written by my undergraduate theatre students, that most young artists consider themselves “active” learners who achieve more by “doing” and who are more comfortable learning through live interactions with people. This may be another reason for the appeal of interviewing as it seemed the case with this group of ARs.

Though it can be argued that a person recognizes who she “is” by observing those that appear to be what she is not, this interview process provided the ARs with the opportunity to recognize or rediscover his or her “self” in another person. Moreover, an interview process that asks someone to reveal why she hides, what she is hiding, and from whom she hides, quite possibly entices the interviewer. This type of interview process awakens the AR's desire to know another person's “drama”; the process

heightens a desire to empathize with another in the pursuit of a clearer understanding and acceptance of self. By the end of these first few weeks and preliminary data analysis, I considered that *participation in devising documentary social justice theatre influences and affects the construction, perception, and/or performance of urban youth identities through profound connections made with interviewees during the interview process and through the collection of true stories that provide new information and rare opportunities for self-reflection and self-realization* (Key Assertion 1).



Figure 4.15 Practicing the interview.

In the next chapter I continue the conversations begun here to solidify this study's key assertions. I share Part II of our journey with this docutheatre devising program, beginning with the daunting task of turning interviewees' many words into something docutheatrical. The ARs and I conclude this chapter sharing some of the ARs' experiences with interviewing and the surprises they encountered:

### **“Hiding & Exposure: On the Meta”**

#### **SETTING**

The Drama room. November 28, 2012, 3:00 p.m. Kiara and Lacey have left early for a chorus recital. Charli has left the group by now.

*(Lights come up. The group is seated at the desks. They are arranged in a semi-circle around ENZA.)*

MONROE: *(leans back in his chair holding his research binder)* Yeah, mine was weird. I interviewed a really good friend and she like, acted...different. It made me question whether she was acting that way because she was hiding something from me, or not answering my questions completely. She surprised me cause we're, just so close.

CHRISTOPHER: Yeah, my mom started talking about herself in high school, with boys.

It started getting really awkward. She changed the subject quick. *(giggles nervously)*  
*(Everyone laughs.)*

BREEZY: People are afraid of being judged, they have insecurities and that's why they act differently during an interview. What was interesting to me was, I interviewed my dad. Me and my dad are **SUPER** close. When I was asking him these questions, he was trimming his fingernails, eating potato chips, he would find something to do instead of answering the questions. It was interesting. He would lower his face, he

would take off his glasses and just cover it. *(she covers her face)* I'm sitting here watching him answering the questions, but at the same time trying not to. He would look at the dog, anything, any excuse. He made a sandwich! *(giggles)* And you know my dad is into the Bible and he would answer questions with the Bible.

ALEXANDER: Yeah, so I interviewed my Great-grandmother. I found out she is a really wise person. Her story is very similar...with bullying. She told me these kids bullied her and she fought back. She got suspended from school! *(everyone laughs)* She gave me some advice "To thine own self be true." I just thought that was brilliant!

ENZA: This is really great everyone. I especially think that it's pretty cool that you're asking people about the ideas of hiding and exposure and yet they might be hiding from you or exposing something to you at the very same time.



Figure 4.16 Discussing research.

MONROE: Oh yeah...

ENZA: Ok everyone, time's up. Remember transcribe at least one interview by Monday.

*(Everyone collects his or her belongings. Lights down)*

## CHAPTER 5

### FROM RESEARCH TO THEATRE: DEVISING PROGRAM, PART II

#### **“Hopes”**

#### **SETTING**

The Drama Room. Everyone (but Charli) is present.

*(The lights come up. Everyone sits in a circle on the stage with transcripts in their hands. They take turns speaking around the circle.)*

CHRISTOPHER: I want them walking away actually learning something. That they're not the only ones.

LACEY: I want people to know that it's OK. That it's hard for them to, like, expose themselves, and, like, when they actually do it's because they're ready. And people have to be more understanding about it, like, they have to be like—they have to know that it's really hard for people to actually open up.

KIARA: Yeah, they should know that it takes time and that they are not the only ones.

BREEZY: And that they should be comfortable with who they are.

MONROE: I also think that some people might have regrets, um, like, for some certain circumstances it might have been better for the situation to hide, but for them it might have been worse to keep it in, and in hindsight they never should have done that.

ENZA: Alex?

ALEXANDER: Hm?

ENZA: What would do you hope people will walk away with after seeing your play?

ALEXANDER: I'd like people to walk away with understanding the concepts of hiding and exposure a little bit more. I want them to understand that it's not always bad, what people are hiding or trying to expose.

ENZA: (*holds up the first draft of the script*) Do you think what you guys have here can accomplish that?

LACEY & MONROE (*overlapping*): I hope so. I hope so.

(*Nervous laughter ripples through the group. The lights dim.*)

So far I have reflected upon the events of the first half of this research project and docutheatre devising program.<sup>21</sup> In Chapter Three, I introduced the ARs and described my first few days at GHS. In the previous chapter I reported outcomes of the first rehearsals with the ARs and commented on our experiences with community building and story-sharing, choosing and solidifying our play topics, and practicing drama and research skills. In this chapter the focus becomes what I refer to as Part II of the GHS devising program, specifically the ARs' pursuit of his and her "hopes" for the ensemble's original docutheatrical endeavor and its reception by an audience. I review our final rehearsals and describe how, in nine short meetings, we transformed our research into monologues and scenes and devised dramatic moments for our presentation.

This chapter's purpose is also to feature the script, *To Be What's Not Meant to See*. I provide my interpretation of the script as I attend to the ways in which its themes and the ARs' devising choices address this study's research questions and support its key assertions. In addition, I continue my attempt to underscore the voices and experiences of the ARs through the short ethnodramas "Hopes" (above) and "Masks" and with various

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<sup>21</sup> This "first half" loosely describes the first ten days of my fieldwork (about nine hours), or roughly the first three weeks of the six-week program.

still images. Lastly, I analyze the ARs' performances in the presentation of our staged reading.

### **Transcribing and Editing**

Over the next few rehearsals, we focused on practicing drama skills as we worked on transcribing interviews and writing the script. I originally planned for Fridays to be the day for sharing our research and interviews. However, I noticed shortly after the ARs began conducting interviews that they gathered and reported research inconsistently. This was not entirely due to a lack of commitment. Most interviews were conducted at different times and on an individual basis at the convenience of the AR. I also believe the challenges associated with transcribing might have contributed to inconsistencies. It was best to discuss research as it was conducted and shared with me or transcribed onto our Google drive document.<sup>22</sup> Each fifty-minute rehearsal became a juggling act rather than the smooth execution of my meticulously outlined plan. The night before rehearsal, and sometimes the morning of, I collected research on the Google Drive and from our Facebook group and crafted a rehearsal outline. The day's objectives included sharing and discussing research and practicing dramatic activities that might still achieve some of my own research goals, but that were geared more toward the ARs' needs and the course of their project.

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<sup>22</sup> A program like Google Drive ([www.drive.google.com](http://www.drive.google.com)) allows everyone to share, organize, and edit material onto one electronic document that is password protected. This can be useful for this type of process where everyone has a hand in scriptwriting.

## **Gathering Sources and Transcribing Interviews**

We did not have the luxury of transcribing during rehearsal time or the resources to gather source materials as a group. This may have contributed to the intermittent sharing of research or the scarcity of secondary sources. The ARs were excited when I approved songs as secondary sources and continued to provide me with titles I eventually played during our staged reading. The only memorable secondary source other than song titles was a Google search on “teens hiding” that Kiara printed out. She thought it was interesting that many of the search listings advised parents how to “protect” themselves from hiding teens. The results of this search later became inspiration for a satirical scene Kiara wrote for our play. Each week I asked for more secondary sources, but my efforts proved futile. Even though I was responsible for providing Lake a progress report on the ARs’ performance to influence her grade choices, I did not want to alienate anyone with ultimatums. Secondary sources certainly can enhance the themes and ideas presented in interviews, but I was confident that we had more than enough primary sources to create a worthy script without more secondary sources.

Most of the ARs’ interviews were recorded on personal cellphones or digital music players. We spent one rehearsal discussing how to transcribe interviews and reviewing examples of transcribed interviews turned into monologues and scenes. Transcribing recorded research data is a time-consuming process. Bogdan and Biklan (2007) believe that “a one-hour interview, when typed, amounts to twenty to forty typewritten pages of data” (p. 131). I can say from experience that a 45 to 50 minute video recording takes me anywhere between three to six hours to transcribe. Although the ARs’ interviews were not as involved as those conducted by experienced qualitative

researchers, it was with apprehension that I asked the novice ARs to take on this challenging feat. My worries mounted when, on more than one occasion, they seemed overly confused or reluctant about using Google drive to share and edit their transcripts. The reactions to the group document surprised me since Lake was the one who suggested using Google Drive because it was a program her students had used often in the past.

### **Editing for Moments**

Lacey was the first to raise her hand: “Do we have to type up the *whole* thing? The one I did with Nick goes on forever!” I stressed how important it was for the ARs to focus on choosing “golden moments” and reassured them that because we did not aim to create a *Verbatim* play (recall the “Spectrum of Reality Theatre” from Chapter Two), it was acceptable for the ARs to merely transcribe moments he or she felt closely addressed the play’s themes or that he or she intuitively believed might lend themselves to being dramatized. I reminded Lacey that she and Nick had many instances in their interview where they joked and strayed off topic. I asked her to reflect on whether those moments were necessary to transcribe for her to achieve her goals for our project. Breezy also seemed anxious. I offered to take Breezy’s interviews, and those of anyone else who needed assistance, and transcribe them myself. I implored them to at least try to transcribe their interviews for the experience; and I mentioned that if it was at all possible for them to add their interviews to our group document, the script might be more efficiently organized. The ARs’ anxieties were justified and I was more than happy to transcribe if needed. Eventually everyone did complete his or her own transcriptions of their own accord, though some took longer than others. I worked individually with

Monroe, Lacey, and Breezy to edit their transcripts into monologues and with Christopher to organize his into a scene.

Once the ARs felt more assured, I played a short recording of a sample interview that I conducted some time before. I asked the ARs to practice selecting the “golden moments” such as words, phrases, or ideas that affected them emotionally. I then shared a “before and after”: an interview with my mother that I transcribed and then the monologue I wrote for a class project. I asked the ARs whether I edited the monologue in a manner that distorted my mother’s personality or the story she shared with me in the original interview. Monroe felt that I did not: “No, it was still her and essentially what she said, you just cut some unimportant stuff out.” The rest of the group agreed and pointed out that the monologue was more engaging and less distracting without the original tangents. Finally, Breezy asked if she was “allowed to add herself [the interviewer] to the transcripts.” Her question provided an excellent segue to Tectonic Theatre Project (TTP) and Moises Kaufman’s (2001) *The Laramie Project*, a play in which the interviewers are featured characters. I chose to share this play and its background as a model because of the groups’ interests in LGBTQ communities and because of my affinity for TTP’s multivocal and experimental creation process called *Moment Work*. Brown (2005) explains:

In Tectonic workshops in which new work is formed, each artist who signs on for a project becomes what Kaufman calls a “performance writer,” meaning she uses all the tools of the stage to generate individual theatrical Moments. Similar to homework assignments, the Moments are

individually formulated outside of the workshop, and then presented to the other ensemble members; this is when collaboration begins. (p. 51)

When we finished reading the opening of the play, “Moment: A Definition” (Kaufman & TTP, 2001, pp. 5-9), I asked the ARs to share their reactions and what was noticeable about the play’s writing style. Monroe believed, “it was interesting how all the interviews were put together to seem like they were talking to each other but they actually weren’t,” while Breezy shared that she “liked that they put different people’s thoughts and words together to show different perspectives.” I then explained *Moment Work* and read *The Laramie Project* Production Text Notes where Kaufman explains “there are no scenes in this play, only moments. A Moment does not mean a change of locale or an entrance or exit of actors or characters. It is simply a unit of theatrical time that is then juxtaposed with other units to convey meaning” (p. xiv). I admitted that *Moment Work* was something that interested me and, though I was not forcing them to use this technique, I thought perhaps this style of making theatre (as opposed to creating a traditional well-made play with one linear narrative) might work well for us considering our goals.

After Lacey grabbed *The Laramie Project* excerpt and turned to Lake to exclaim, “Mrs. Lake! We should do this play,” I refocused the group’s attention. I hoped they could now imagine the possibilities for their recorded interviews and that these examples gave them more confidence to do so. I ended our conversation by saying: “Whatever we decide to accomplish, we can’t achieve without your transcribed interviews. Please transcribe at least one interview by our next rehearsal. And remember! I’m here to help you: email, Facebook, give me your written notes—whatever you need, but please remember to use your resources, including me.”

## Where's the Drama?

It occurred to me that in a process such as this, where the ARs are learning the techniques of documentary theatre and research for the first time, it can be quite challenging to find ways of incorporating the drama work needed to transform the documents into something theatrical. I spent more time than expected on the ethical and practical aspects of docutheatre and research and chose to rely on the ARs' previous knowledge when it came to drama and theatre practices. I reassured myself with the knowledge that these were young artists whose imaginations were already activated and who had a passion for theatre. However, challenges arose when it came time for the ARs to apply their skills and transform their remarkable ideas into a docutheatrical event.

During small group work there were more instances of ARs talking through staging of monologues and scenes than there

were ARs on their feet actively dramatizing their designs. In this section I provide an overview of the drama skills we practiced as we gathered and shared research along with some significant observations.



Figure 5.17 Image Theatre: Sculpting.

### Image Theatre

I facilitated the creation of individual and group images to explore the ARs' reactions to the final list of possible play issues and then the play's eventual themes of hiding and exposure. I explained that images are "frozen" by the performer's body and I modeled how individuals might also physically sculpt her partner's body into various



Figure 5.18 Image Theatre: Sculpting II

positions depending on the theme or her ideas.<sup>23</sup> I encouraged the ARs to create abstract images, first individually and then in groups, that expressed multiple perspectives. When they shared their work, I requested active engagement from both actor and observer. I wanted

to impart that in *Image Theatre* everyone is welcome to express his or her own interpretations of what he or she sees or feels because of the images created. The ARs' general response pattern closely resembled one that I am accustomed to receive when I first introduce *Image Theatre*. At first it seemed that the group was hesitant; perhaps they did not want to look silly with their bodies frozen in awkward positions. Then they appeared confused. Maybe they did not understand how this is considered theatre. Finally, they observed each other's work. Slowly, and with my gentle prompting, they reflected on each other's powerful images (Figures 5.17-5.19).

Suddenly, I could feel minds opening as the singular images reflected multiple perspectives and possibilities and affected everyone viscerally. Though the ARs seemed unsure at first, they were drawn into the many stories told by a simple frozen image. These images allowed us to further reflect on our play's concepts and provided the ARs with a way to separate themselves from the stronghold of theatrical realism that I find prevails in many high school theatre departments (a least those with whom I have

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<sup>23</sup> My explanation of sculpting is always followed by a conversation about people's right to refuse being touched or to have his or her body manipulated. There are various ways to sculpt without having to physically touch (Boal, 2002, pp. 174-215)

worked). I do not make this statement to denounce realism, but only to suggest that it is important for young artists to experiment with various modes and languages of theatrical expression, especially those that require integration of the artist's whole self (mind and body) and those that pay attention to communicating to diverse audiences with various cultures. *Image Theatre* became one of the primary tools for devising our play and a technique the ARs were comfortable executing. In hindsight, I see that *Image Theatre*, in combination with the ARs' previous experience with realism and improvisation, may have sufficed as the singular tool for crafting this short-term project's docutheatrical performance. I discuss this further in the following chapter's closing thoughts.



Figure 5.19 Image Theatre: What do you see? How does it make you feel?

## Improvisation

When I heard the group easily identify one of the main rules of improvisational theatre (“*Yes...and?*”), I felt comfortable proceeding with the improvisation game I brought with me on transcription and editing day. I divided the ensemble into two small groups for *One-Minute Fairytales*. I asked each group to choose a fairytale familiar to

everyone and to work with an Arizona State University graduate student assisting me for the day to create a one-minute version of the fairytale.

This event impressed and surprised me for a few reasons. First of all, each group collaborated without arguments or distractions and was able to present a well-structured and hilarious one-minute version of *Cinderella* and *Little Red Riding Hood*. Secondly, though all of the ARs were committed to their individual characters' actions and intentions, Christopher was one of the finest wretched Evil Stepmothers I have seen. I did not come to expect this from a young man who up until now had been quiet and reserved in his actions. Finally, it brought me satisfaction when I asked the group why I might suggest they try this improvisation activity. We had barely a minute left when Kiara quickly sputtered: "Because we have to figure out how to take a long interview and make it something interesting but still show something that makes sense!" She was basically right. I predicted that the *One-minute Fairytale* improvisation game might be enjoyable, but mostly I hoped that this activity might become a reference point as the ARs transformed their transcripts into pieces of theatre "with the boring parts taken out," and reimagined their interviewees' stories using some of the guidelines of dramatic structure. Unfortunately, this was the only opportunity I had to facilitate an improvisation game such as *One-minute Fairytales*. Though, indeed, everything we did after this point involved the principles and rules of improvisation.

### **Characterizing Our Interviewees**

In the next four rehearsals (or week and a half before our presentation), I decided to facilitate physical theatre exercises mostly geared toward developing and embodying characters and devising moments for our play, but that still lent themselves to exploring

the topics of hiding and exposure and various related themes the ARs discovered through his or her research. By this point I found myself increasingly focused on my roles as facilitator and director of the ARs' creative work and dramaturg of their devised script. I recorded notes in my research journal after each rehearsal, but I confess that those participant observation fieldnotes began resembling director's notes. I relied heavily on the video camera. There were instances when I found myself worrying that I was not "researching enough," or that it might become a problem for the framing narrative of my proposed research that the ARs' immigrant backgrounds were not approached enough, or at all, during these rehearsals. For now it was important to focus on supporting the ARs as they pursued their goals for the docutheatre presentation and to trust that data would emerge through my observations and visual recordings of our creative work.

**The mask of your interviewee.** We considered how to portray the people we interviewed through Boal's (2002) *Games of mask and ritual* (p. 148). After check-in and a round of *12 Steps* I asked, "What is a mask?" Everyone remained quiet with skeptical looks on their faces. Perhaps they thought I was asking a trick question. Monroe spoke first: "Kiara can answer!" She refused, even though being the overachiever that she is she immediately mumbled: "Something people put on to cover who they are." Everyone then followed with describing masks as tangible disguises that can be "ugly, pretty, vivacious" and that people put on for Halloween, masquerades, or a performance to play a different role. This short exchange followed:

**"Masks"**

## **SETTING**

The Drama Room. Everyone is present.

*(The lights come up. Everyone is standing in a circle on the stage.)*

ENZA: Are masks just something you can physically put on?

ALL: No!

KIARA: Because people wear masks when they're trying to hide.

ENZA: How do they do that?

KIARA: They don't tell the truth.

*(ALEXANDER fidgets and touches MONROE who is trying to listen. ENZA tries to get ALEXANDER'S attention and motions for him to listen. BREEZY looks at MONROE with a sympathetic and knowing look. She starts rubbing MONROE'S shoulder.)*

BREEZY: They hide behind, you know, their feelings. They can smile, they show that smile, but behind that smile is something different. *(She lays her head on MONROE'S shoulder and rubs his back.)*

ENZA: What about the masks that we put on to perform the roles we play in everyday life. What does that mean to you?

KIARA: *(mumbles)* Well, like, I kind of, I don't know...I act different, like depending on where I am. Like, if I'm home, I'll relax. I don't care what I'm doing. I'll lay...*(clears throat and laughs nervously at herself)*. And like if I am at school? I'm in a dress because I'm out.

MONROE: *(nods his head in agreement)* Something changes about you when you're wearing your mask.

ENZA: Something changes? How does it change?

MONROE: It changes instantly, kind of, like, mentally.

KIARA: It'ssss...the character? It's jussss-like...how you act? I act more respectful in certain place at certain times.

MONROE: Yeah, depends on the instances.

*(ENZA and LACEY nod quietly. BREEZY holds MONROE'S hand. ALEXANDER shifts from one foot to the other. CHRISTOPHER stands motionless. Lights go down.)*

I introduced symbolic mask work because it truly does help me to conceptualize and then physicalize the inner forces of the characters I create for performance. On more than one occasion, including this one, I utilized Boal's *Games of mask and ritual* to contrast the idea of wearing the physical mask of a character over your own mask(s), as opposed to "becoming" the character which I believe can only be accomplished with some form of magical power. When the group chose the topics of hiding and exposure it became necessary for me to investigate what might result if I facilitated this type of metaphorical mask work in this space.

What tugged at my brain during our physical mask work was the controversial idea I asked you to consider earlier in this dissertation: maybe people do not have multiple identities or multiple selves. Boal (1995) suggests the following:

We always remain the *person* we are, but we only transform a tiny portion of our potentiality into *acts* [original emphasis]. I shall call this reduction personality. We all have a personality which is a reduction forced out of our person. The latter boils on in the sauce pan; the former escapes through the safety valve. And, in this fashion, we scrape along perfectly well. Because we pretend to be only that part of ourselves which is

excusable; the rest we keep carefully hidden. However, both our demons and our saints remain alive, very much alive. (p. 35)

Perhaps the ARs pointed me toward a similar notion. Maybe underneath the various masks I wear to play the many characters in the narrative of my life, there really is just one “me.” This me is not fixed, stable, or continuous, unchanging through time, but she has always been somewhere “in there” continuously struggling to reconcile, manage, and *act* her many masks. These notions grew as I further analyzed data and discovered In Vivo codes spoken by the ARs such as, “In your true self,” “Be yourself,” “To thine own self be true,” “War [of sides of me] inside my head,” and “Be comfortable with who they [our audience] are.”

The mask exercises culminated with a version of Boal’s (2002) *Follow the master* (pp. 148-149). I asked the group to watch me talk and move about the space and to imagine what might be the “inner force” that drives me to move through the world the way I do (p. 148). At first they thought this was humorous since I was almost eight months pregnant. So I asked: “Should you make fun of the fact that I’m pregnant when you take on my inner and outer masks?” The group agreed that “over-acting” or caricaturizing my pregnancy was untruthful and maybe even disrespectful, as would be the case when representing the people they interviewed. We also decided that instead of worrying over imitating my physical mask “perfectly,” they should choose one to three features they found interesting and believed they could manage (a swing of the arm, talking with hands, etc.) and practice those. After the ARs attempted to reproduce my physical mask, I asked them to pick a person they interviewed and to close their eyes and visualize these people. They then played with performing the masks of their characters

and simultaneously speaking their characters' inner monologues. As I walked through the ARs solitarily working in his or her own space, I noticed that everyone was trying the exercise but no one was standing. ARs sat in corners and on chairs or on the floor. Their physical choices were subtle. I was unable to make out the details of their inner monologues because volumes were low. I now wish I had silenced the group, asked for everyone's attention, and tapped individuals on the shoulder as a cue for him or her to speak snippets aloud. Regrettably, I felt compelled to push forward to work on that day's research.

**More psychophysical character work: Gestures, Grids, and The Machine.** The ARs seemed to respond to the physical theatre exercises, or at least they did not voice opposition and they were very excited when I brought in Cirque du Soleil music to accompany our work.<sup>24</sup> I decided to continue facilitating a combination of techniques loosely based on Michael Chekhov's *Psychological Gesture* (PGs) and *The Viewpoints*, with a smattering of creative drama. Since it is not possible for me to fully explicate these incredibly complex techniques at this time, I encourage you to do your own research to further your knowledge of these techniques before you employ any of their principles in your programs. For the most part I chose not to mire our rehearsals with explanations or lessons about where these exercises originated. It seemed more worthwhile to "just do it."<sup>25</sup> The following exercises were implemented over a period of four rehearsal meetings and usually occurred in the first half of rehearsal, though we spent a majority of one rehearsal with Viewpoints.

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<sup>24</sup> I do not force actors to participate in games, activities, or exercises they do not feel comfortable with. I establish an "opt out" policy from the first day of a program.

<sup>25</sup> As I mentioned in Chapter Three, I provided the ARs with a glossary of terms in their research binders that included detailed explanations of the techniques I might facilitate throughout the program.

*Viewpoints and Chekhov's Psychological Gestures (PGs)*. Bogart and Landau (2005) explain that Viewpoints is “a set of names given to certain principles of movement through time and space, these names constitute language for talking about what happens for the stage”(8). These names are Tempo, Duration, Kinesthetic Response, Spatial Relationship, Topography, and Gestures and they are played out on an imaginary grid drawn on the ground (in time actors eventually move on and off the grid). I am aware that it takes extensive training to fully understand the Viewpoints, however I wanted to try some of the principles because until I practiced the Viewpoints myself it was rare that I followed my impulses in my acting work or that I felt fully present or comfortable in the shoes of the character. I simply took the ARs through a few of the Viewpoints (Tempo, Duration, Kinesthetic Response, Spatial Relationship) but mostly focused on the Grid as their playground where they



**Figure 5.20 Viewpoints: Kinesthetic Response.**

might experiment with movements and gestures. I hoped that creative expression within the boundaries of a certain playing field (the Grid for example), and using a specific vocabulary, might provide the ARs a structure that was comforting and made risk-taking less frightening. To be frank, the director in me also imagined the potential for a powerful movement piece using Viewpoints and the Grid in their docutheatre presentation.



**Figure 5.21 Viewpoints: Spatial Relationship.**

After the ARs practiced the Viewpoints on the grid, I introduced the idea of gestures based on Chekhov’s psychological gestures (PGs).

Chekhov’s (1991) PGs involve the actor fully communicating, through archetypal gestures, the innermost

desires or will of the character he/she is

portraying (pp. 58-94). For example, if the character desires affection, the actor might wrap her arms around herself and squeeze tightly. This gesture might communicate, “Give me a hug!” After explaining and modeling various gestures, I asked the ARs to practice literal gestures first (a wave hello, the middle finger, a salute, etc.) and then gestures that might communicate the intentions of a character that hides or exposes her deepest desires. They then took these gestures on the Grid and practiced manipulating the gesture using the principles of Viewpoints (e.g., experimenting with what it feels like to walk quickly with a gesture as you respond kinesthetically and instinctually to another actor’s movements on the Grid). Each time an AR took a ninety-degree turn on the Grid he or she changed the gesture to something new.



**Figure 5.22 Psychological gesture: Alexander.**



Figure 5.23 Psychological gesture: Kiara.

At first the ARs were confused about what they should do on the Grid; they would come off the Grid or smack themselves on the head (literally) for forgetting what to do with the gestures. For

everyone other than Monroe, who clearly was in his element, there was a great concern to get it “right.” Gestures were very literal or they were restricted to a hand covering the eyes or face. I insisted they should just “play” with tempo and levels and not worry because this was a safe space and I was not concerned about “right” and “wrong.” It was

heartbreaking to watch the ARs slowly release inhibitions and create characters doubled over from the pain of hiding. Characters spreading their arms as they revealed themselves also stirred my emotions. It seemed to me that when the ARs shared positive responses to the



Figure 5.24 Psychological gesture: Christopher & Lacey .

physical exercises and reflected deeply on

the play’s themes they were also allowing themselves to react inwardly.

*The Machine.* Until this point each of the ARs had attempted all of the physical exercises, though some did so more fully than others who were more reserved in their performances. Intriguingly, I had bypassed the usual resistance or bouts of laughter I encounter when introducing psychological gestures and Viewpoints for the first time. If,

before facilitating *The Machine* exercise, someone asked me if this was a group of risk-takers I would have surely given an affirmative response. I did not expect that an exercise I initially thought was unthreatening would paralyze the ARs like it did.

*The Machine* is an exercise often used in the creative drama classroom. One member of the ensemble begins a repetitive sound and movement. As an ensemble member is ready, he adds himself to what becomes a machine with many moving parts. Eventually participants can play with connecting sounds and movements. I enjoy this activity for its versatility. It works as a warm-up activity, an icebreaker, and ensemble builder. I also facilitate this activity to explore themes. For example, we created a “hiding” machine. I suggested we might also consider that, when set to music, the machines might be interesting movement pieces for our presentation. My ASU graduate assistant and I modeled first. I then asked for a volunteer to start the hiding machine but did not receive a response. The assistant offered to begin. The “crickets” got louder and louder as they left him there repeating his sound and movement for what seemed like a lifetime. Finally, Alex stood

with a sheepish grin on his face and added himself to the machine.

The rest of the ARs shyly and deliberately added him or herself to the machine.



Figure 5.25 “Ma-wha...?”

They were thinking so intently about what to do and they did not connect to each other’s bodies, but their sounds and movements were appropriate and in rhythm. After I sped the

machine up to the point of “explosion,” the ARs broke out in loud giggles and cacophonous dialogue about the “hide and go seek” machine they created. I took this to mean they had fun, but I was shocked that they were so insecure and afraid to try this activity. It occurred to me that the ARs were more comfortable taking risks as a group. This was one of the only exercises in which the ARs were asked to volunteer to make a solitary and bold physical choice while everyone watched and I looked on. I recalled a similar response to an earlier warm-up exercise.<sup>26</sup> At the time I dismissed this response because we were still getting acquainted. I now wondered if it was more difficult to blend in the group (or hide) in *The Machine* activity. Whatever the reason, the experience with *The Machine* foreshadowed what was to come.

### **Making it Docutheatrical**

#### **From Research to Script**

The ARs added their transcripts to the group document. With four fifty-minute rehearsals remaining, Monroe asked if he could conduct “just one more interview” because he had a friend he really thought “would be great for this.” I did not want to force the ARs to stop researching, nor did I want to pressure them to perform if they were not ready. For me, a reading of selected interviews and a discussion with the audience about our ideas for a potential performance would have sufficed. However, the ARs wanted to have something to present onstage in a week. I was barely able to convince them that it was okay to hold scripts as they performed (once they read through the transcripts and realized how much they might have to memorize they quickly agreed).

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<sup>26</sup> This exercise was the *Sound and Movement Wave* warm-up where everyone stands in a circle and creates “waves” like they might at a baseball game. Each ensemble member creates his or her own original sound and movement that travels around to the ensemble members around the circle.

Everyone believed it was possible to do “more” than sit in chairs and read from scripts. Therefore, I had no choice but to make an executive decision so that they might reach their goals: it was time for us to complete the research and transcribing phases and start organizing our script and devising some docutheatre.

We read through the transcribed interviews I received thus far and the ARs felt confident that we had more than enough material. Nonetheless, it was important to have everyone share the work they had accomplished. I asked Lacey and Breezy, whose transcripts had not yet been completed, to please transcribe their interviews by the next rehearsal, otherwise we might not be able to use them. Again, I offered my assistance but was not called upon. In the days that followed, I received a transcribed interview from both Lacey and Breezy. There were many formatting issues in all of the ARs’ transcripts, especially in Breezy’s barely intelligible writing. I did my best to edit for clarity and to make time to meet one-on-one with the ARs during devising sessions to revise and edit their work. After reading through everyone’s transcripts a second time, each AR decided which interview(s) they wanted to keep and develop further for performance. Choosing which interviews to discard was difficult. They were all captivating, and the ARs had grown emotionally attached to them.

Our final choices included interviews the ARs thought most aligned with what they hoped to impart on their audience: four monologues (Alexander’s Great-Grandmother, Monroe’s friend Francis, Breezy’s father Ruben, and Lacey’s friend Nick) and two scenes (Christopher’s interview with his mother Maria and a scene Kiara said she wanted to develop based on the Google search page). Interviewers cast who they wanted to perform in his or her monologue or scene. At this point we did not decide what

we wanted to do with these pieces, only that we wanted to explore them further with devising tools. We made a list of these tools (including the drama techniques I facilitated and the various skills the ARs brought with them) and began collective creation. I continued to revise the script based on the ARs' decisions until the day of performance. I communicated with the ARs often about necessary changes that required their approval.

### **Devising: Putting It All Into Practice**

There were three rehearsals left until our presentation. I called two of these rehearsals “devising sessions” and the third a “dress rehearsal.” To give them an idea of how they might use devising tools, I described an idea Breezy and I discussed before rehearsal. Breezy suggested the performers come on the stage and “tag” the walls with graffiti illustrating words and phrases associated with our themes. I loved the idea and then wondered aloud what it might look like for everyone to put down their markers and walk on the Grid while one of their songs played in the background. I then proposed that they perform gestures. Alexander suggested that at a certain point the performers might speak aloud the words they drew on the wall to punctuate their gestures, each of them getting louder and faster until sounds and movement became chaotic and dissonant. Monroe offered his opinion that these ideas might be “good for the beginning or end [of our staged reading].”

After this exchange of ideas, I divided the ARs into small groups depending on which monologue or scene they chose to explore or showed an interest in performing. Since most of the pieces were monologues and the group was only comprised of six ARs, there were two groups working on multiple pieces. Breezy asked to work with an ASU graduate assistant to continue editing her monologue because “she wanted to work on it

more.” Each group was given the task to decide how they wanted to stage their monologues or scenes using any technique(s) they desired. The main interviewer of each piece was given a leadership role as my co-director and asked to maintain the vision of his or her group and to report back to the rest of the collective. I purposely left directions vague and chose not to intrude on this small group work. I was interested in examining what might happen if the youth independently applied the skills they learned to create material for the play. I knew I would make myself available for questions and advice when and if approached.

My concerns mounted when, much to my disappointment, the entire first devising session had almost come to an end and none of the ARs had moved from a seated position to “act” or physically play with any of the devising tools. When we reconvened for the last minutes of rehearsal I asked if they might want to expand one interviewee’s story into a more complete linear narrative for everyone to work on together or if they still wanted to continue working on each piece as separate moments in a similar manner to TTP’s *Moment Work*. Lacey spoke for everyone who nodded in agreement when she said “it’s probably easier to just work on each monologue and scene as a separate moment.” The group leaders (Kiara and Monroe) then verbally shared ideas for each of the pieces. I was pleased that their designs included using machines to materialize the inner thoughts of one character, images and gestures enacting events of an interviewee’s story as it was being told, and other similar physical work integrated with theatrical realism. Perhaps, I thought, it would not prove detrimental that I chose not to get more involved in the ARs’ small group work or that they had not showed anything dramatic for

the rest of the group to critique. They had very detailed ideas and we still had one more devising session to go.

### Final Days

I continued to give the ARs space to make autonomous choices until the day before our performance. Throughout the second to last rehearsal (the day before our presentation) the majority of the monologues and scenes appeared before the collective with performers sitting in chairs facing each other with little to no characterization and faces glued to scripts. Others

stood on stage motionless with faces glued to scripts. I could no longer silence the director in me. I did my best to take leadership while still collaborating with the ARs to realize their designs. For



Figure 5.26 Devising Great-Grandmother “X” monologue.

example, Alexander imagined that his Great-Grandmother should be played by Breezy whom he felt could portray his Great-Grandmother’s strength (I never discovered if this was because of how Breezy carried herself physically or because of the stories she shared of her past). He wanted Breezy, in role as Great-Grandmother, to speak the monologue as she somehow uncovered the rest of the ARs in role as “hiding teens” covered with pieces of fabric or clothing. I acknowledged Alex’s idea but first I asked if the ARs might want to begin the play with the graffiti and Viewpoints/gestures-based movement composition. When they agreed, I asked Alex what he thought if at some point in the opening piece the

performers froze on the grid in various metaphorical hiding images, rather than literally hiding under clothing, and then we would transition into his piece. He approved.

Before we moved on, I suggested he consider Kiara to play his Great-Grandmother. I regretted having to usurp Alex's power, especially when Kiara pointed out that she did not want to take the role if Alex wanted Breezy. I looked at Breezy, who was already struggling with her own monologue, and saw the discomfort in her face: "I think Breezy might have enough on her plate with her own long monologue, what do you think Breezy? If you're willing, then so am I." She looked up at Kiara and said, "Can you do it?" and Kiara accepted. We then proceeded to rehearse the monologue. At a certain point Lacey suggested they try to make a group "hiding" image rather than striking individual poses. This worked brilliantly. We continued to collaborate in this way until all the pieces were staged. I reminded myself to constantly consult with my creative partners and to allow my ideas to scaffold those of the collective. I did not want to move forward without their approval of any of my ideas.

### **Considerations**

I spent the long ride home after this rehearsal feeling completely perplexed. What happened? The ARs participated fully in all the activities I shared with them throughout the program and, based on the sophistication of their ideas, they seemed to understand what they had practiced. Why were they unable to execute their ideas using drama but able to fulfill interviewing, transcribing, and editing responsibilities with minor assistance? And, more importantly, what were the implications of this turn of events for this study's primary research question and the ways in which the ARs manifested their identities?

As I reflected on this through my practitioner's mask, I began to feel remorse. I should have intervened sooner, or at the very least guided the ARs through critiques of each other's drama work regardless of the time. I then forced myself to don my researcher's mask to seek potential answers. I viewed and reviewed the video data to see if perhaps the ARs were captured straying off topic or if they seemed confused about the devising tools at their disposal. There is one instance when Breezy and Alex start giggling about something and seem to lack focus, but then both begin to concentrate when their partners Lacey and Christopher plead for their attention. For the most part, I see the ARs brainstorming and acknowledging each other's ideas even through frustrating moments of indecision. Some ARs try to get up and enact ideas, but then quickly give up, sit down, and start "just talking" again.

I stopped the videos and took a moment to reflect and write analytic memos that included semiotic analysis of the ARs' more subtle physical responses to certain drama exercises and nondramatic activities and of my own facilitation. I returned to my preliminary coding and reviewed the ARs' research of the concepts of hiding and exposure. I also considered the prevailing themes that emerged from the play's monologues and scenes such as "fear of judgment." The ARs seemed passionate about maintaining the integrity of the interviewees' true stories—especially since these interviewees are people they know or with whom they are intimately related—and so it could be they were fearful of their drama work fictionalizing the truth of their interviewees. It is possible that subconsciously (or consciously) the ARs restricted their creative interpretations and performances for fear of what these people, who we invited to our presentation, might think or feel about them. In a sense, like most of the characters in

their documentary play, the ARs seemed afraid to be exposed. The physical work was especially new and emotional for the ARs. Perhaps they were more confused than I realized or they did not want to chance embarrassment or failure. The ARs relied on their previous experiences with theatre and drama and practiced what felt comfortable.

I also believe there were instances when time could have been used more wisely. The young artists simply did not have enough time to research with their bodies and explore the skills I shared. In the future I will reconsider incorporating too many techniques and instead I will ask ARs to choose one or two dramatic practices that are most useful or comfortable and elaborate on these (such as Image Theatre or improvisation). Moreover, I realize some ARs are mostly new to the art of devising theatre and might need more guidance. I confused my involvement with imposition. It is possible to involve myself more as a facilitator to provide structure or direction in those moments in the devising process when a group of actors finds themselves at a standstill amidst too many or not enough ideas and creative choices.

### ***To Be What's Not Meant To See, a play***

The documentary play *To Be What's Not Meant To See*—a title offered by Monroe and voted on by the collective—explores the opposing ideas of hiding and exposure (see Appendix F). Like most binary relationships, the two concepts play off each other in the search for meaning, often vying for the position of dominance. For the most part, the characters in the play privilege exposing one's "true" self over hiding certain aspects of one's character to meet expectations of family, friends, educators, or society. The opening stage directions explain that the performers are to stagger onstage one at a time and "tag" a wall with graffiti while JJ Heller's (2006) "Love me" plays in the

background. The ensemble walks on an imaginary grid and communicates through physical gestures what it means to hide and expose as they vocalize the words they tagged on the wall. One performer then decides to lead the group in creation of a frozen “hiding” image (the stage directions advise that this decision to lead should be spontaneous).

Once the image is established, an actor breaks out of the image and transforms into Great-Grandmother “X.”<sup>27</sup> Alexander faces the audience and speaks the title of the monologue: “Great-Grandmother “X”, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012.” This titling convention is used repeatedly throughout the script. Great-Grandmother “X” walks to the frozen image and physically removes arms covering faces and gently helps a crouched person to his feet. In her monologue she warns her grandson Alexander: “You have to be yourself and move on. You cannot care what people think of you else you become a slave to society.” In the next section of the script, two monologues and a scene are juxtaposed against each other in choral-like dialogue that echo similar sentiments. The character of Maria remorsefully admits to her son that when she was a youth she hid who she really was to avoid judgment and become more popular. At times this meant bullying someone who even reminded her of the Maria she was hiding inside. Interspersed with Maria’s nervous confession is Nick’s opinion that people hide because they are “ashamed of what people might think of them . . . they’re afraid of judgment . . . [and] disappointing family and friends,” and Francis’s admission that hiding her sexuality with a fake smile on her face “killed her inside” until she willed herself to “hope” and finally come out to her family. Francis counsels others in similar situations to do the same.

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<sup>27</sup> Great-Grandmother was called by her last name, which is also the last name of the AR represented in this dissertation as “Alexander.”

There are times when characters refer to hiding as a personal and protective act that potentially gives a person power over the course of his or her life. In the scene following the choral speaking, “Google Reveals All,” the characters of Mom and Dad sit in front of a Google search they have conducted on teens and hiding. They become irrational, almost to the point of madness, about their Child’s power to hide her personal life from them. When the character of Child enters, Mom and Dad accuse her of hiding everything, from her sexuality to her mental health, and forcibly coerce her to expose herself to them. She refuses. Mom and Dad ignore her, even as she insists that she is a good kid who hides nothing. Child finally takes control and gives an ultimatum: “I’m happy I don’t hide because I would never tell you anything! Stay out of my life or I’m going to break.” The scene ends with Mom and Dad having learned nothing other than what the Internet tells them to believe. In the play’s final monologue, the character of Rueben explains that keeping a secret might hurt someone but that people hide because “they like to do dat.” People have the right to hide to protect themselves, their individuality, and their most prized possessions.

Stage directions imply that the final moment of the script returns to the idea that exposing one’s “true” self results in positive feelings of release, freedom, and strength. In the closing composition each of the performers walks downstage, as his or her “true” self, and proclaims what he or she is hiding directly to the audience. They do this by completing the statement, “Because of \_\_\_\_\_ I have to hide \_\_\_\_\_.” Stage notes also specify that these statements are spontaneous and fundamentally personal. Therefore they are not included in the script. They change from performance to performance depending on the actor. The stage directions then ask that the actors walk

off the stage and into the house to choose an audience member to guide toward the graffiti wall. The actors then request that the audience member add thoughts and feelings inspired by the play onto the wall.

### **A Staged Reading<sup>28</sup>**

Early Friday evening, after squeezing in a dress rehearsal during 9<sup>th</sup> hour, the ARs and I presented a staged reading of the play described above to a small but diverse audience of the ARs' peers and family members, Lake, and my dissertation chair. I was pleased with what we

accomplished together in less than three hours of devising and rehearsing. The ARs presented a piece of docutheatre that told their respectful versions of



**Figure 5.27** "Love me."

provocative true stories. They shared raw emotions, both theirs and those of their interviewees. Interesting to note is that none of the ARs performed gestures as they walked the Grid during the opening piece, even though they did so multiple times in rehearsal and allowed me to write this detail in the script's opening stage directions. It seemed obvious to me (but most likely not to the audience) that each AR was waiting for someone else to start his or her gesture, and when no one did they decided to forgo the gestures altogether. Watching the ARs walk his or her solitary pattern on the Grid and then call out and repeat the phrases they had spontaneously written on the wall, such as "live out loud" and "one day my friends will know," was powerful enough without

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<sup>28</sup> This performance is available in its entirety on the website [www.meant2see.com](http://www.meant2see.com).

gestures. The gestures were unnecessary and I respect the ARs for collectively making the choice to do what was best for them.

Kiara and Monroe continued to lead while



**Figure 5.28** “You cannot care what people think else you become a slave to society.”

Alexander and Breezy surprised me the most with their professionalism and performances. Lacey was inconsistent in her performances and Christopher seemed to shy away from making the bold choices he showed he was capable of when in role as the wicked step-mother. Overall, everyone was professional, if a bit tentative at times. This was most likely due in part to fear, stemming from the fact that they rehearsed the entire piece, from beginning to end, for the first and only time thirty minutes prior. Except for the missing gestures, each AR carried out his or her blocking as planned and worked through glitches without indication or stopping the action.

Kiara was the first to speak during the opening piece and Monroe was the first to create the hiding image for Great-Grandmother X’s monologue and to initiate the confessions for the final “exposure” composition (all of these choices were improvised during the final presentation). Kiara attempted Great-Grandmother X’s German accent and she created a contrasting character of Child with clear intentions in the “Google Reveals All” scene. I noticed she pulled her hair back somewhat for the presentation. This choice was significant to me because during most rehearsals Kiara hid behind her hair, especially when she spoke during open dialogues.



**Figure 5.29 Choral speak/juxtaposition.**

During the four-person choral speak moment, Christopher, Alexander, Monroe, and Lacey struggled (though this piece took incredible risk). Each of them avoided eye contact with the person his or her character was speaking to (in all cases this was the interviewer) and with the audience. Christopher barely attempted his mother's accent, something I knew from rehearsal he was able to do. It is my opinion that the visible discomfort of the ARs was due in part to nerves caused by the improvisational quality of their work. We decided the day before that they would not rehearse who was going to speak and when but that they would play off each other and "feel" when it was right to come in with his or her next line. When they attempted this in rehearsal they had some exciting moments when the monologues and scene seemed like one long monologue spoken by one character, and others where the characters actually seemed to respond to each other as if in conversation. Afterward, in rehearsal, the performers literally shouted for joy and exclaimed how "cool [it] was!" I would venture a guess that they were trying too intensely to recreate what occurred in rehearsal during our presentation. They often looked to each other for cues. Moreover, they were performing characters that were actually sitting in the audience. Later, they confessed how daunting this was.

Both Alex and Lacey made clearer choices when performing the characters of Mom and Dad. Though this scene was more of a satire, it was the safest and most closely related to theatrical realism. Also, I can only assume it was thrilling for the performers to poke fun at such



**Figure 5.30** “I would never tell you anything.”

“absurd” parents and to witness the Child try to defend herself in such a strong manner. The audience chuckled empathetically and the performers smiled to themselves while removing his or her chair for the next piece.

Breezy’s was the final monologue of the evening. Her performance of her father shocked me the most. She was uncharacteristically quiet throughout our last devising rehearsals and seemed unsure about her ability to perform her monologue, maybe because she had the least amount of theatre experience or maybe because performing her



**Figure 5.31** “They like to do dat.”

dad’s words meant so much to her. It was evident during the staged reading that she had studied her piece on her own time and that it was important to her to be as authentic and prepared as possible. She had a costume piece and props, was almost fully memorized, and she made clear and bold acting choices that affected the audience who

often responded with laughter. It can be said that she excelled because of her close

relationship with her father, or because she wanted to please her mother who sat in the audience. Whatever the reason, Breezy's performance was impressive.

Each time I watch the video of our presentation, I am most viscerally affected by the final moment. One at a time, beginning with Monroe, the ARs walked downstage and stared directly at the audience. They fidgeted, grabbed at their clothes, crossed and uncrossed their arms and legs, and cleared their throats. It took incredible courage to be so vulnerable. I knew this might be a risky decision when we discussed it in rehearsal and expressed this to the ARs. I advised that if they wanted to execute this moment, they should only share what they were comfortable sharing. As they held onto each other for their final bows, I saw through their smiles a feeling of liberation. Lacey even did a little dance. I have to say that each time I watch this moment I smile as well. I feel their relief and I feel my pride, mostly because the ARs wanted the audience to know that none of them was alone in this world and I am sure they achieved this goal. The audience responded positively to the ARs and their elegant docutheatre presentation. The next chapter begins with a look at our conversation with the audience following the performance.

**A Final Thought: “But Now You Can See Me.”**

The ARs and I now leave you with their statements from the final moment of *To Be What's Not Meant to See*. Because these statements change each time the play is rehearsed or performed, they are not included in the final script:



Figure 5.32 “Because of \_\_\_\_\_ I have to hide \_\_\_\_\_.”

- \* Because I’m bisexual I have to hide my feelings. (Monroe)
- \* Because *I’m* bisexual I have to hide who I am to my family because I have a military family. (Alexander)
- \* Because my parents are teachers I have to hide the things I really want to do. (Kiara)
- \* Because my parents are really religious I have to hide that *I’m* bisexual. (Lacey)
- \* Because I’m a guy I have to hide to my family that I hang around with a lot of girls. (Christopher)
- \* Because I come from a really big family I have to hide who I am. (Breezy)
- \* (*pause*)

\* BUT NOW YOU CAN SEE ME. (Everyone)



Figure 5.33 The ARs take their bows.

## CHAPTER 6

### “SO WHAT CAN I SEE?”



Figure 6.34 *To Be What's Not Meant to See* graffiti wall with audience additions.

#### And Now a Word From Our Audience

After the audience graciously contributed some of their thoughts and feelings to the graffiti wall, I asked everyone to return to their seats for what is traditionally known in the theatre as a “talk-back.” This is the time when the audience has the opportunity to respond to the performers and the production team and to ask questions about their process, any ideas put forth by the play, or production choices. I decided, on the spur of

the moment, that as the moderator (or what Boal calls the “Joker”) it was necessary for me to “warm-up” the audience so they might feel more comfortable to participate in the conversation. I stood on the stage watching everyone return to their seats and thought: The actors took a risk and exposed themselves to the audience; I wonder what might happen if the audience is asked to do the same? Once everyone settled, I introduced myself and thanked the ARs. I then asked the audience to stand. I mentioned that it was not obligatory for someone to participate if he or she did not feel comfortable. I promised not to call on any individuals and made a request: “The actors just finished revealing something they’ve been hiding about themselves. Please think about what you might be hiding and for what reason. On a count of three, if you feel OK about this, speak in unison so no one can else can hear you, and share what it is you are hiding and why.” A cacophony of sound reverberated back to the ARs and me. We all laughed exuberantly and the ARs clapped for the audience.

For various reasons, this dialogue between performers, production team, and audience is my favorite part of the entire theatrical experience. It is a time for the artist to assess the impact of her work, a time for the audience member to “unpack” the themes and ideas of a play and to impart their own knowledge and interpretations. It is a time for critique, praise, and community development; at least it has been this way in my experience. You will see by this final ethnodrama that it was this way for us:

### **“Talk-back”**

#### SETTING

December 13, 2012, 4:30 p.m. The drama room has been transformed into a theatre with rows for the audience. The performance of *To Be What’s Meant to See* just ended.

*(The audience settles back into their seats after tagging the graffiti wall. The cast sits on the apron of the stage. ENZA sits downstage right in a chair turned to face the actors and audience. The cast introduces themselves. ENZA acts as moderator calling on people in the audience.)*

AUDIENCE MEMBER (AM) #1: I always like to ask the company, because you have the inside knowledge, we don't, could you talk to us a little bit about what you felt about the work? Either what you did today or leading up to it?

ALEXANDER: Uhhhh, the work was definitely fun, just cuz it was able to take something very personal from ourselves and be able to put it in something we love to do.

KIARA: The interviewing process is fun. It's cool for you to know what—cause we interviewed a lot of people, and it was cool to know what they actually thought about what we were doing and what they had to go through.

LACEY: I think it was a great time because it gave us knowledge of what we, we've been hiding ourselves and that maybe exposing it wasn't so bad. It gave us so much to think about and it made us learn, every time we interviewed someone. So it was a good time.

CHRISTOPHER: I think it was fun because we got to know Enza and we just really, actually like, actually, like, feel, like, friends? *(he breaks out in shy laughter and everyone including the audience of mostly fellow high school students follows).*  
Um, the people we care about? We know more about them that we didn't know before.

BREEZY: And getting an opportunity to like, get a chance to experience, you know, interviewing people and getting to talk to them. And looking up stuff and finding

songs that actually, you know, fit with what we were going to do. It was a pretty good experience. It gives you more of an insight, I mean, I don't know about everyone else but, it had me thinking: what else am I hiding? What else am I willing to, to let go and let people know, about who and what I really am.

AM #1: It's a tough subject. Not everyone is willing to talk about that. Even when we did the exercise I put my hand over my mouth and then I said my hidden secret, so—

MONROE: (*excitedly*) Even that, makes it more interesting, it makes you more curious to find out, like, like, to just get *their* side or view of the topic.

AM #1: How do you get people to feel comfortable talking about stuff they wanna hide?

MONROE: It's all about them. What they're willing to share.

KIARA: If they really cared they would've wanted to be anonymous, they chose not to be.

ENZA: That was the funny part. We had consent forms. You know, people could choose to remain anonymous and no one wanted to.

LACEY: It made me feel more open to myself in a way. Like, if they're not scared doing it, why should I be scared, you know? I mean I know I'll get accepted from somebody. So I know I'm not going to be a hundred percent alone (*shrugs shoulders*).

ENZA: Do you think that had something to do with the fact that you interviewed people you knew?

ALEXANDER: (*doubtful*) Ehhhhh—

KIARA: It helped.

BREEZY: Well, I interviewed a lot of people. I decided to do my dad just because like, he's my best friend, I grew up with him so...like, everything that he does to me, it was like, I knew what was going to happen, but I was just waiting for it to happen. And when you have that moment, and you're like it's not going to happen and then it does you're, like WHOA!!! *(makes an explosion gesture with hands)* It's explosive!

AM #1: Yeah...

BREEZY: How did you guys like that we brought something to the table that's different, unique?

AM #2: I like, like, liked what you did because it was really, like, it was cool.

ALEXANDER: *(wryly)* I like your reason.

*(Everyone laughs)*

AM #2: Sorry, I'm really hungry.

*(An audible sigh from the audience.)*

ENZA: Ok, who's that back there?

AM #3: Oh, yeah. Well, I want to say that you were all really great, like, seriously. You guys really did bring my emotional side out and usually that doesn't come out, like honestly. But you guys made me like, not be scared to cry and to think about it. And Monroe you did great on my interview.

MONROE: Love you.

LACEY: God bless for your interview, it was brilliant!

*(Everyone claps and the actors blow kisses toward the interviewee. The next person speaks.)*

AM #4: I'm glad that I was able to come witness this, because it actually had an impact on me. And like, her, I got a little teary-eyed.

ENZA: It happened!

*(The ARs burst out in boisterous laughter.)*

LACEY: We were like, Monroe's gonna make somebody cry!

ENZA: We had a conversation yesterday about what we hoped the audience would get out of our—

ALEXANDER: We were hoping we'd make somebody cry! *(Everyone laughs)*



Figure 6.35 "We were like, Monroe's gonna make somebody cry!"

MONROE: Yessss.

AM #5: You know from a mom's point of view, it opens my eyes a lot. To have you guys bring it forth, it was just really heartwarming.

*(Everyone starts talking excitedly at once and there is some insistence over who ENZA should pick next. ENZA calms the group and calls on another audience member. )*

AM #6: Um, I liked your guy's whole, uh, shtick. I like that it was original and you used a lot of inspiration that came uh,—you know, I was really invested and I thought you guys were awesome.

AM #1: You know I love this type of theatre. I read about it, I study and write about it. I was just so moved by this. I mean it just really jazzes me to see this kind of theatre and was just excited and I was so honored to be here.

THE ARs: Thank you! Wow, thanks.

*(Everyone claps)*

LAKE: You know I can't tell you guys how proud I am of you and the work that you just did. It's really—your dedication to doing this and working with Enza in the last month and a half has just been wonderful. Um, any time anyone creates something as beautiful as you did, you guys definitely earned my love for doing that. Especially with a topic that is so meaningful for me, because I spent so much of my life hiding who I really was and uh, it's, you know... *(trails off)* Hopefully just my presence here helps people to understand that living authentically is the best way to live. Seeing you guys address that really matters greatly and I was super impressed with the work.

AM #7: *(stands)* I really loved how everything flowed together. You know it really smacked you in the face with some information and really made you feel like you could do anything, like you could really express yourself.

*(Everyone claps after this last comment. ENZA and the cast thank everyone for coming.*

*People rise from their seats and the conversations continue privately for some time*

*before the lights slowly go to blackout.)*

## **Time Did Not Prevail**

Toward the end of the conversation I confessed how obsessed and anxious I became about what I believed was a restricted time frame. I looked at the ARs and thanked them for reminding me that when people come together to make docutheatre, or any type of theatre that promotes social justice and/or intends to create spaces for community engagement, there is no need for restrictive time frames to prevail. Actually, I said that when it happens, regardless of how it happens or how much time you have to make it happen, “It’s all good.” I shared with the audience the reasons for my passion for docutheatre and for approaching topics that are repeatedly overlooked or avoided by people for “the fear of judgment” mentioned in our script. I was thrilled that we shared stories that might not have had an opportunity to reach a wider audience and that these stories seemed to have an impact on everyone that day in December. Finally, I thanked the audience for participating so openly and consenting to become part of the micro-community created in our one hour together.

**Communitas.** As I reread the paragraph above, I realize that it may come across somewhat sentimental to some readers or that my representation of the audience’s feedback may remind others of studies that advocate for theatre’s potential to “change lives” (especially those of youth). Recall from Chapter Two that my intentions did not include “changing” anyone with this project. I did become emotional during and after the staged reading. However, I do not believe these emotions were caused by some “warm and fuzzy” belief that the ARs or I had changed (or saved) anyone’s life with this process or our play. Saldaña (2011a) seems wary about immeasurable claims about ethnotheatre’s potential to change lives. He supports his skepticism by sharing research in the field of

mainstream theatre which suggests that audience members might only experience minimal change after viewing one performance and that in actuality there are too many variables involved to determine the probability of change with any measure of certainty (variables including, but not limited to, the material circumstances of individual audience members, their choices of interpretation, and what happens when they leave the theatre and proceed with the business of their lives) (p. 33).

In his earlier text Saldaña (2005) expresses his belief that “theatre’s primary goal is neither to educate nor to enlighten. *Theatre’s primary goal is to entertain—to entertain ideas as it entertains its spectators* [original emphasis]. With ethnographic performance, then, comes the responsibility to create an entertainingly informative experience for an audience, one that is aesthetically sound, intellectually rich, and emotionally evocative” (p. 14). I believe the ARs and I succeeded in creating the seeds of such a performance that with more rehearsal might have grown into the kind of theatre Saldaña describes. This is evidenced in our audience’s response and their willingness to join in on the conversation that began when the ARs first stepped onto the stage. Beyond rationalizing that we had succeeded in fulfilling our docutheatrical responsibilities, I admit that my reaction was a response to the kind, unpretentious, genuine, and rare human connections I felt with and between the ARs, our audience members, and myself.

Dolan (2005) invokes a “utopian aesthetic” for the theatre when she calls for theatrical performances to bring people together as a community so they might imagine a better world and a more tangible notion of humanity and humankind. She considers

The potential [for] different kinds of performance to inspire moments in which audiences feel themselves allied with each other, and with a broader, more

capacious sense of a public, in which social discourse articulates the possible, rather than the insurmountable obstacles to human potential. (p. 2)

We began this project with the ideas such as “Trying to deal” and “Life is war” and ended with hope that, even though living feels like a battle sometimes, it is a war fought with allies with whom we can struggle for a better world.

I have been critiqued about my vision for a theatre that people can utilize as a method for collectively building a more just future “rather than just waiting for it” (Boal, 2002, p. 16), similar to the ways in which visions of utopia have been critiqued for being unattainable or for propounding one more controlling ideology. No critic has been harsher than I have been on myself. I often reflect upon the conscious and unconscious ways I acknowledge my privilege in the classroom or community setting. Moreover, global tragedies and persistent day-to-day injustices often force me to take stock of what my theatre artistry and scholarship can actually *do* or if anyone will care.

Still, I continue to be drawn to this type of work and its likelihood for what Turner (1982) calls *communitas*, a process by which people can transcend the masks they put on to perform the roles imposed on them by the structural order to experience “an unmediated relationship between historical, idiosyncratic, concrete individuals” (p. 45). This dissertation illustrates docutheatre’s potential for inspiring visceral “gut” reactions created by deeply personal identifications with others during fleeting moments of what Turner calls “spontaneous communitas.” In these moments individual identities challenge each other to “place a high value on personal honesty, openness, and lack of pretensions or pretentiousness” (p. 48). For Turner, communitas “preserves individual distinctiveness” as it develops sympathetic relationships (p. 45).

In many ways these moments of *communitas* involve sculpting yet another kind of social mask. In our case this is a mask of hope that is much less painful than some of the ones forced upon us by dominant society. As the ARs crossed downstage one at a time to reveal what they were hiding and the audience responded with their own revelations, they all passed through the liminal threshold between hiding and exposure to experience a significant moment of togetherness. I know now that this was incredibly significant to them and me because it was the moment they achieved their “hopes” for the audience (“they’re not the only ones”) and it was the moment that *communitas* became possible. What this study revealed to me is that even the possibility of these fleeting breaks in the mechanization of superficial relationships cultivated through the everyday norm can make “trying to deal” (refer to “Teen Drama” in Chapter Four) that much less trying. Like Lacey said: “If they’re not scared doing it, why should I be scared, you know? I mean I know I’ll get accepted from somebody. So I know I’m not going to be a hundred percent alone.”

### **Closure: One Last Meeting**

I put the finishing touches on the cupcakes I promised to bring to my last meeting with the ARs. An intense and frightened voice comes from the television in the living room. Did I just hear something about breaking news from my home state of Connecticut? I drop the icing and dash into the living room.

\* \* \*

Our last meeting took place the same day as the tragic school shootings in Newtown, CT. With this dreadful news weighing on all of our minds, we reflected on our experiences with the docutheatre devising program and the performance of our staged

reading. Lake wanted to be present so she might share her critiques, as did the rest of her 9<sup>th</sup> hour class, most of which attended the performance. The ARs and I were eager to receive their feedback. Much of the conversation centered on the theatre artist's moral imperative and the importance of creating provocative theatre that makes a social impact. Lake informed the students that next semester she would require them to consider how he or she might incorporate these different forms of theatre in their original one-act plays.

### **Some People Don't Want to Hear About the Issues**

One of Lake's students raised his hand and confessed that he enjoyed the performance and that he thought "it was super interesting but [wasn't] sure if people on a lower thinking level [non-theatre people] would enjoy it. Most people just want to be entertained, they don't want to hear about the issues." Lake almost immediately countered with: "Well that's even more reason to do it!" I understood both their viewpoints, as I have experienced them both personally. I have rarely been asked to share my work with mass audiences and have often heard administrators say in a condescending tone, "it was nice, but next time can you do something ... a little ... with a more ... recognizable title?" I have felt incredibly frustrated with this perspective, though I understand my preferences are not everyone's and I realize there are financial burdens placed on schools and community-based organizations pressured by funders to produce work that sells tickets or that can be assessed for merit.

Lacey then mentioned that it was "too bad this shooting didn't happen before, we could have made our play about it." I am sure that Lacey did not wish for the shooting to have happened before, or ever for that matter. I am certain what she meant to voice was the possibilities she saw in the work she just completed and her desire to combat what

happened in Newtown, CT with the art form for which we all shared a collective passion. Despite my previous knowledge and affinity for docutheatre, I felt defeated by the thought of all those innocent children: “But there have already been documentary plays and films written about school shootings and this still happened and continues to happen. So what can the arts actually *do*?”

### **Hopes (Reprise)**

Kiara provided me this answer:

I don't know what it can do but I know what it did for us. I mean when a teen is pushed to go out and express themselves, I think they become at least a smidgen more comfortable with who they are, especially in the setting we created. Also, with such an abundant amount of opening ourselves up, we connected to the audience, both adults and teens. We gave them a reality check and brought them closer. Adults are generally always going to be a bit more judgmental and a bit more cautious around teenagers but with plays like this, they can learn to be more open and trusting because that is the only way they can ever really connect with their child.

Monroe then said that he wanted to do a project like this again. He shared the following:

This project made me see myself and the way I act like, around my family versus my friends and later it made me question why I naturally felt like I had to feel certain ways with my family and friends. Yeah, and I felt that this was a topic that needs to be brought up anyway, even just in our small theatre or out into the world, because, like, the truth is that everyone,



much an im happy dat i got to work with ya and got to do so much with u  
guys lots of love BREEZY.

Christopher was also missing that day. He posted the (exact) following message on our Facebook group:

I am really sorry that I didn't go...I waz going to but an emergency came up...I apologize enza...I wish I could be there and say my good bye too you....Thank you guys for making this experience fun, exciting, and entertaining...I couldnt be more grateful.;;)

The conversation ended that final day when I asked Alexander what he was thinking. He responded: “Who knows? Maybe we helped someone feel a little bit better about who *they* really are?” I thanked him and everyone profusely and then we ate cupcakes.

### **A Culture of Docutheatre-Makers**

Something to keep in mind when and if you undertake a project such as this one, is the “radical contextualism” of docutheatre-making as a cultural practice (refer to Chapter Two); its process and outcomes are unique to each group of ARs who engage in its theories and practices. Surely there are some similarities between companies of ARs doing this work, such as their goals for doing a type of theatre that seeks documentary evidence to uncover “truths” and represent reality, or the use of similar drama practices and theories or research techniques to craft the play (though often these tend to be site or group specific as well). This genre and method of making theatre also generally establishes itself as a cultural practice through its gathering and sharing of stories of living or once living people. However—following Geertz’s (1973) idea that culture is “*a story [people] tell themselves about themselves*” and those of theorists I have mentioned

who argue that identities determine and are determined by cultural and social circumstance—society and people are in a constant state of evolution and change and therefore so are their stories and the ways in which they are told and/or shared.

In other words, the docutheatre-making culture created by this project became about hiding as an act of power and powerlessness, as an act of protection, a coping mechanism, a response to oppression and a way to combat oppression. Our docutheatre-making culture also included stories about the act of masking. Masks reveal the beauty, complexity, and multiplicity of one's personality but also hide "our demons and our saints" (Boal, 1995, p. 36) so we might exist without retribution within the social order. We became a culture that uses drama and theatre as the mechanisms with which to interrogate these concepts and practices, express ourselves, and reveal something lurking behind the masks. Except, all of this might have gone in a completely different direction if I had not come to this research study seeking answers about youth's identity processes, or if the topic of our play was "dream interpretations." Or maybe some of the outcomes would be the same. It is difficult to say. This promise of uncertainty and new discoveries dependent on the group and cultural climate drives my and the ARs' desires to make more docutheatre.

I hope this dissertation demonstrates how docutheatre techniques might be utilized as entry points into research and as analytic tools as well as a method for making theatre. Devising docutheatre can be a way for your students, clients, or community members to engage with their educators, friends, family members, community and religious leaders and to gain greater insight as they develop creative skills and investigate social issues, current events, or moments of historical significance. Since the outcomes of

a docutheatre devising process are contextual, they do not necessarily need to have a relationship to social justice theatre. This one did because of my own particular skills. I encourage anyone interested in this work to do their “research” and to seek methods of crafting docutheatre that suit the needs of their community.

### **A Final Word on the Promise of the Interview**

Drama and theatre were the primary modes of exploring our play concepts with greater depth and clarity. Through the apparatus of theatre we were able to represent the culture that we established and to heighten our relationship with our audience. However, I do want to give special consideration to the function of research, particularly the interview process. As I mentioned previously, there are many benefits of the interview as a mode of inquiry in traditional and nontraditional spaces of teaching and learning. As a form of active learning, interviewing provides entry points into the research of various topics in a way that is accessible to researchers of varying abilities and intelligences. However, there is more beyond what may be the obvious learning potentials of a process that involves gathering firsthand accounts, especially for young people coexisting in diverse urban settings. Once again I return to this study’s Key Assertion 1: *Participation in devising documentary social justice theatre influences and affects the construction, perception, and/or performance of urban youth identities through profound connections made with interviewees during the interview process and through the collection of true stories that provide new information and rare opportunities for self-reflection and self-realization.*

On more than one occasion the ARs and their interviewees articulated that their reciprocal relationships provided them opportunities for self-reflection that resulted in a

newfound awareness of him- or herself. Furthermore, interviewing with our line of questioning seemed to produce feelings of inner calm or strength rather than perpetuating feelings that lead to suppression of their identities. It can be said that this occurred because most of the ARs interviewed people they were intimately connected to. I was anxious that perhaps an AR or his interviewee might discover something about each other they were not prepared to know, or that the interviews might result in friends comparing themselves to each other in unhealthy ways. There are moments in which my comparison of myself to friends, colleagues, or even family results in feelings of insecurity and self-doubt: “She is so much better than me at \_\_\_\_\_. Is there something wrong with *me*?” This is due in large part because at times it is difficult to ignore the grand narratives constructed by a U.S. American society that values and enforces judgment, competition, individualism, and certain images of “good,” “bad,” “right,” “wrong,” or “normal.” This study shows that often those who do not concede to these norms become self-conscious and feel pressured to hide what they believe is not “good” or “normal” about them lest they pay a terrible price.

In our case, we practiced certain dramatic techniques that revealed the many “holes” in those narratives as we counteracted them with our own stories and those we gathered from our interviewees. Through research of two complex and opposing concepts, the AR was able to identify with her interviewee as she sought to satisfy her curiosity and “develop insights on how subjects interpret some piece of the world” to gain a clearer sense of herself (Bogdan & Biklen, 2007, p. 103). Bogdan and Biklen suggest that the center of the interview is “understanding how the person you are interviewing thinks.” If this is so, then identification with an interviewee becomes less

about comparison of superficial qualities and more about sympathizing through shared experiences and empathizing with each other's circumstances. As such, the AR recognized, through a fresh perspective, the degree to which she felt passionate about becoming her interviewee's ally, which in turn made her realize how important it was for her to be her own ally and take some form of action over her own expressions or acceptance of identity. It was through the ARs functions as interviewers and gatherers of stories that they sensed a collective responsibility to show by example. Through sympathizing and empathizing with the stories of people who are as "real" as they are, the ARs felt the necessity to express to their audience: it is acceptable to hide or expose if and when necessary and on your own time; what a person hides or exposes may not be as horrible as she or society thinks; and it is possible to take action and challenge the internalized aspects of oppression everyone is socialized to accept.

I cannot say with certainty that this process of association with the interviewee did not result in comparisons that produced feelings of insecurity, however there were more instances in which the ARs seemed to express strength as they performed the role of interviewer. Along with their verbal responses to the interview process and their intentions for their play's reception, I saw the professional manner in which they physically conducted themselves during practice interviews (sitting up straight, using recording equipment, referring often to their resources), their staunch commitment to conducting interviews over completing other assignments, their consistency with consent forms, and their transcriptions of interviews without accepting my assistance.

## **A Cautionary Note**

I also learned that this cultural practice and method of true story gathering, telling, and sharing can potentially legitimize certain problematic dominant ideologies or grand narratives. In our case, the ARs are teens and therefore told their versions of what it means to “be a teenager” in their current moment in time, and they provided a glimpse of youth cultures in general. Sometimes their stories seemed to reflect what I have come to know as the oppressive “Mad Teen” phenomenon. As I wrote this dissertation in the office of my father’s driving school, I overheard my own sister lecture to adults about staying clear of teens on the highway because “you know how teens are: emotional, wild, they can’t control themselves.” There have even been scientific studies that go so far as to use neuroimaging to study the teen brain to investigate why this period of a person’s life is so angst ridden. Some of these studies reflect that the brain’s natural process of maturation has something to do with why teens “act the way they do,” stating that their brains are “still under construction” (Dobbs, 2011; “The Teen Brain,” 2011).

Though the ARs told many stories about the struggles of being a teen that may have worked to legitimize their role in U.S. American dominant culture, none of them behaved in one identifiable or essential “teen” way. I found it incredibly interesting that the ARs even commented how difficult it can be for both youth and adults to cope with the many roles they have to express or suppress in their individual lives “because, like, the truth is that everyone, teenagers, children, adults, all have something they wish they could tell someone but, um, they just can’t find the words to do it.” I believe this type of theatre-making can provide youth and adults tools with which to cope with “identity confusion” and empathize with each other. I know in the future I will continue to pay

particular attention to how this process reinscribes troublesome and essentializing narratives grounded in “truth” and how the sharing of such deeply personal stories affects artist-researchers and interviewees.

### **A Last Look at the Program**

Throughout this dissertation I continuously returned to data sources to investigate the effectiveness of the docutheatre devising program I implemented and to critique certain facilitation choices. The program was “effective” since it produced rich data and positive experiences. However, there are some aspects I will consider revising in the future. I have already mentioned experimenting with how to lessen my involvement in choosing the play topic to avoid exerting my power over the ARs’ decision-making process. I also discussed using time more efficiently. This might include eliminating certain dramatic techniques and focusing on one or two conventions ARs might seem drawn to the most, such as Image Theatre and Improvisation. Additionally, I considered increasing my involvement in the devising sessions themselves to alleviate feelings of confusion or “too many choices” during devising sessions.

Something else to remember is to acknowledge the skills the ARs bring with them at the start of the program. This can be accomplished by asking the ARs what techniques they want to use to devise their play. In the future I will continue to prepare myself with at least an outline of a program at the onset; however I want to challenge myself to find ways that celebrate the knowledge and experience of the artist-researcher rather than simply relying on myself as the only arts or research expert in the room. I believe this perspective might also remind me to speak less during rehearsals to make room for the

voices of the ARs. I noticed there were many instances where I could have “backed-off” and resisted my need to teach or direct.

**Researcher, no, Facilitator, No, Researcher, NO, Director, NO--Ahh!: Who am I?**

This brings me to the many masks I wore throughout this process. Although in some ways I am accustomed to juggling multiple roles in my life in and outside the classroom or the theatre building, something about the combination of roles I played in this process was quite challenging. I have alluded to this in previous chapters. Perhaps I encountered my own crisis of identity because in some respects the stakes were higher for me in this scenario. When I added the role of researcher I found myself often torn between which aspects of this project to prioritize, especially when I had to revise my primary research question. As I made choices that seemed to sacrifice certain facets of either my research purposes, the experiences of the youth, or the artistic quality of our play, the “cops in my head” became progressively louder judging my every move. I refer one final time to Boal (2002):

[T]he oppressions suffered by the citizens of authoritarian societies can profoundly damage them. Authoritarianism penetrates even into the individual’s unconscious. The cop leaves the barracks (the moral, ideological barracks) and moves into one’s head . . . in certain extremely repressive and oppressive societies one does not see the battalions of armed police in the streets . . . we carry them with us, they are our ‘cops in the head.’ (p. 206)

I mention this idea of “cops in the head” (which in Theatre of the Oppressed are dramatically enacted and challenged by actors) to describe how I struggled with the

pressures I put on myself. More importantly, I refer to “cop in the head” because I want to place myself in a position similar to the one in which the ARs, the interviewees, and our audience placed themselves. I hide too. I am afraid of judgment and disappointing others too. And now I am taking the risk of exposing myself. Often times as leaders of these types of programs we position ourselves on the outskirts of the creative or educational moment. We do this because we want to manage our classrooms, workshops, or rehearsals as properly and efficiently as we can. It seems “better” to do this from a physical and psychological distance. Other times it is because we believe the process should be about “them” (the ARs, students, clients, etc.). It *should* be about them, but it should also be about you; you are part of the group or ensemble. I did not conduct interviews and I did not share any stories about what I hide because of my fears. I remained at a safe and privileged distance. I thought I might resist power over the youth by “making it about them” but this choice quite possibly reinforced what I wanted to avoid.

For some, it is a constant struggle to “be yourself,” especially when you may not be certain who that “self” is, or when you are not yet ready to cope with or manage the many roles you have to play to navigate this world and the incessant cops patrolling your mind. I hope to overcome this struggle in future programs by continuing on this path of honesty and openness and by seeing myself more as an ally to the groups who I partner with and to myself. In social justice education an ally is a “member of [an] advantaged group who act[s] against the oppression(s) from which they derive power, privilege, and acceptance . . . who choose[s] to ally [herself] with people who are targeted by oppression” (Hardiman & Jackson, 2007, p. 47). I attempted this by trying to find a group

of immigrant youth to whom I might relate because of my own immigrant origins. However, seeking a particular quality or characteristic and then forcing a relationship based on this quality or characteristic did not work in this instance. Regardless of our commonalities or lack thereof, when it comes to programs in which youth are the members I will always come from a place of privilege and I will often be put into positions of leadership. With an awareness of my roles, I can better traverse the distances between us. Relationships grow through the process of sharing and listening to all of our stories. I am reminded of a quote by Lilla Wattson, an aboriginal elder, activist and educator from Queensland, Australia: “If you have come to help me, you are wasting your time. If you have come because your liberation is bound up with mine, then let us work together.”

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APPENDIX A  
INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD APPROVAL FORM

**To:** Johnny Saldana  
GHALL

**From:** Mark Roosa, Chair  
Soc Beh IRB

**Date:** 09/28/2012

**Committee Action:** **Expedited Approval**

**Approval Date:** 09/28/2012

**Review Type:** Expedited F7

**IRB Protocol #:** 1209008295

**Study Title:** Engaging immigrant youth as artist-researchers through social justice theatre and docutheatre devising practices: A Research Study-Within-A-Research Study

**Expiration Date:** 09/27/2013

The above-referenced protocol was approved following expedited review by the Institutional Review Board.

It is the Principal Investigator's responsibility to obtain review and continued approval before the expiration date. You may not continue any research activity beyond the expiration date without approval by the Institutional Review Board.

**Adverse Reactions:** If any untoward incidents or severe reactions should develop as a result of this study, you are required to notify the Soc Beh IRB immediately. If necessary a member of the IRB will be assigned to look into the matter. If the problem is serious, approval may be withdrawn pending IRB review.

**Amendments:** If you wish to change any aspect of this study, such as the procedures, the consent forms, or the investigators, please communicate your requested changes to the Soc Beh IRB. The new procedure is not to be initiated until the IRB approval has been given.

Please retain a copy of this letter with your approved protocol.

APPENDIX B  
CHILD ASSENT & PARENT CONSENT FORMS

## Child Assent Letter

November, 2012

Dear possible participant in my study,

My name is Enza Giannone. I am a Graduate student in the Theatre and Film department at Arizona State University. I am also a theatre artist and teacher. I am conducting a research study, which will lead to a report written by me and to be used as dissertation materials for my doctoral degree.

What am I asking of you?

I am asking you to take part in this research study because I want to know more about how making an original play affects the lives of first and second generation immigrant teenagers. My parents were born in Italy and I am a second-generation immigrant myself! I am curious whether making theatre allows us to better understand our experiences. I am hoping that people, teachers in particular, will read the results of this study and learn more about theatre and immigrant youth first-hand experiences. I am also hoping you might potentially enjoy learning new skills such as: theatre-making, imagination, creative problem-solving, teamwork, and self-confidence. There are no foreseeable risks or discomforts to your participation. Your parent(s) must give you permission to participate in this study if you are under 18. **I must have this letter and your parent permission letter when we meet for the next informational meeting/workshop in order for you to participate further.**

You do not have to be in this study. No one will be upset with you if you decide not to do this study. Your school attendance and/or academic standing will not be affected because of participation in this study. Even if you start the study, you can stop later if you want without anyone treating you badly or blaming you for your decision. You may ask questions about the study at any time. I welcome your input and see you as my research partners.

If you decide to be in the study I will not tell anyone else how you respond or act as part of the study. Even if your parents or teachers ask, I will not tell them about what you say or do in the study. Your safety and health are the most important things to me. While I don't plan on anything bad to happen, I reserve the right to share information if--AND ONLY--I feel that you might be in danger. Everything I write or share with other people in my field will be kept completely confidential. Your name and names of school and community members will be confidential. In my research report, publications, or any presentations I make about this study, your names will always be changed to protect your privacy.

What will your participation in this project be like?

If you agree, you will be asked to join a theatre program that I will organize and lead. You will be asked to work in a group with other first and second generation teens. We will meet for at least two, one and a half hour workshops and/or rehearsals a week, after-school, for the next two months. I will teach you theatre skills and we will share our experiences. We will work together to make a play about something that we choose and then share our creation in an informal performance for our families, teachers, and friends. I will ask you to commit to every week until our final performance. I will ask you to give me permission to observe and take notes about your work and to ask you questions about your experiences in the program during confidential interviews. I will also ask you to be videotaped, to keep a journal, and to participate in open discussions with the group. Please let me know if you do not want workshops or open dialogue sessions to be taped or videotaped; you also can change your mind after the workshops or open dialogues start, just let me know. All this information will be used for my research and destroyed once I have completed (within a year or less of the study). Everything will be kept in my office on the ASU campus and will be locked at all times.

Finally, please check and initial each of the following, if you are comfortable (No research will be conducted without your permission):

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have my artwork (such as monologues and scenes) and journal entries published in a research report (with the knowledge that my name will be removed from all materials).

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have my words quoted in a research report (with the knowledge that my name will be removed from all materials).

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be tape-recorded during workshops and class dialogue sessions.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be video-taped during workshops and class dialogue sessions.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be photographed during workshops and class dialogue sessions.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to be photographed during performances.

By signing here, you are granting me, the researcher, the right to use your confidential likeness, image, appearance, and performance - whether recorded on or transferred to videotape, film, slides, and photographs - for presenting or publishing this research.

Signature of subject \_\_\_\_\_

Subject's printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of investigator \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

If you have any questions about your rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you have been placed at risk, you can contact my supervisor Johnny Saldaña, through the ASU Office of Theatre and Film, at (480)965-2661. You may also contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the ASU Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Signing here means that you have read this form or have had it read to you and that you are willing to be in this study. You will not be allowed to participate in the study if this document and your parent or guardian consent form is not with you on our first meeting day.

THANK YOU!  
Enza Giannone

Signature of subject \_\_\_\_\_

Subject's printed name \_\_\_\_\_

Signature of investigator \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

## PARENTAL LETTER OF PERMISSION

November, 2012

Dear High School Parent or Guardian:

I am a Ph.D student under the direction of Professor Johnny Saldaña at the Herberger Institute of Design and the Arts in the department of Theatre and Film at Arizona State University. I am conducting a research study for my dissertation to explore the affects of participation in the collaborative creation of original theatre on the lives of immigrant teens and teens whose parents are immigrants.

I am inviting your child's participation, which will involve three hours a week for two months. More time may be required as we reach performance of the piece your child and their group members create. I will inform you of these dates and times as soon as possible. Your child's participation in this study is voluntary. If you choose not to have your child participate or to withdraw your child from the study at any time, it will not affect your child's grades or treatment in other after-school programming, and your choice will be completely respected. Likewise, if your child chooses not to participate or to withdraw from the study at any time, there will be no penalty and your child's reasons for leaving will remain private.

Although there may be no direct benefit to your child, the possible benefits of your child's participation are: learning new skills they can apply to their academic studies such as oral communication skills and language development, cooperation and collaboration skills; numerous opportunities to express themselves creatively and perform in a play they create; greater self-confidence and self-empowerment; intercultural communication and understanding; the ability to describe the importance of significant social issues and events in local, state and global histories; the opportunity to develop and share their own personal narratives from their points of view; and active involvement in their communities.

I do not see any foreseeable risks or discomforts to your child's participation. However your child's safety and well-being are my first priority and will remain so throughout my research. While the work we do, and the experiences we share, will remain private and confidential, I reserve the right to report any indicators of possible abuse, danger or harm to your child. I will do this by first immediately contacting the school principle and then contacting the guidance and counseling services. I will take their advice and implement any pre-established school protocol. You will be contacted at their request.

I will be conducting interviews with your child and observing their work in exercises, activities, and performances. All of my research will be private and confidential. All names and places will be kept confidential. This study may be used in reports, presentations, or publications. I will not use your child's name or the names of your family members, the child's school or any other community participants. All contact

information used for research will all be deleted as soon as my research is complete; within one year. Please make sure your child has this letter with them at our next informational session in order for them to participate further.

Finally, please check and initial each of the following, if you are comfortable (No research will be conducted without your permission):

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree or you to have my child's contact information for a period of one year or as soon as your research is complete.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have my child's artwork (such as visual art, monologues, and scenes) and journal entries published in a research report (with the knowledge that my child's name will be removed from all materials).

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree to have my child's words quoted in a research report (with the knowledge that my name will be removed from all materials) and possible publications that may result from this study.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree for my child to be tape-recorded during workshops and class dialogue sessions.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree for my child to be video-taped during workshops and class dialogue sessions.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree for my child to be photographed during workshops and class dialogue sessions.

\_\_\_\_\_ I agree for my child to be photographed during performances.

If you have any questions concerning the research study or your child's participation in this study, please call my dissertation chair, Professor Johnny Saldaña through the ASU Office of Theatre and Film, at (480)965-2661. Also, if you have any questions about you or your child's rights as a subject/participant in this research, or if you feel you or your child have been placed at risk, you can contact the Chair of the Human Subjects Institutional Review Board, through the Office of Research Integrity and Assurance, at (480) 965-6788.

Sincerely,

Ms. Enza Giannone, M.A.  
Grad Teaching Associate/Ph.D. Candidate (Theatre for Youth)  
ASU, Herberger Institute for Design and the Arts  
(646) 221-8681  
enza.giannone@asu.edu

By signing below, you are giving consent for your child  
\_\_\_\_\_ (Child's name) to participate in the  
above study.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

By signing below you are agreeing for your child to be videotaped and photographed and for your child's likeness, image, appearance, and performance - whether recorded on or transferred to videotape, film, slides, and photographs- to be confidentially used for the purposes of data analysis to be used in my dissertation report, shared in conference presentations I give, and/or written about or displayed in possible publications I produce.

\_\_\_\_\_  
Signature

\_\_\_\_\_  
Printed Name

\_\_\_\_\_  
Date

APPENDIX C  
DOCUTHEATRE INTERVIEW CONSENT FORM

## Documentary Theatre Interview Consent Form

### THE PROJECT:

I am a participant and an artist-research partner in a doctoral dissertation study conducted by Arizona State University theatre student Enza Giannone and a student of High School in AZ. We are creating a piece of reality-based theatre (docutheatre) that will examine the concepts of *hiding* and *exposure*. We will conduct interviews and research these ideas and their place in the lives of teens and their friends and families. Interviews, research, and our own personal experiences will be used as the basis for character creation, monologues, and scenes. We are using the structures of such professional theatrical works as *The Laramie Project*, *Fires in the Mirror*, and *The Exonerated* as inspiration for our own piece of theatre. Our goal is to use theatre as a research tool and our performance as a way to explore social issues and speak our voices. If you have any questions please feel free to contact the lead artist-researcher on this project, Enza Giannone, at [enza.giannone@asu.edu](mailto:enza.giannone@asu.edu) or her supervisor Johnny Saldaña at [johnny.saldana@asu.edu](mailto:johnny.saldana@asu.edu).

### THE INTERVIEW PROCESS:

I am so appreciative that you have taken the time to speak to me about your personal experiences. Interviews will be used for character creation. If you give us permission, we will create characters based on the people we interview. We will remain accurate to each person's interview and use verbatim information whenever possible. We may also use interviews as inspiration for monologues, scenes, movement pieces, or digital media. Please fill out the following interview release form to protect your privacy, to give us permission to use your words, and for our record-keeping purposes. We ask for your email address so we can invite you to be part of the creation process if time permits and so we can contact you when it's time to come see our performance!

### THE AGREEMENT:

Name of Person Being

Interviewed: \_\_\_\_\_

Email: \_\_\_\_\_

Interviewer: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_ A.M./P.M.

I, \_\_\_\_\_ am aware that my participation in this interview is voluntary. I understand the intent and purpose of this research is to create a reality theatre project that will be presented to an audience of peers, families and friends. I may share whatever information I choose to without demands. I will be as honest about my experiences as possible. If for any reason, at any time, I wish to stop the interview, I may do so without having to give an explanation. I am aware that recorded materials will

be kept in a locked office on the ASU campus, will be used only with my permission, and will be destroyed once the theatre project is complete.

Please check all that apply:

I agree to be tape-recorded and to release this information to the artist-researcher.

I agree to be videotaped and/or photographed and to release this information to the artist-researcher.

I would like my personal information and physical description to be documented in writing only (**no recording devices please**).

I am giving permission for the artist-researchers to use **ONLY** my name and personal information or stories in my interview for their theatre project. (**NO images or voice recordings should be used**).

I am giving permission for the artist-researchers to use my name, image and/or voice and all my personal information or stories in my interview for their theatre project.

I would like to remain anonymous. I do not want my name or anything that might identify me to appear anywhere in the research or performance of this Documentary Theatre piece, however, artist-researchers may use any personal information or stories I share in this interview for their theatre project under an anonymous or fictional name.

Signature of Interviewee

X \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

Signature or Interviewer(s)

X \_\_\_\_\_ Date: \_\_\_\_\_

APPENDIX D  
DOCUTHEATRE CODE OF ETHICS

Enza Giannone's Docutheatre Facilitator-Artist-Researcher Code of Ethics (I originally wrote this for use in the high school classroom, though it can be applied in various contexts with youth.)

#### Preamble

Docutheatre is a theatrical convention defining itself by the inclusion of factual information and the stories of living or once living people. In a time when anything is possible, be it through technological advances or the control of the media, any claims to truth seem problematic. The particular lenses I, or others, view truth or reality effect our creative choices as our creative choices effect the representation of "truth." I believe in the many educational and personal benefits student artist-researchers gain through learning the techniques of docutheatre. In this process, we all have a great responsibility to avoid misrepresenting the experiences and stories of others. This code is based on what I have learned working with youth to make docutheatre. I believe the facilitator-artist-researcher's is primarily accountable for the student artist-researcher, our primary sources and communities, and the audience.

#### Responsibility to Artist-Researchers:

*In full recognition of my obligation to the student artist-researcher I will:*

- Foster community through creation of an emotionally and physically safe and healthy learning environment for all student-artists.
- Recognize, respect and uphold the dignity and worth of student-artists as individual human beings, and, therefore, deal justly and considerately with student-artists.
- Engage artist-researchers in the explorations of a particular social issue or event by outlining basic research skills and opportunities for students to seek and examine primary and secondary sources.
- Train artist-researcher in interviewing and interaction with interview sources, highlighting compassion, empathy, patience and an open-mind.
- Introduce artist-researchers to conventions such as interview release forms, which provide detailed information about project and will serve as a contractual agreement with interviewees and community members.
- Provide knowledge of theatrical tools used to create theatre and describe ways theatre can stimulate social justice.
- Provide access to all points of view without deliberate distortion of content area matter.

- Nurture in students lifelong respect and compassion for themselves and other human beings regardless of race, ethnic origin, gender, social class, disability, religion, or sexual orientation.
- Assist students in the formulation of, positive goals.
- Cultivate responsible artistic citizenship of artist-researchers with respect to societal issues and humanization of interview sources and communities through theatrical expressions and storytelling.

Responsibility to Our Primary Sources and Their Communities:

*In full recognition of my obligation to sources and their communities I will:*

- Provide full access to information concerning the theatrical project and encourage students to do so as well.
- Include all persons involved in every step of the creative process if applicable; welcome and encourage feedback and editing decisions.
- Invite all sources and community members to any and all subsequent performances.
- Respect and honor retractions of (or ban use of ) personal accounts, as per request of sources and/or community.
- Acknowledge the voices of all involved through play program citations and/or director's notes. (Cite my sources!)

Responsibility to Audience Member:

*In full recognition of my obligation to audience members I will:*

- Work with artist-researchers to provide the audience with entertaining and provocative theatre.
- Work with artist-researchers to inform audience of the subjective nature of the piece of the theatrical presentation. Although the theatrical representation is based on the experiences of non-fictional people, living and/or dead, the audience will be made aware of the artist's own subjectivity in the re-telling of events.
- Provide audience members with a list of primary and secondary resources when possible.
- Request audience participation in pre and post performance conversations with the artistic team and/or sources and community members whose stories are featured in the theatrical presentation.

APPENDIX E  
SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCRIPT & POSSIBLE QUESTIONS

DOCUTHEATRE SAMPLE INTERVIEW SCRIPT  
written by the artist-researchers, edited by Enza

1. Hello! Hi! How are you? How's it going? Hope all is well, etc.... Do you have some time for me to ask you a few questions...about mental illness? My name is \_\_\_\_\_. I am \_\_\_\_\_ years old. I am a student at - \_\_\_\_\_ where I study \_\_\_\_\_ I'm from \_\_\_\_\_ What about you? I am part of an ensemble that is working on writing a documentary play. Have you ever heard of *The Laramie Project*? *Vagina Monologues*? (explain if they haven't) Would you please like to share what the work *hiding* means to you?
2. You may choose to remain anonymous. If you do choose so I promise you that your identity will not be shared with anyone and that no part of this interview will be shared with anyone but my classmates, myself and my director/teacher. Privacy is one of our main concerns.
3. Before we start can you please read and fill out this consent form. This form is to protect your privacy as well as for our record-keeping purposes.
4. Thank you for agreeing to let me interview you for my docutheatre project. I really appreciate your patience with me as I am only just now learning about the interview process.
5. Please be aware that whatever you agree to share with me may be used to create a piece of theatre that will be presented to my peers, family and friends.
6. Please feel free to share whatever you are comfortable with.
7. You may strike anything from the record (tell me not to use it or erase it from my records) at anytime if you change your mind after you tell me about it.
8. I know that we may be friends/family/colleagues but for the sake of this interview can we please just assume that I don't know anything about you or your experience? This will help me compile the most factual and detailed information. This is my first time working on project like this and I really want to create the most authentic characters I can and tell the most truthful stories possible. Please don't be offended if I ask you a question you think I might already know the answer to or that might be confusing to you. Please be as detailed as you feel comfortable being.
9. Please be as truthful as possible. It is crucial for you and our project that we remain honest and true about these topics. We want to educate people about **your** truth.

10. Thank you again for spending time with me. I assure you that I will use the information you have provided with the most integrity possible in order to give you and others the voice that you deserve. It's been really nice spending time with you. If you'd like to share your email with me we will let you know our rehearsal schedule and when our performance dates. We really want you to be part of our process.

Possible Docutheatre Interview Questions  
written by the artist-researchers, edited by Enza  
11/21/12

**Please do not ask any questions until you have described our project and the person agrees to the interview and then signs and dates the Interview Release form. Remember you need one form completed for each interview. I will collect these each of these. (Enza)**

Interviewees are primary source research participants who agree to share their first-hand experiences with us. These experiences will become materials for our play and the people you interview may become characters in our play. The questions we designed for use with interview participants are listed below. Please do not feel restricted by these questions. You do not have to ask each and every one and you may decide, in the moment of conversation, to add other questions. Again, use your instincts and create a comfortable environment for you and your interviewee. Please be patient, kind, and sensitive. Listen carefully.

1. What is your definition of the word “hide” or “hiding”? [WAIT FOR ANSWER] What about “expose” or “exposure”?
2. What is the first thing that comes to your mind when I saw the word “hiding”? What do you picture in your mind? [WAIT FOR ANSWER] What about the word “exposure”?
3. What do you think people hide the most? Why?
4. What do you think makes me people hide things from other people?
5. What are some things that make people feel like they have to hide?
6. How do you think it feels to hide?
7. If you were to hide something, how would you hide it? Can you explain why?
8. How open are you able to be with your friends/family? Can you explain why you think/believe this?
9. How do you think the person or people you care about would feel if they found out you were hiding something from them, or the truth about yourself? OR IF THEY SAY “I’M NOT HIDING ANYTHING” YOU COULD ASK SOMETHING MORE GENERAL AND SAFE LIKE: How do you think someone would feel if they found out someone they love is hiding something from them?
10. How do you think it makes people feel to expose what they are hiding? [WAIT FOR ANSWER] What makes you think this?
11. In your opinion, what is the scariest thing to expose?
12. What might make someone tell, or reveal, something they were hiding or afraid to expose?
13. How do you think it would make you feel if you were to expose something hidden about yourself or your lifestyle?
14. How did this interview process make you feel? OR How did it feel to be interviewed for this project?

### **Things to keep in mind when interviewing:**

**Be honest and clear:** Explain project to your interviewee and get consent forms signed first.

**Be prepared:** have a paper and pen with you at all times. Bring recording equipment with you when you have it available and make sure you check it ahead of time to make sure it works and can do what you need. (Don't be limited by recording devices. You can always grab a pen and paper in a pinch).

**Multi-task:** Observe your interviewee as closely as possible. **Watch** their mannerisms while you **listen** to their responses. Jot down notes about them and the little movements they make. Remember these are potential characters and you will represent in our play.

**Protect yourself and your interviewee:** Don't push anyone and be careful of asking questions you don't really want to hear the answers to or don't feel comfortable with.

APPENDIX F  
*TO BE WHAT'S NOT MEANT TO SEE SCRIPT*

*To Be What's Not Meant to See*  
By "GHS" Artist-researchers  
Edited by Artist-researchers and Enza Giannone

\*Original staged reading & audience talk-back are available for viewing on  
[www.meant2see.com](http://www.meant2see.com)\*

**Notes:**

The script has been left in its original form (as it was edited on Google docs). Names have been changed to protect confidentiality of artist-researchers. Play characters have signed consent forms to have their names included in this script.

This is a suggested song list provided by the playwrights (the artist-researchers) to be played during transitions between monologues and scenes:

"Love Me" (JJ Hellar)  
"Oh Mother" (Christina Aguilera)  
"This Dark Day" (12 Stones)  
"Alive in You" (7eventh Times Down)  
"Sitting with Me" (Mary, Mary)  
"Lay Down My Guns" (Sanctus Real)  
"Breaking You" (Audrey Assad)  
"L.E.S Artistes" (Santigold)

**Note**

This play was performed as a staged-reading. The performers never left the stage. When they were not performing in a scene or monologue they sat stage left and right with their scripts on music stands.

*Ensemble enters from stage left and stage right (staggering in). They begin to "tag" the larger pieces of paper on the walls with ideas, thoughts, phrases about the topics of hiding and exposure, either from their research or their own personal experiences. After they finish writing on the papers they take their spots on the imaginary grid and walk in 90-degree angles. Once everyone has taken their spots on the grid, each of the actors creates gestures that represent either what they wrote on the large piece of paper or what they want to communicate to the audience about hiding/exposure. Each time the actor walks on a 90-degree angle his/her gesture should change. The actors begin to speak aloud what they wrote on the paper, getting faster and louder until it becomes chaotic. Someone then decides to create a group image of "hiding" the rest of the actors follow, adding themselves to the image.*

*Actor playing Alexander's Great-Grandmother X breaks out of the group image and speaks to Alexander. She "exposes" the actors hiding themselves in the image. She is a*

*big strong woman who carries strength and wisdom. Once the monologue is complete, actors return to their seats.*

Alexander: Great-Grandmother X Doll, December 4<sup>th</sup>, 2012

Great-Grandmother X: Hiding means not wanting to be found. Exposure doesn't mean anything to me cause I am a very open person and don't hold secrets. They drag you down.

Fear, embarrassment, the possible chance that somebody will haunt you with the words that you thought would set you free

Well your sexuality for one and many other things. I've never had to think about that, but probably sexuality just because it's a type of thing that people have different opinions on.

They see through a politician's view, you want to be seen as top of the world so you don't let people see things that they don't approve.

You expose if someone threatens to expose you or the simple fact of you not wanting to feel like the atlas holding the weight of the problem on your shoulders.

If someone found something out it would sadden me, but you have to be yourself and move on. You cannot care what people think of you else you become a slave to society.

*Actors playing Christopher, Nick, and Francis take their spots on the stage. Their pieces are in "conversation" with each other. They do a choral speak of their scene and monologues, juxtaposing various ideas. Before they begin their pieces the actors introduce the people they interviewed and the date of their interview. [We have to add this]*

Christopher: Mom, what's the first thing that comes to you when you hear the word, hiding?

Maria (Mom): (sitting calmly) When I think of the word hiding I think of people having (whispers) secrets...(looking away a little bit).

Christopher: Mmm-hmm, and what do you think of the word, exposure?

Maria: I think that exposure is what people see--something other than themselves.

Christopher: That's really interesting. Why do you think people hide things?

Maria: I think people hide things because they maybe want a little mystery in their lives, or it's too much for others to handle, or because they would be treated differently if others knew. (She starts to wobble her feet around).

Christopher: Ok, so, why do you think teens expose certain things but not who they really are?

Maria: They probably do that because of the people that they hang around with. Teens these days try to fit in with people that say they have—*como se dice?* What's it called? (Thinks for a moment) Oh yeah, (like a light bulb went off) SWAG!

Christopher: Can you explain to me if and why you would have ever done that?

Maria: Well, of course I would because, when I was your age this kid had some really cool clothes, so I copied his exact taste and style and I ended up hanging with the cool kids.

Christopher: I see. What about at home? How did you act differently there than at school?

Maria: I was really nice and would care for everyone, but then at school... (starts to wobble her foot faster and faster) I would bully others for my friends' benefit.

Maria: Did you at least feel bad for the ones you were being mean to?

Maria: (Voice gets higher in pitch) Of course I did! I felt like they were in my shoes when I was younger. (Eyes were starting to look everywhere instead of my eyes)

Christopher: Have you ever lied to your friends for them to like you more? Why or why not?

Maria: (with a small grin) Yes, yes I have...I would uuuhh, (pauses, takes in a small breath) usually pretend like I had a uh, a boyfriend named Antonio, when I never even had a boyfriend. I would tell them that we would (giggles) do things and what not. (speaks quickly) But I wasn't the only one that does that...

Christopher: Pardon me but, what made you lie to them?

Maria: Oh, it's alright. But, I only told them because I wanted to be popular and let them know I wasn't a virgin at the time, (starting to speed talk) which I was...but---

Christopher: Well, thank you for your time and your honesty. (*Both giggle uncomfortably*)

Nick: Oh wait, what is the topic going to be about? I might want to stay anonymous (*smiles a bit nervous because of the topic*).

I think of people physically hiding, hiding from someone trying to harm them. A family hiding under floorboards. Or personal things about them that they don't really want other people to know. Because they are like ashamed or afraid of what people might think of them. Because people are social, like, we are social creatures and we care. As much as we say we don't care what people think about us, I honestly think we do. Like someone might say, "Oh, well she's just a harlot," like, most girls would say, I don't care what they say, think about me, like their opinion doesn't matter, but to me someone thinking and saying that? It kind of bothers them, like what did they do wrong and how could they fix it?

They're afraid of judgment and like... (*quietly*) their afraid to disappoint people. I think they are most afraid of disappointing their family and friends. Like with their sexuality. Oh, I feel like they have a burden on them because they can't really be themselves. They have to be somebody else, and if it was me, I would be uncomfortable being somebody I'm not.

Friends know things because they are friends, they don't have the same, like, their judgment to me, isn't as important to me as my family's. But like, with my family I can trust with more serious matters that I wouldn't tell my friends. They might not give me the reaction I need, but I am still pretty sure that my friends would accept me more than my family. But there are things in which the family judgment is more important to me than my friends'. I have this friend and we have been friends for maybe a year. Yeah, I'm pretty sure a year, and I don't know what makes me love her so much, (*He's referring to interviewer. He looks at interviewer and smiles and giggles*) but I just feel a connection with her, like I can tell her anything. But than again, I've known people for years and years and I feel like I can't tell them things because I don't have the same type of relationship that I have with them as I have with other people—like my friend I was just talking about. Ummm... Like it all depends on the person your friends with. And the person's attitude, beliefs and everything.

How would people feel if they knew I was hiding? I think they would kind of feel kind of upset with the distrust, like they wouldn't understand why I was hiding it. How do I think it makes people feel to expose what they are hiding? Sometimes I feel like a weight is lifted off my chest but at the same time, another one is added because I am waiting for the judgment from friends and family.

Yeah, I am satisfied keeping my secrets right now. Honestly, they are not that big of a deal and if they were to come out they would just cause like... not like lots of drama, but just unnecessary drama--- Uhh why did I say drama? Umm, not like unnecessary drama... URGGGGHHH MAMAMAMAMA! (*frustrated because he keeps messing up on what he want to actually say and starts to laugh*) Ummm, not like umm... URGGGGHHH I can't think! Ummm... Ok, (*takes a breath*) I'm gonna restart. I'm fine with not letting out my secrets right now because, ummm, they are not that big of a deal to me, so if they were to just get out, than it would be like "oh whatever, my secrets are floating around in the world right now," so..

Ummm... ummm... oh what was I going to say? This interview kind of made me think a little bit of what secrets I'm holding I didn't realize. Oh well, whatever. And so

now I'm wondering, what are all these people hiding from me? I kinda wanna know. I WANNA KNOW EVERYTHING! *(starts to laugh anxiously)* AHHHHH!

Francis:

Hide or hiding is probably, like, something, I don't know how definitely to explain it, but to me hiding something is like when you're keeping something from someone, from everybody else, and keeping to yourself.

What I picture in my mind, when I hear the word hiding is...probably hiding that I'm a lesbian to my family. It was really hard for me to come out, it took years, a really long time. I was still confused about it...for a while. I had to hide it for a long time and it killed me inside. I knew my family wouldn't accept it, I thought my family would not, well, judge me. Of course when I came out, that did happen, but it really did surprise me. But it brought me closer with some family members that I didn't think I'd have close relationships to.

Everyone's scared of being judged, of course, like the way I was. Everyone's just scared. They don't know what to do and that's why they're hiding. They pretend to be someone they're not, like who they really are. Like if they're crazy and outgoing, they'll probably be scared or settled down instead. Like, that's what I think hiding means to me. Hiding isn't always a bad thing, probably not. Like, you know, how they say you hide things from your loved ones so they won't feel the pain? Or something like that, is not so bad, but sometimes hiding can really keep, you know, your self-image inside.

Uuum, heh...huuuh, eheh...The way I hide my feelings is by always having a smile on my face, no matter how much people ask me: are you ok? I am still going to say I'm ok. I used to do cutting. I used to be in that stage. The way I used to hide was always wearing long sleeves, always making sure my hair was in my face, and I didn't like no one looking at me. I went through a pretty rough time during 7th and 8th grade. But you know, if you wanna come out, then come out. Because that's the best way to go. Don't like, keep it inside of you when it's hurting you. Just hope, and at least have someone who's your rock and you can tell them everything, literally everything.

*Actors take their seats as the actors playing mom and dad take their spots downstage right with a laptop. Child enters after the parents speak a few lines.*

“Google Reveals All”

Mom: We know

Dad: We know everything

Mom: Google told us. It told us 70% of teens hide from parents

Dad: You're probably one of them

Mom: But it's ok because now we know

Dad: Where you are

Mom: How you act

Dad: What you do

Mom: Every second

Dad: Every minute  
Mom: Every hour  
Dad: Of every day.  
Mom: You don't have to tell us  
Dad: We already know.  
Mom: We'll think of a punishment later  
Dad: Thank you Google

Child: Wait, what? What am I doing? I didn't know I was doing anything wrong. What did I do?

Mom: Your Facebook said you went to your friend's house  
Dad: Web MD said you're probably doing drugs  
Mom: It's ok  
Dad: We're here for you  
Mom: We'll find a way to get through it

Child: But we didn't do any drugs. We were hanging out.

Mom: Stop hiding  
Dad: You're embarrassing yourself.  
Mom: We won't judge.

Child: But I didn't do anything wrong

Mom: You don't seem to talk about relationships either  
Dad: Are you gay?  
Mom: It's ok  
Dad: We can help you  
Mom: Google told us  
Dad: We need to look for this kind of stuff  
Mom: You can tell us

Child: I'm focused on other things right now. No I'm not in a relationship, I don't feel like dating.

Mom: Your Facebook said you were married to your "friend" Jordan  
Dad: She's a girl  
Mom: You're a girl  
Dad: Stop hiding from us

Child: It's a joke you guys. Friends do it all the time.

Mom: The Internet said you're probably hiding behavior  
Dad: Promiscuous behavior

Mom: that you put it online  
Dad: that you let other people see you  
Mom: exposed

Child: Well I don't!

Mom: It's ok  
Dad: We'll help you  
Mom: We can take down the pictures  
Dad: We can talk to your girlfriend  
Mom: We can help with your drug addiction  
Dad: The Internet told us  
Mom: Google told us.

Child (*obviously frustrated*): But I'm not! I'm completely clean! I've never done drugs, or kissed a girl, or taken a dirty picture. I stay in every night and I get good grades and eat all my vegetables. I'm happy I don't hide because I would never tell you anything! Stay out of my life or I'm going to break.

Mom and Dad: The Internet could help with that. (*End of scene*)

*Actors return to their seats. A table is brought centerstage for "Ruben" to make his sandwich.*

Breezy: My father, Rueben, November 27<sup>th</sup>, 2012

*Ruben eats & drinks water, looking at the camera, and at random things in the house*

Ruben: Why you are taking my picture?  
You gonna put me on blast?  
Look at that fat man eating that (*as he look at sandwich*) ...mmmmmm  
Hiding?  
Hiding...Hiding. (*pause*) Like not being found?  
Revealing something. (*Shakes his head*)  
I don't know...sneakiness.  
(*Long pause while eating*)  
Finding out the truth (*giggle*) um, of a person's sin.  
Ooooh you want more?  
A person's sin, their guilt, their money.  
Why do I think this thing?  
(*Pause, eats, looks around*)  
Ummm..... cuz, a lot of people do dat.  
They like to do dat  
(*Long pause*)  
They're afraid that someone gonna steal or copy them.

*(Eats..long pause because food is in his mouth)*

How to hide?

Ummm

*(Pause)*

Under the bed...I don't know, cuz I can sleep on it.

*(Eats and drinks water, long pause)*

What you mean, how open am I?

Really open, little open, bit open.

Ummm...I'm okay with it.

Can I explain why I'm open?

*(Cleans his nails with the knife and gets an orange)*

Because I have the love of Jesus in me.

*(Laughs, looks at the camera with crazy eyes and the knife in his hand and looking away. Doesn't look at the interviewer, being sneaky and silly).*

How would people feel if they knew I was hiding?

*(Burps)*

I don't know, ummmm.

How would they feel? Probably...probably, think that I wouldn't trust them?

They might put me on an **interview**, exposing my **weaknesses!**

*(Gets the knife and plays around making his crazy face)*

Exposing my weaknesses! That's what I said.

*(Puts his hands over his face, fake cries)*

You're so mean. These questions are too hard!

*(Hands still over his face)*

I don't know lets see, Ummm... because I don't have such a nice past *(picks at his teeth and with a sad voice, peels an orange)*

Your questions make me feel like lying.

I don't know...

You know, t's been longer than 5 minutes, my Hippopotamus daughter.

Ok, what was the question?

Closing with the entire ensemble: *(One by one the actors walk downstage as him or her self and completes the following line:*

Because \_\_\_\_\_ I have to hide \_\_\_\_\_.

Everyone: BUT NOW YOU CAN SEE ME.

*(End of play)*