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This dissertation attempts to describe a new form of education called *Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy*. The object of this pedagogical method is to infuse aesthetic experience into critical educational practices in order to enhance capacities in students that are indispensable for social empowerment. By exposing students to participatory encounters with artworks that possess certain qualities that encourage the sharing of experiences and the recognition of common sources of oppression, educators can create a sense of empowerment that will prepare students to enable social justice. As illustration of this process, the Lincoln Center Institute's Aesthetic Education Program is described. This program provided a practical framework for incorporating aesthetics into critical pedagogical practices, which contributed to the development of the aforementioned pedagogy.

The tool used to measure the ultimate success of this critical aesthetic process was a narrative paper in which a group of 46 teacher education students enrolled in a foundations of education course were asked to write reflecting on the entire semester's assigned readings and related class discussions in the light of their own personal experiences and using the LCI Aesthetic Education experience as a backdrop. A narrative analysis of students' reflective papers was conducted looking for recurring themes that indicated an enhanced critical awareness and empowerment to pursue social change.

This analysis showed that the infusion of aesthetic experiences into critical pedagogical practices can indeed enhance the development of social consciousness, and

thus promote the adoption of educational methods that advance social change. Students in this study responded to this method in one of three ways: by moving toward critical reflection, social empowerment, or resentment. These responses depended on the power of their aesthetic experience, and this in turn is influenced by the life experiences they bring to their encounter with the work of art included in the curriculum.

CRITICAL AESTHETIC PEDAGOGY: TOWARD A THEORY OF SELF
AND SOCIAL UNDERSTANDING

by

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Approved by

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To Tiffany and our family...

APPROVAL PAGE

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TABLE OF CONTENTS

	Page
CHAPTER	
I. A LIFE STORY	1
My Life in Two Countries	3
“Sunk in the Everydayness of Life”	7
Who Am I?	9
Awakening in My Body	12
Latina Salsera	14
I Became a Teacher, Overcoming My Bad Experiences	16
A Story with Three Lessons	19
My Students Had Never Learned to Imagine	22
Dissertation Overview.....	23
II. CRITICAL AESTHETIC PEDAGOGY.....	27
Theoretical Framework	29
The Value of Experiential Knowledge	29
The Challenge to Existing Forms of Schooling.....	32
Culture and Language.....	34
Social Class	35
Gender	37
The Issue of Identity	39
Limitations of Critical Pedagogy	42
Infusing Aesthetic Experiences.....	50
Conclusion	54
III. CRITICAL AESTHETIC PEDAGOGY: A NARRATIVE STUDY	57
The Lincoln Center Institute and the Aesthetic Education Program.....	59
Foundations of My Research	63
My First Year at the Lincoln Center Institute.....	64
My First Experiment in Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy	65
Why a Narrative Study?.....	66
Establishing the Validity of My Research Methods.....	68
Professional Development at LCI.....	69
Choosing the Work of Art for My Course.....	72
The Planning Session	74
Line of Inquiry	76

	Page
Questions that Drive the Line of Inquiry	76
Developing the Classroom Activities.....	77
Activity 1: Gesture Explorations (In Two Groups, 10-15 Minutes)	78
Activity 2: Reflective Writing (Individual Work, 10-15 Minutes)	79
Activity 3: Moving Tableaux (Group Work, 15 Minutes).....	80
Activity 4: Monologues (Group Work, 1 Hour)	81
Activity 5: After Viewing the Performance: Expressing the Story through a Visual Medium (Individual Work, 30 Minutes)	83
Activity 6: Summary and Review (Whole Class, 30 Minutes).....	83
Recurring Themes	84
Critical Awareness in Describing the Theatrical Production.....	85
Critical Awareness in Connecting the Play to My Course Assignments	86
Deepening Compassion Evidenced by Use of the Metaphor “Putting on Someone Else’s Shoes”	86
Deepening Compassion Evidenced by Identification with a Particular Group of Characters in the Play	88
Critical Awareness in Describing their Future Roles as Teachers.....	89
Empowerment to Change Social Inequalities, Starting in their Own Classrooms.....	91
An Expression of Resentment	93
Conclusions.....	94
 IV. CONCLUSIONS	 97
Most Important Elements of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy	99
The Case of the Resentful Student	104
Limitations of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy	107
Challenges and Implications for Schooling.....	108
Teacher Education Programs	108
K-12 Schools: “No Child Left Behind”	111
Final Thoughts.....	114
 BIBLIOGRAPHY	 117
 APPENDIX A. CLASS SYLLABUS.....	 121

	Page
APPENDIX B. IRB APPROVED PROTOCOL AND EXTENSION APPROVAL	128
APPENDIX C. CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT	155
APPENDIX D. LCI LETTER OF APPROVAL TO USE THEIR AESTHETIC PROGRAM.....	158

CHAPTER I

A LIFE STORY

I don't want to change the world, I just want to spark the minds of those who will.
(Lazin, *Tupac-Resurrection*, 2003)

For the purpose of this work, I have been reflecting on my personal history, examining it as if I were watching an old home movie of my life, searching through the memories and experiences that I believe have shaped my identity. This journey has been painful, therapeutic, and life affirming. It was painful because revisiting my past revived memories of learning and maturing through sorrows; therapeutic because it helped me develop a sense of closure, empathy, and forgiveness; and life affirming because by analyzing my past, I came to understand my reasons for being, and began to envision my future.

This personal research has been complicated because, as Amin Maalouf (2000) so astutely notes, “identity is one of those false friends” (p. 9). As soon as you think you understand its meaning and can accept it as a definition of your self, it begins to shift and mutate, and before you know it, you turn into someone else. An individual’s identity is created from a number of elements that include but are not limited to culture, language, gender, social class, personal interests, and abilities. These elements engender connections that Maalouf (2000) refers to as “allegiances” (p. 2), which are complex and multilayered, and can complement and/or contradict each other over time. Furthermore,

one allegiance may dominate others, creating internal hierarchies that define one's identity temporarily. Yet these hierarchies constantly shift obliterating one definition of self and elaborating another with its own set of rules and characteristic behaviors. Identity continues to change throughout each person's history.

As I tried to understand the construction of my identity, I realized that it is filled with paradoxes and tugs-of-war that have prevented me from compartmentalizing long enough to define who I am. I am a Dominican and a New Yorker; a rebel and a hyper-achiever; a Latina with a Southern past; a bad student but a caring teacher; a dancer and a teacher educator; a Salsera and a feminist. These characteristics are contradictory at times, yet none of them could have developed without the influence of the others. I am a mixture of all of them, though at times I choose to express more of one than of the others.

Thinking about the development of my identity reminds me of the movie *How to Make an American Quilt*, which tells the story of a group of women creating a marriage quilt for the granddaughter of one their members. The movie combines flashbacks of each woman's story connecting their narratives to the individual quilt patch each one is creating. As the movie unfolds, we learn how another member of the group has affected each woman's life. At the end, when all the stories are sewn together, they compose a quilt of personal connections.

My identity can also be seen as a quilt with a narrative sequence, with each patch representing a flashback onto a story from my life, or to use Maalouf's term, an "allegiance." All these patches of experience are held together by a common theme, which is like a black thread running through the quilt in its entirety. This black thread

represents what I have come to understand as my perpetual feeling of displacement, and a need to prove my worth.

I cannot remember a time in my life when I felt a sense of completely belonging. I have always felt that for one reason or another, I do not fit into the mold created by my surroundings. Throughout my life, I have compensated for these feelings of maladjustment by rebelling against authority and refusing to comply with expectations, or by hyper-achieving and striving to become the best at everything, in order to prove wrong all those who seem to lack faith in my moral or intellectual capacities.

In the following pages, I will relate the stories connected with some of the patches in my identity quilt, some briefly and others in more detail. Some of these stories will overlap, and some will be contradictory, but they are all pieces of the complex self that I have become.

My Life in Two Countries

Born in Queens, New York, I am the only child of two teenagers who divorced before I could form memories of them as a couple. After the divorce, my mother and I moved to the Dominican Republic, her country of origin. The explanation she gave for this decision was that in the Dominican Republic she could provide better educational opportunities for both of us, a better upbringing than the one I was receiving in New York City, and a lifestyle she had never enjoyed and would be unable to afford in New York City. It was during those early years that I first began to feel different from my classmates, relatives, and friends.

The Dominican Republic is a country of extreme social and racial stratification, with a strict social structure that resembles a caste system. A very small upper-class group controls the wealth of the country, and the members of this elite have Spanish surnames and light skins that entitle them to better jobs, greater respect, and more opportunities for advancement. In contrast, the members of the under-class majority have darker skin and a closer genetic link to our shared African heritage. Membership in the latter group condemns an individual to second-class citizenship, inferior education if any, and few opportunities for financial growth. Most members of this subordinate group serve the members of the elite.

I did not belong to either of these social groups. I was not part of the upper class, because although I attended their schools, my last name did not connote personal wealth. I was not part of the subordinate group, because although I lived with and befriended children in poorer neighborhoods, I attended an upper-class school. Furthermore, I was not interested in the games the children in my neighborhood played, the music they listened to, or the place they frequented. I preferred the activities that the children at my school took pleasure in and the places they frequented, but I could not afford them financially.

Later in life, I began to understand that belonging to a higher social class meant not only having money or a particular kind of surname, but also embracing a system of values, interests, and behaviors that I unconsciously absorbed throughout my school years. Bell hooks (1994), reminds us that

class was much more than one's economic standing . . . it determined values, standpoint and interests. It was assumed that students coming from a poor working class background would willingly surrender all values and habits of being associated with this background. (p. 182)

I had assimilated the ideals of a privileged class, even though I was constantly reminded that I did not fulfill all the requirements for membership. At the same time and for the same reason, I was considered “stuck up” by the children of the other, much larger social group. No matter where I was or who I was with, I was always aware of my otherness.

For this reason, years after my mother and I had moved to the Dominican Republic, I still found excuses to return to New York City. For months on end I stayed with the relatives we had left behind, until my life story was almost split in two, with a half in each separate country. However, while I frequently traveled to both of these places throughout my teenage years, I always felt homesick for one when I lived in the other, and guilty for leaving loved ones behind. Consequently, I grew up with one foot in New York City and the other in the Dominican Republic, emotionally torn between two countries, two languages and two cultures.

In addition to my constant homesickness and guilt, there was another reason for my lingering sense of alienation. I was always seen as a *Dominicanita* in New York City, and thus perceived as a naïve little girl who needed to be protected, while in the Dominican Republic I was called a *Gringita*¹. The latter was more painful to me because Dominicans hold a stereotyped view of American children as a decadent influence on

¹ Little American girl.

their culture; children of American transplants were notorious for using drugs, indulging in sex, and answering back to elders. This stereotype was used to warn those around me, including my mother, that my trips to the United States would make me too *Americanizada*. Because their cultural stereotype held that American children were loud and *malcriados*², Dominicans thought that I needed to be controlled. I spent most of my teenage years trying to prove to my relatives, teachers, and peers in both countries that I was as trustworthy, normal, and intelligent as my native cousins and classmates.

However, during all those years of displacement, no matter what country I was in, there was always one thing that remained constant in my life—I always made sure to enroll in some kind of dance class. There, no one cared what I had done before I arrived, or how I arrived—by plane, car, or foot. No one asked if I was Dominican or Gringa. No one cared about my last name, only my first. All that mattered was that I wanted to dance, and because of that, I was welcome.

I now understand why to this day, dancing remains such a significant part of my life. The dance floor was my first encounter with social justice. It was the only place that offered me an equal opportunity to succeed—a place where achieving success was not connected with my social class or nationality, and where my heritage did not count. All that truly mattered in this community was my love for dancing. For this reason, ballet, modern, and Afro-Antillean dances were at the center of my life as I pivoted precariously across lines of social class, culture, and language.

² Disrespectful.

Consequently, I grew up dancing, and never doubting that I was going to dance for the rest of my life. After graduating high school, I joined a dance group in the Dominican Republic, which greatly reduced the frequency of my trips to New York City. Dancing thus became my whole life, and my main source of income until I reached the age of twenty-one. Then, at the peak of my dancing career, I stumbled into a closed sliding glass door that shattered, slit three tendons in my left leg, caused cuts requiring over 1,800 stitches, and left me with little hope of ever dancing again.

Scarred for life not only physically but also emotionally, I realized that I had reached a turning point, and would have to decide where to go and what to do next. My friends and family did not know what advice to give me, because they wondered, what could a dancer do but dance? Perhaps they believed that since I had spent so much time on Pointe shoes, my brain had atrophied.

I realized then that my old feelings of displacement and need to prove my worth had returned in full force; I had lost the only place where they could not haunt me, the dance floor. This time, in order to prove everybody wrong, I promised myself that I would forget about dancing completely and enroll in college to become an elementary-school teacher.

“Sunk in the Everydayness of Life”

A few years after my life-changing accident, I had become a different person. I was living a so-called normal life: I had gone to college and earned a bachelor's degree, I had stable employment, and I had even gotten married. Yet in spite of it all, I was still unhappy.

Looking back on that time, I now see that I was what Maxine Greene (1995) calls “sunk in the everydayness of life” (p. 14). I felt lost in what I considered a mediocre life, with no escape in sight. I had lost the capacity to question my life, evaluate its flaws, and consider how to rebuild it. I had forgotten that I had the right and the power to change my life in whatever way I wanted. Before my accident, though feelings of displacement had always haunted me, I still knew with the strength of my entire body exactly what I wanted from life, and that conviction had kept me going, even when my only goal was to prove my worth. After I stopped dancing, I lost that strength, and stopped all my questioning. As a result, I had begun to comply with the expectations of my surroundings regarding work, marriage and social behavior. Greene (1995) describes my situation well:

My argument is simply that treating the world as predefined and given, as simply there, is quite separate and different from applying an initiating, constructing mind or consciousness to the world. When habit swathes everything, one day follows another identical day and predictability swallows any hint of an opening possibility. (p. 23)

After I had lived through several years of marriage, teaching at a private school, and living a so-called normal life, the owner of the school where I was working suggested that I continue my education. He recommended that I enroll in a master’s program in Elementary Education at Western Carolina University, in North Carolina. He knew people at the school who could facilitate my acceptance into the program. I remember that during this conversation, I began to imagine a different life for myself; I began to “look at things as if they could be otherwise” (Greene, 1995, p. 19). I did not hesitate to

take advantage of this opportunity, and in a matter of three months, I had moved to North Carolina with the intent of continuing my formal education.

Today I understand that this choice was only a cowardly escape from a loveless marriage that I knew was bound to fail, and from a life that I had unconsciously rejected. However, at the time I could only see (and admit) as much as my pain would allow. I also knew that my new choices would bring as much pain to my loved ones as the happiness they had felt before, unaware as they were that I was secretly miserable. I left my home, my marriage, my friends, and my mother behind, and moved to the United States to pursue a master's degree in Elementary Education, and subsequently a Ph.D. in Curriculum and Teaching.

My feelings about leaving home were complex. I left to avoid being “sunk in the everydayness of life,” and I felt excited about starting a new life full of possibilities. But at the same time, I felt guilty for abandoning my home, my memories, and those who I loved so much. My new and unfamiliar surroundings filled me with apprehension, and I was unsure of my ability to speak and write in English at the graduate level. Most of all I was insecure about fitting into the strange Southern culture, something I so desperately needed to do in order to succeed.

Who Am I?

To my surprise, life in the South was very different from life in the Dominican Republic, and based on what I remembered, from life in New York City as well. On the one hand, I was the only Latina in both of my graduate programs. On the other hand, the racial issues that take precedence in the South regard Black and White. For this reason, I

felt very uncomfortable participating in class discussions about race and ethnicity.

Although Latinos and African Americans share a history of slavery and oppression, race is a social construct, and therefore a lived experience. I was not African-American and I was not White. I felt like a plantain in a basket of fruits.

Furthermore, this feeling of social discomfort inhibited my ability to communicate in English. Sometimes after gathering the courage to state my opinion about an issue raised in class, I would immediately realize that my comment had not come out the way I had intended. Nevertheless, my statement would initiate a discussion among my classmates, and by the time I could mentally organize what I had really meant to say, the moment was gone and the class had moved on to something else, leaving me with a sour taste of stupidity. Maalouf (2000) describes the total alienation I experienced during this period:

The secret dream of most immigrants is to try to pass unnoticed. Their first temptation is to imitate their host, and sometimes they succeed in doing so. But more often they fail. They haven't got the right accent, the right shade of skin, the right first name, the right family name or the proper papers, so they are soon found out. (p. 39)

My biggest fear was that I would be "found out." I was terrified that my professors would eventually realize that I did not belong in the program because of my limited intellectual capacity, insufficient English proficiency and horrible writing skills, or just because I was a woman who had somehow fallen through the cracks.

I understood that to preserve my sanity I needed to confront my feelings of inadequacy, but to be honest, seven years have passed since I began my graduate studies,

and I am still haunted by the fear of being “found out.” Nevertheless, at that time I managed to find a way of speaking for myself about issues of race, I began a search to define my own racial identity. Not being White or Black, what was I? Was I Hispanic? Latina? American? Latin-American? Who was I and for what did I stand?

After months of reflection and reading the work of various Latin-American intellectuals on the construction of race, I decided to call myself Latina. I did not choose Hispanic, because that term was connected to my people’s colonizers and oppressors, the Spanish. I did not choose American, because although I was born in the United States, I was raised primarily by Dominicans in the Dominican Republic, and I felt a strong connection to that country and its culture.

I should note that I use the word Latina with caution, because I understand that the term Latina/o can also function as a reductionist social construct that places all people from Spanish-speaking countries into one category, and perpetuates the belief that we all belong to a single culture. In addition, this term is problematic because it is used only in the United States. People from the Spanish-speaking countries of Latin America do not think of themselves as Latinos; they define their identity according to the specific country of their origin. Coco Fusco (1995) also struggles with this notion, because she believes that by calling ourselves Latinos, we may

lapse into the bad habits which enabled the U.S. government and the American media to turn hundreds of ethnic groups into one—Hispanic, Latino, you name it—and systematically promote its misinterpretation as a racial term, for the benefit of a segregationist system that sees only in black and white, no matter what the other’s color is. It also involves comprehending how the respective colonialists of the North and the South engendered different social constructions

of race, despite shared legacies of slavery, sexual exploitation of blacks and indigenous women by white men, and segregationist legislation. (p. 23)

Nevertheless, I believe that in the past few decades, the rush of immigration into the cities of the United States by so many Spanish speakers of different nationalities, including Cubans, Puerto Ricans, Dominicans, Colombians, and Mexicans, has engendered interracial relations with both Whites and Blacks that have allowed for the development of a common political discourse. Fusco (1995) notes that:

between jazz musicians and soneros, between Cuban Revolutionaries and Civil Rights leaders, between Young Lords and Black Panthers . . . Those interactions are transforming what was once a largely Caribbean phenomenon into the seed of American's cultural present and future . . . creating the conditions for the productions of hybrid black english/spanish/spanglish culture. (p. 24)

This discourse has produced a cultural category that I will refer to as Latin American, for the purpose of this discussion. It has also defined my choice of racial identity: I am Latina.

Awakening in My Body

Looking back on my years in graduate school, I must admit that they were intellectually challenging. I spent that time searching for a place of belonging, reading new and challenging books, and participating in extraordinary class discussions. However, I also spent those years in denial. The intellectual demands of graduate school kept me from thinking about the void I felt in my body and soul because I was not dancing.

I had wanted to prove to everyone that I had a brain and that I knew how to use it, and for this reason, I had even been willing to leave the ones I loved. But by the time I graduated with my master's degree, I realized that I had everybody fooled: they all thought the dancer in me was completely gone. I had convinced them that I was nothing but an oversized brain walking around with no body attached to it—and that is exactly how I felt. I enjoyed my new intellectual identity, but it was hard to keep from thinking about dancing, even though these thoughts were so painful for me.

People process new information by relating it to a framework of past experience, in order to make sense of it. Because I had decided to concentrate on my intellectual development, I had forced myself to reject the memories of my life as a dancer. Therefore, I had to create a new way of understanding that was completely disassociated from my previous experiences. As Freire (2000) would say, I was “banking” my new knowledge, and when I found a way to do that, I was in good shape . . . *Or so I thought.*

It was during my doctoral work at the University of North Carolina at Greensboro that I first learned about the notion of the body-mind split. This idea haunted me for a long time, because although it resonated with my experience, I still could not draw a direct connection with what I was going through at the time. Then one day I met a man named Oren, who became my friend and later my dance partner. He invited me to go Salsa dancing, and I will never forget that night. As I danced, I awakened in my body.

Suddenly I understood the real meaning of the body-mind split. This concept holds that in our society, the mind is more important than the body, and thoughts are more important than feelings; reason takes precedence over emotions in an ideology that

separates thinking from being, and devalues experience as a creator of meaning. The alternative view is what Sherry Shapiro (1999) refers to as *body knowledge*: “both mind and body mingle together in a continuous informational stream creating the interpretations we call knowledge. As such, we experience our interpretations as reality” (p. 33).

I was a living example of this concept of body-mind separation. My mind was divorced from my body, not because I had given up dancing, but because I had thrown away the most valuable tool I had for creating meaning and understanding the world. I cannot understand how I went for so long without that vital connection to my body, which had channeled all my expressions of love, joy, passion, and compassion. When I look back at that time in my life, those disembodied memories appear in black and white—blurry, odorless, and tasteless.

When I began to dance again, the emptiness I had felt for so long, and had tried so hard to ignore, simply disappeared. Since then, I have continued Salsa dancing as an essential part of my integrated identity. As Shapiro (1999) put it: “Dance was a place where I could remember my body, and experience myself as a whole again” (p. 7).

Latina Salsera

At this point, my allegiances shifted once again, and I became a *Latina Salsera*, an identity that I still carry with pride. Consequently, during my last few semesters in graduate school, after a hiatus of many years, I again began to travel frequently to New York City, the capital of Salsa, for training and dance exposure. Little did I know that

there I would discover a new community among the *Salseros Dominican-Yorks*³. Finally, I would find a place where I belonged, full of people who saw the world and created meaning in the same way I did: *through our bodies and our culture*. Kathleen Casey (1995) calls this kind of discovery “a Collective Subjective, [where] in the process of articulating a common political discourse, individual isolation is overcome, and identity is created in community” (p. 223). Needless to say, as soon as I finished my doctoral coursework, I moved back to New York City.

However, to my dismay, it did not take long before I began to feel displaced again in my new surroundings. Now the feminist in me was screaming accusations that I was perpetuating machismo and traditional sexism by conforming to the demands of a dance style that is sold as a “lead and follow” dance, in which men are the leaders and women follow.

One way in which Salsa instructors typically sell their lessons to the public is by claiming that in this age of women’s liberation, Salsa dancing is one of the few arenas where men are still in charge because in this dance style men lead and women follow. I often heard a particular instructor say during a lesson, “Women, you may be the bosses everywhere else now, but here, men are still in charge.” The men would often cheer and applaud this kind of statement.

This bothered me in my identity as a feminist, because although I love Salsa, at the same time I felt that by allowing a man to lead me, I was giving in to patriarchal tradition. This internal dissonance motivated me to attend classes at different studios, to

³ Dominicans living in New York.

compare how other Salsa instructors taught the “follow-and-lead” techniques. I hoped to find a way of easing the cognitive dissonance between the feminist (in cap and gown) who stood firmly on my right shoulder, telling me that I was perpetuating female oppression, and the *Salsera* (in a glittery outfit) on my left shoulder, shaking her hair and moving her hips to the sound of the drums.

Finally, I found a Salsa school with a male instructor whose motto was, “To lead and follow is to know the right moment to react to the actions of your partner.” With the help of this teacher, I came to understand that leading and following are both learned behaviors, and equally important skills. Following is not a natural capacity that women are born with, any more than cooking is. Both men and women have to learn and master all of the skills necessary to create a well-balanced partnership. Dancing is about two partners giving each other just the right amount of body tension, so that when one initiates a move, the other translates it into a shift of weight that will complete the paired movement. If either partner does not give the right amount of tension back to the other, they both fail to create the dance move. In other words, leading and following both mean knowing the precise moment in which to “act” and “react.” Thus, despite the macho sales pitch I had heard so often, I concluded that Salsa dancing is based on mutuality, partnership, communication, and the sharing of equal strengths at precise moments.

Imagine my relief!

I Became a Teacher, Overcoming My Bad Experiences

In addition to my career as a dancer, I hold an instructor’s position teaching Social Foundations of Education at a City University of New York (CUNY) branch, and I

am in the process of completing my Ph.D. I have learned that my identity is filled with paradoxes and tensions that will always prevent me from neatly defining who I am. Nonetheless, I hope that through this “partnership with myself,” I will come to understand most, if not all of the allegiances that have shaped me.

I previously noted my negative feelings of displacement and intellectual inadequacy, and my positive experiences of connecting dance to social justice, and finding what Casey (1995-96) defines as a *collective subjective*. However, I have not yet discussed why I became a teacher, and later a teacher educator. Perhaps after my life-changing accident, I was subconsciously motivated to choose teaching as a career. Yet I knew that I needed to search deeper into my life to discover my true motivations.

Another journey through my memories took me back to my early school years. This was a difficult and problematic passage, because I have very little recollection of that time. At first, all I could remember was sheer boredom, sitting for hours on end in rooms where teachers “blah blah blahed” their way to the end of the period. I remembered taking notes and memorizing information, not because it had any relevance or appeal to me, but because I knew that later I would have to spill it out on a test. I also remembered skipping many classes. When I began to recall punishments and complaints made against me, I felt a renewed hostility toward some of my old teachers. I could not think of a single reason why I should have wanted to become a teacher. I had detested school!

However, perhaps these hateful memories of school are precisely what drove me to become a teacher, and made me so passionate about education and social justice. I did

not have a wonderful schooling experience, and my teachers did not serve as positive role models. In fact, my few memories of school are of oppressive, painful, and silencing experiences. Worst of all are the memories of those moments in which I acquired the reputation of a *malcriada*⁴ because I could not “keep my mouth shut,” but spoke up whenever I felt injustices had been committed toward my peers or myself. This reputation in turn made me rebel even more. “Unquestioned authority” was not in my vocabulary. Nevertheless, with time, the punishments and complaints served to silence me, and fueled my feelings of inadequacy and my compulsion to prove my normalcy.

The reality is that I became a teacher despite these horrible experiences, but also in some ways because of them. Intuitively, I knew that there were other ways of approaching students, and I needed to discover them. I wanted to see children as more than “deficit pieces, [for when children are] unable to be affirmed for the strength they possess, children come to know themselves only in the places where they need extra help, whether those places mean academics, social skill or their bodies”(Pennell, 2003, p. 457). Perhaps I wanted to do my best, first as an elementary school teacher, and eventually as an instructor of Social Foundations of Education teaching future teachers, so that the children whose lives I touched would have a different schooling experience than those I had endured.

As I searched for these alternative pedagogies that empower students to become embodied learners, and promote the development of teaching methods that do not perpetuate pain, disconnection, and oppression, I attended numerous graduate level

⁴ Disrespectful

courses with professors who are known to offer alternative classroom environments. My student experience in most of these courses was wonderful. The professors helped me to shape and understand my world, they affirmed my radical views as legitimate, and most importantly, they helped me to determine the type of classroom I wanted to create, by modeling mostly positive and some negative pedagogical examples.

A Story with Three Lessons

In one particular graduate course, I was very disappointed with a white male professor who claimed to follow a liberating feminist pedagogy, when in fact his course mirrored a conservative, patriarchic, and silencing educational model. This class was composed mostly of women, with one white male student. Throughout the course, the professor and the male student managed to monopolize the discussion, to the point of silencing the rest of the class. Worst of all, this environment of patriarchal camaraderie blinded the professor to the fact that on the few occasions when female students managed to participate, they were always interrupted by the male student with corrections of our own words, based on what he believed we meant to say.

After a few months of bearing with this situation, when I found myself repeatedly interrupted in the middle of an oral presentation, I could not restrain myself from walking out of the class, never to return. My advisor subsequently arranged a meeting for me with this professor, so we could discuss this situation. I was horrified by the prospect of confronting him and speaking up for myself, after years of being socialized to believe that doing so was a sign of disrespect. I felt as if I was back in grade school; once more I was little Jolie Medina, “*la malcriada*.”

To prevent my emotions from getting the better of me in this meeting, I wrote down what I wanted to say, and went to meet my nemesis. Then in a flood of tears, I expressed my extreme discomfort with his class, and explained how oppressive it was for me and for the other female students in the class. He listened to everything that I had to say, handing me tissues to dry my tears. Then he proceeded to inform me that, although he was saddened at this situation, he felt that his class was not a therapy session, and that it was not his job to pamper students. He also said that it was our responsibility as graduate students to fight for the right to speak when we wanted to participate. After that day, I never returned to his class, nor did I speak to him again. There would have been no point in it, as we had very different philosophies of education that prevented us from seeing eye-to-eye.

I include this anecdote because as a spiritual person, I believe that everything happens for a reason, and that no matter how painful an experience may be, I should learn from it and turn it into life lessons. In this spirit, I would like to describe the three lessons that I learned from my encounter with this patriarchal professor. Firstly, it is important to emphasize that we, as educators, can have the best intentions of promoting a liberating classroom environment, and still manage to perpetuate ideologies of oppression. To quote from one of this professor's required readings, "Any situation in which 'A' objectively exploits 'B' or *hinders* [my emphasis] his and her pursuit of self-affirmation as a responsible person is one of oppression" (Freire, 2000, p. 55). Although this professor called himself a liberationist pedagogue and a feminist thinker, he failed to see that his method of conducting class was based on masculine ideals of independence, detachment

and competition, as opposed to connection, care, and compassion, which are the primary characteristics of a liberating feminist pedagogy.

Secondly, although I do not propose that classrooms should become group therapy sessions, I do believe that education should be healing, rewarding, and constantly respectful of human dignity. Bell hooks (1994) agrees, when she writes that “while it is utterly unreasonable for students to expect classrooms to be therapy sessions, it is appropriate for them to hope that the knowledge received in these settings will enrich and enhance them” (p. 19).

Finally, this experience made me realize how important it is to ensure that every student’s voice is acknowledged in the classroom. This can only happen if we, as the facilitators of discussion, become actively involved in providing each student with the opportunity to speak, even if this means limiting the participation of the most vocal individuals in the group.

While reviewing the stories I have told so far, reliving the memories of my school years and my upbringing, I have found a clear understanding of my commitment to education, which is three-fold. Firstly, I am committed to searching for models of learning that embrace human beings with dignity and respect. These are pedagogies in which students’ interests and experiences become the most important tools in the curriculum, and knowledge is shaped from what students bring to the classroom, including their own ways of understanding the world. Secondly, after beginning my career as a college professor, I became interested in modeling these alternative pedagogies in my college classrooms as a way of guiding future teachers toward more

affirming ways of approaching students. Thirdly, I want to raise my college students' awareness of social issues of oppression and inequality, and their understanding of the institutions that perpetuate them. I hope to help students find ways of reducing, if not eliminating these injustices.

My Students Had Never Learned to Imagine

After three years of teaching at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, I felt that my students shared my views about what David Purpel (1999) calls "the unnecessary human suffering" (p. 22). Yet I still heard a tone of despair in their voices, and very little if any hope for a better future. They were doubtful of their authority and power to change the current systems of domination. As future educators, they wanted to become healers of children's suffering, but it seemed as if a huge wall stood before their eyes, and they could not see any better alternative. They could not imagine a life that differed from their experience.

I then realized that my educational model was missing a vital component. I had failed to take into account the previous school experiences of my students, and my own, which had been limited to what Paulo Freire (2000) calls "the banking concept of education" (p. 72). In this approach, students' individual ways of interpreting the world are not valued. The learning process is disconnected from their lives, so they will never embody the knowledge they receive, or learn that they can use it to transform the world. Furthermore, because this approach to learning is one-dimensional and hierarchical, it leaves little room for critical and independent thinking, and even worse, reduces the capacity to imagine. Thus, students come to see the world as fixed, and given. As my

own students have often said, “Yes, it’s terrible, but what can we do? That’s the way things are.” They were as I once was, “sunk in the everydayness of life” (Greene, 1995, p. 14).

This is where I found the biggest flaw in my teaching model: my students had never learned to imagine. They were coming to my classroom, sharing their experiences, linking them to issues of oppression and the need for change, but they still could not imagine a better future, because they could not envision their own power to create and recreate their world.

This then is where I find myself today, in a permanent search for alternative pedagogical methods that will approach students as whole human beings, accepting and valuing their personal experiences as legitimate tools for learning. An educational model of this kind will help students develop the capacity to imagine a world without unnecessary suffering, and the compassion to create these much-needed changes. My goal is to define a practical pedagogy that I can model to future teachers, and that they in turn can model to their future students. As Tupac Shakur said, “I don’t want to change the world, I just want to spark the minds of those who will” (Lazin, 2003).

Dissertation Overview

My interest in transformative/critical pedagogies intersects with my involvement in the arts, commingling my identities as an educator, a dancer, and a Latina. In exploring these intersections, or allegiances, I discovered the subject of this dissertation: *Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy: Toward a Theory of Self and Social Understanding*.

I intend to introduce an alternative type of progressive education that I will call Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy. This pedagogy utilizes the arts to promote critical learning, and it incorporates particular types of aesthetic experience into pedagogical practice to increase students' commitment to social justice. To demonstrate this I utilized the Lincoln Center Institute's Aesthetic Education Program as a framework to demonstrate how this approach may complement or enhance the development of social awareness and social justice practices, when it is combined with critical pedagogical practices.

In this introductory chapter, I have explored the social construction of my identity. I described the feelings of displacement that haunted me throughout my formative years, as I moved across borders between countries, cultures, languages, and social classes. I discussed how my early dancing served as an important source of personal affirmation, and provided a milieu in which I could experience social justice. I related how a catastrophic accident changed my focus in life from dancing to teaching. I described how I forced myself to create a new way of learning and understanding the world, while pursuing my master's and doctoral degrees. Finally, I explored how my own oppressive experiences as a student informed my decision to become a teacher, my dedication to teacher education, and my search for transformative/critical pedagogies that embrace human beings with dignity and develop awareness of social injustice.

Chapter II of this dissertation will depict an intellectual journey. Throughout both of my graduate programs, I sought and studied the paths taken by other pedagogues who promote alternative ways of teaching. This chapter will present a theoretical framework to explain the principles voiced by these scholars, who influenced the shape of my own

educational philosophy. This theoretical framework will describe a fusion of two main pedagogical approaches to create what I will call a Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy. It will be based on a foundation of Critical Pedagogy, with its emphasis on valuing students' voices and experiences in the classroom, enabling student empowerment, and challenging existing forms of schooling. I will then argue for the infusion of aesthetics into critical educational practice, as a way of providing the crucial elements that are absent in Critical Pedagogy. These include awareness of the body, the development of the imagination, and compassion.

Chapter III will present an overview of my research project, which aimed to determine whether the critical aesthetic practices I employed in an undergraduate course in Social Foundations of Education succeeded in enhancing students' social awareness, and increasing their social empowerment. My overall method was to link scholarly readings, academic discussions, critical thinking, and experiential knowledge in a unified approach to the course material. As illustration of this process, I will describe the Lincoln Center Institute's Aesthetic Education Program, whose main goal is to "integrate aesthetic education into teacher preparation programs in order to ensure that the arts and imagination will assume an essential place in the education of children" (Holzer, 2004, p. 133). This program provided a practical framework for incorporating aesthetics into critical pedagogical practices, which contributed to the development of my *Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy*.

The fourth and final chapter will contain an overview of this entire piece of work. I will describe what I consider to be the most important elements of my project, how they

contributed to the success of my Critical Aesthetic Pedagogical method, and the limitations I encountered in its implementation. The second part of this chapter will consider the challenges and implications that Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy may present for traditional forms of schooling, specifically for teacher education programs and K-12 public education.

CHAPTER II

CRITICAL AESTHETIC PEDAGOGY

The first chapter of this dissertation explored the social construction of my identity. I described the sense of displacement I felt throughout my formative years, and how my early dancing served as an activity through which I experienced social justice. I analyzed how my feelings of oppression as a student shaped my decision to become a teacher, a teacher educator, and a passionate seeker of transformative/alternative pedagogies that embrace human dignity and empower students to create social change. I also described how my encounter with the dance form called *Salsa* changed my life in various ways. Firstly, it helped me to understand the importance of using personal experience as a backdrop for creating meaning, understanding one's past, and determining one's future. Secondly, it helped me to appreciate and shape my identity as a Latina. Finally, by reflecting on my experience with dance, I began to understand the need for an educational model that promotes experiential knowledge.

This second chapter will detail my intellectual journey as a student and a teacher. Throughout my graduate education I studied the paths taken by other pedagogues who have promoted alternative methods of teaching, encouraged students' voices in the classroom, and valued experiential knowledge. This chapter will present a theoretical framework to explain the principles voiced by these scholars, who influenced the shape of my own educational philosophy. To support my analysis, I will draw on material by

renowned radical educators such as Peter McLaren, Maxine Greene, Susan Stinson, Paulo Freire, bell hooks, Sherry Shapiro, and Sonia Nieto, among many others.

My theoretical framework will describe a fusion of two main pedagogical approaches. It will be based on a foundation of Critical Pedagogy, with its emphasis on valuing students' voices and experiences in the classroom, enabling student empowerment, and challenging existing forms of schooling. After analyzing these fundamental elements of Critical Pedagogy, I will discuss how despite its relevance to my analysis, this educational theory overlooks other factors that we must consider if we wish to inspire a deeper awareness of social justice in our students. I will then argue for the infusion of aesthetic experience into critical educational practice, as a way of providing the crucial elements that are absent in Critical Pedagogy. These include awareness of the body, the development of the imagination, and compassion. My intention in this work is to combine Critical Pedagogy and aesthetics into an alternative educational model that I will call *Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy*.

To illustrate how this form of pedagogy may be practically applied, Chapter Three will present a case study based on a semester's work in the Lincoln Center Institute's (LCI) "Aesthetic Education Program" (AEP), and my college students' experience with this program. Specifically, I will describe how students related the issues of oppression that were discussed in an undergraduate Social Foundations of Education course held during the fall semester of 2003 to the Aesthetic Education Program offered by the LCI. The primary assignment for this course was a paper in which, using the LCI's AEP as a backdrop, students were to reflect on the entire semester's assigned readings on

race, culture, social class, and gender, as well as the respective class discussions. In reading my students' papers, I looked for recurring themes that would indicate a growing awareness of the need for social justice, an understanding of their own social empowerment, and a desire to create social change.

Theoretical Framework

Critical Pedagogy provides the foundation of the theoretical framework upon which I will base my analysis in this chapter. This educational theory contains several elements that I consider crucial to the alternative educational model I am attempting to develop. The first of these is the creation of classroom spaces where students feel safe to share their personal experiences, and where these experiences become the most important educational tool. With this approach, Critical Pedagogy challenges existing forms of schooling that are based on what Paulo Freire (2000) refers to the "banking concept of education" (p. 72) which reinforces systems of domination. The second crucial element of Critical Pedagogy lies in encouraging students to explore how their experiences shape their identity, and how they are marked by the larger culture in which they live. The third involves urging students to find their own voice by critically analyzing their cultural identity and its influences.

The Value of Experiential Knowledge

The first critical element I will discuss is the establishment of a classroom environment in which students feel accepted and safe to share their personal experiences. This requires pedagogical guidelines designed to assure that the dignity of every person present will be preserved, no matter how unusual their opinions might be, or how

uncomfortable they may make the other students feel. The Critical Pedagogical classroom must be a place of interaction and engagement, where students' worldviews and opinions are considered the most valuable resource for learning. This requires that the instructor's pedagogical method remain fluid, and open to continuous transformation. Each encounter will present a new approach to the subject, depending on the students' experiences and how they interpret them. As instructors, we cannot walk into this classroom with a set agenda for the day; we must leave room for flexibility and change, because each day and each topic discussed will reveal a new set of experiences and interests that may or may not allow us to move on to the next topic.

Critical Pedagogy encourages democratic ideals in the classroom, because it assures all students the fundamental right to participate and to be heard. The students are also free to make decisions about their own learning process, by determining when it is time to move on, and when to explore a topic of particular interest in greater depth. Johnson (2000) argues that "pedagogy should be shaped and modified constantly by paying attention to what actually [is] happening among the students in response to teaching, [and the] course design should be constantly readjusted to what [is] being learned from the students"(p. 98). Bell hooks (1994) concurs, writing "there could never be an absolute set agenda governing teaching practices. Agendas [have] to be flexible, to allow for spontaneous shifts in direction" (p. 7).

I picture this form of pedagogy as a dance. The teachers and students are like dance partners in constant graceful movement, and the curriculum shifts with every encounter, depending on the students' needs, interests and experiences, and the ways in

which they understand the world. Sonia Nieto (2000) encourages a form of education that is inclusive, holistic, and multicultural in every regard. It should embrace the reality that students come into our classrooms bearing different kinds of knowledge, depending on their background. Their experiences have shaped the ways they see the world, and how they learn. Nieto also holds educators responsible for meeting each student's needs by bridging their home culture to the learning process.

My interpretation of this principle is that we must allow students to use their own personal experiences to find a sense of connection with the learning process. It is our responsibility as educators to ensure that our students are learning, by employing the knowledge they bring into the classroom as our basis to further their education. Paulo Freire (2000) offers what he calls the "problem posing method in education, which is constituted and organized by the students' view of the world, where their own generative themes are found" (p. 109). Again, students' experiences are the primary factor in this transformative pedagogy. The practice of connecting students' experiences to the learning process allows them to personalize the knowledge they are gaining, and thus it becomes relevant to their lives.

In *Teaching to Transgress* (1994), bell hooks calls for an "Engaged Pedagogy" that embraces students as whole human beings, with lives full of experience that can be used as a legitimate tool for learning. Hooks writes that education can only be liberating "when everyone claims knowledge as a field in which we all labor" (p. 14), and that "Engaged pedagogy . . . embraces experiences, confessions and testimonies as relevant ways of knowing, as important and vital dimension of any learning process"(p. 18). She

also emphasizes the importance of teachers bringing their own experiences into the classroom as well, and linking them to the academic discussion. In this way, we also can be seen as whole human beings who exist outside the classroom walls, with complex lives in which we love, care, and struggle for meaning. Furthermore, when we as teachers share our own stories in the classroom, our students can draw a connection between our love for the discipline we teach and the discipline itself, and our teaching can thus become a significant force in their lives. If we are going to expect students to share their experiences relevant to the learning process, we need to do the same.

Today's dominant educational model suffers from a lack of relevance. Students are often expected to memorize information without connecting it to their life experience. This rote learning process discourages students from becoming active and involved participants in their own education. Instead they become passive recipients of bits of information that are fed to them by an authority figure, and they are never required to interpret or make meaning out of the information they receive. An educational system that considers knowledge as fixed and unchangeable leaves no room to determine its relevance, and discourages critical analysis. Relevant meaning can only be created when we relate our personal knowledge to the new information we receive. We must learn to analyze this information using our accumulated experience, drawing on what we have encountered in the past to determine how we can best utilize it in the future.

The Challenge to Existing Forms of Schooling

By allowing students to relate their personal experience to the learning process, Critical Pedagogy challenges existing forms of schooling. In my experience as a

professor of Social Foundation of Education at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, I have found that most of my students have been formed by a pedagogical system that is hierarchical and non-interactive. Paulo Freire (2000) refers to this model as the “banking concept of education,” in which students are reduced to storing bits of information provided by their instructor, who considers her/himself as a superior authority, and “turns them into receptacles to be filled” (p. 72). In this educational model, students’ experiences and ways of interpreting the world are not valued. The learning process is disconnected from all social relevance, and students are prevented from creating meaning, as described above.

In the banking concept of education, knowledge is a gift bestowed by those who consider themselves knowledgeable upon those whom they consider to know nothing. Projecting an absolute ignorance onto others, a characteristic of the ideology of oppression, negates education and knowledge as processes of inquiry... The more students work on storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. (Freire, 2000, pp. 72-73)

Traditional forms of schooling, in which experiential knowledge is not viewed as a legitimate route by which to create meaning, can only perpetuate systems of domination. An individual’s experience is shaped by culture, language, social class and gender, among other factors, and these can all be seen as different lenses used simultaneously to view the world. Each individual will experience the same situation differently, because their prior experience serves as the context in which they understand each novelty they encounter. For example, the experience of a poverty-stricken Asian woman differs from that of an upper-class white male, because they have been exposed to

vastly different lifestyles. If they meet in the same classroom, these two individuals will create meaning in very different ways, based on the habits they have learned through years of socialization. By assuming that experience does not effect learning, traditional forms of schooling tend to produce irrelevant knowledge, because they do not allow individuals to interpret new information through the lens of their prior experience, and thus to create meaning that is relevant to their worldview. Furthermore, by denying that culture, language, social class, and gender are the main influential factors in shaping the ways we create meaning, the banking method of education perpetuates systems of domination, as I will explain in greater detail.

Culture and Language

Peter McLaren (1998) defines culture as “a set of practices, ideologies, and values from which different groups draw to make sense of the world” (p. 175). Culture is experienced and perpetuated in the context of individual lives, and when students are not allowed to use their own cultural experiences as a background for the learning process, the knowledge they gain through study becomes irrelevant. Sleeter, Gutierrez, New, and Takata (1994) assert that “there are fundamental cultural differences in the experiences students bring with them to the school, that are based in their racial or ethnic roots” (p. 151). Some educators claim that curricula should be “color blind,” but I will argue that such practices are just as detrimental to the learning process as the “banking” approach. When an instructor decides on a “color blind” classroom, the students’ authentic voices are eliminated from the conversation, and the instructor remains as the only legitimate source of knowledge.

Culture and language go hand in hand, and one cannot separate the language we speak from the way we understand the world. A classroom that does not respect students' native language differences fails to take into account the multiple ways in which students relate to study materials based on the language they are raised to speak. For example, a student whose native language is Spanish might struggle to answer questions posed by a teacher who is a native speaker of English. Not only is there a language barrier to comprehension, but the thought process reflected in the Spanish language also differs from that of the English speaker. As Sleeter et al. (1994) remind us:

The syntax of the Spanish language is broad, open, and free in structure. The English language is restrictive and economic in word usage because the Anglo thought is different from the Hispanic thought. To an Anglo who does not understand this a Hispanic student might appear to talk around a point imprecisely; conversely, to a Hispanic student an Anglo might appear to speak too bluntly and even rudely, and to move through ideas with excessive speed. (p. 151)

This linguistic and cultural incompatibility can create a barrier between students and teachers that makes it impossible for students to feel comfortable sharing their experiences, and this in turn can cause them to withdraw from class participation. A critical educator must be aware of each of her/his students' background, language, and culture in order to use these factors for the benefit each individual's education. Critical pedagogy affirms the validity of all students' voices as valuable tools for understanding the world and shaping knowledge.

Social Class

Social class is not merely an economic construct, it also shapes the values and attitudes that define the ways in which knowledge are given and received. The values of

the dominant class determine how an individual must behave in order to be considered educated in any given society. In our society, for example, an educated person is always expected to maintain control over her/his emotions and actions. I am reminded of Jane Roland Martin's (1998) description of the Platonic ideal of an educated person: "Passions [are considered] to be unruly and untrustworthy, an ideal of self-discipline and self-government keeps feelings and emotions under tight control" (p. 201). To appear emotional, passionate, and loud is considered the mark of a subordinate, uneducated social group. Although these rules are never overtly stated, they are reinforced by a social system that rewards stoic calm and emotional detachment. This social imperative can create a classroom environment in which it is deemed inappropriate to express one's feelings and beliefs. Bell hooks (1994) writes:

If one was not from a privileged class group, adopting a demeanor similar to that of the group could help one to advance. It is still necessary for the student to assimilate bourgeois values in order to be deemed acceptable.... Students are often silenced by means of their acceptance of class values that teach them to maintain order at all costs. (pp. 178-179)

When the expression of personal experience is welcomed into the traditional classroom, it is the experience of the dominant class that dominates the discourse. In our society, this is what bell hooks (1994) refers to as the "materially privileged class experience" (p. 181), or that of the middle-bourgeois and upper class groups. To avoid feeling like outsiders, students from other class backgrounds may choose to remain silent, or to adopt a demeanor that will help them assimilate into the privileged class group. In such cases, students from non-privileged groups will continue to receive irrelevant

information, because they cannot use their previous life experience to create meaning from the new knowledge they receive. What is worse, some students may feel unable to endure such an environment at all, because the gap between what is expected of them and the reality of who they are seems too wide to bridge. Critical Pedagogy rejects the notion that students from subordinate cultural groups must give up their native values in order to attain an education.

To consider the other side of this equation, students from privileged groups may see loud and passionate discussions as rude and threatening, and thus they may be silenced by the relative tumult of an experiential classroom. The job of the critical educator is to help all students find their own safe space in the classroom, in which they may participate and learn. Such spaces can be created with small group discussions, or through regular journal entries in which students can reflect on class assignments and state their opinions without feeling threatened by any group, or expected to assimilate unfamiliar class values. Critical Pedagogy creates a classroom environment where class differences are used constructively, a space of interaction where students exist primarily as human beings, and their differences are accepted, valued and encouraged.

Gender

We live in a society that is ruled by a patriarchal ideology. In her article *The Culture of Separate Desks* (1994), Elizabeth Dodson Gray quotes Peter Berger and Thomas Luckmann, who wrote, “men have been the chief actors as well as the chief interpreters of the public life we call culture” (p. 162). This social reality has traditionally silenced the voices and devalued the experiences of women in our culture. In an article

entitled *In the Beginning They Are Babies* (2003), Angela Phillips describes how at an early age, boys begin a process of emotional separation from their mothers and from all that is perceived to be female, in order to be socialized as males. This ideal of independence and emotional separateness is what psychologists and social theorists have traditionally used as the standard to define the positive characteristics of individuality, autonomy, and maturity. Girls do not typically go through this separation process, because they are expected to maintain a constant relationship with their mothers, who are also female. As a result, girls tend to grow up with a greater sense of relationship and social connection, as opposed to the male ideal of individuation and autonomy. Because a patriarchal society values the masculine over the feminine, independence and emotional separateness have become central values of our dominant culture, while characteristics that facilitate relationship and connection are seen as belonging to the female world, and are therefore considered subordinate.

Applied to classroom practice, the belief that emotional separateness is more valuable than emotional connection prevents students from sharing their personal experiences as an integral part of their formal education. This means that in order to be educated, female students are expected to abandon the way they traditionally create meaning and understand the world. On the other hand, male students are often silenced by an environment that encourages the sharing of experience, because if they choose to share, they may be considered as adopting the demeanor of the weaker group. A truly transformative pedagogy must be based on an educational framework that eliminates such gender hierarchies. The classroom must become a place where students of both

genders feel comfortable about sharing their experiences, and thus can use them to learn from one another. Here again, small group discussions and reflective journal entries may help to encourage this type of experiential growth.

The Issue of Identity

There are some who question the validity of using students' personal experience to help them develop critical awareness. Post-modernists would deny the value of personal experience as a source of social justice in education, because experience is socially constructed, and therefore ultimately under the control of those in power. However, Critical Pedagogy is also concerned with questioning the relationship between experience and culture, and examining how experience shapes individual identity. Maalouf (2000) believes that experience shapes what he refers to as "allegiances" (p. 2), and that each allegiance is constructed from a collection of related experiences. For example, positive experiences within one's culture, religion, social class, or gender can create a sense of belonging and pride, which enforces an individual's allegiance to the group or subgroup in question. Conversely, negative experiences may cause an individual to reject any of these social groups.

Such allegiances are complex and multilayered, and can complement or contradict each other over time, because characteristics of race, gender, and social class define interrelated groups. In any individual, one allegiance may come to dominate others, thus creating internal hierarchies that define one's identity, but change over time as new experiences shift the focus of allegiance. We are constantly abandoning old definitions of our "self" and elaborating new ones, each with their own set of rules and behaviors.

The main aim of Critical Pedagogy in this regard is to help students recognize the existence of their varying allegiances, and how they are influenced by dominant ideologies in our culture. These allegiances are then analyzed to reveal an assortment of unrecognized biases which may perpetuate racism, sexism, and/or social class inequalities. In other words, this process invites students to notice how their allegiances are influenced and shaped by the larger culture in which they live, and how they themselves may have acted as agents of social oppression. Central to this work is the belief that when individuals become aware of how their allegiances perpetuate oppression, they will develop a critical consciousness which can help them to discuss systems of domination and notions of justice.

This process is what Critical Pedagogues call “helping students find their voices.”

As Peter McLaren writes:

Voice refers to the cultural grammar and background knowledge that individuals use to interpret and articulate experience. . . . A student’s voice is not a reflection of the world as much as it is a constitutive force that both mediates and shapes reality within historically constructed practices and relationships of power. Each individual voice is shaped by its owner’s particular cultural history and prior experiences. (McLaren, 1998, p. 220)

Bell hooks (1994) argues that if we intend to teach in ways that empower students, we must remain constantly involved in the process of self-actualization. By this she means that before all else, we as educators should indulge in a self-reflective analysis of our own biases, and a search for our own voices. Nieto (2003) concurs, stating that “it is only when teachers recognize their own forgotten, repressed, or ignored heritages, their own experiences, and family histories that they can begin to understand the students they

teach” (p. 25). Teachers can then refer to their own experience as they guide students through the process of finding their voices, searching for self-actualization, and inventing their own ways of challenging social inequalities. This kind of preparation also helps educators release some of their power in the classroom to their students, and take the necessary risks to transform curricula into student-centered environment. Hooks (1994) refers to this process of self-actualization as “healing,” as students learn to recognize the connections between the issues they are studying and their own life experiences, and to use this knowledge as an agency for change.

I do not mean to imply that the process of becoming aware and finding one’s voice is simple, peaceful, or quiet. On the contrary, a Critical Pedagogical classroom is liable to become loud and conflictive, as students fill the space and time with relevant forms of exchange and discussion. Awareness evolves out of dialogue with others who hold divergent views, which helps students to understand that there are multiple ways of looking at the same problem. Discussions of this kind should always be encouraged, as long as they adhere to guidelines designed to assure that the dignity of every person present will be preserved

Peter McLaren (2003) describes a Critical Pedagogy that resonates with the Jewish concept of *Tikkun*, which by his definition means “to heal, repair, and transform the world. It provides historical, cultural, and ethical direction for those in education who still dare to hope” (p. 186). McLaren believes that academics should serve as tools to help students understand the world, to promote self and social empowerment, to develop critical awareness, and to challenge existing social inequalities. This should entail a

Critical Pedagogy that “empowers the powerless and transforms existing social inequalities and injustices” (pp. 163-164). I wish to argue that educating students is a political act that can serve either to maintain the status quo, perpetuating social inequalities in a world seen as fixed and unchangeable, or to challenge the status quo by encouraging critical thinking. McLaren (1998) voices the same opinion when he refers to schools as “sites of *both* domination and transformation” (p. 172). A critical educational model challenges all that we take for granted or consider ordinary and fixed, by inviting us to see it as strange and unfamiliar. In this sense, Critical Pedagogy is concerned with teaching future educators that schools can provide a locus for resistance and social transformation, moving from the present and how it is, toward the future and how it should be.

Limitations of Critical Pedagogy

I have been teaching for three years at both the undergraduate and graduate levels, and I feel that the Critical Pedagogical practices I have employed have helped my students become more aware of what David Purpel (1999) calls “the unnecessary human suffering” (p. 22) and the need to create social change. Nevertheless, I still hear despair in their voices when they speak of the future, because they doubt their power to change existing systems of domination. As future educators, they desire a different kind of world for their students, but, as if a huge wall stood before their eyes, they could not see the other side, a better side. They seem incapable of imagining what that world should look like.

This is what made me realize that my application of Critical Educational Theory, as relevant as it may be to my analysis, neglects some important elements that I consider indispensable for the empowerment of students to create social change. Reflecting on my own practice of Critical Pedagogy, I decided that although I had encouraged the development of a safe environment for my students to share their experiences, question their world, and find their own voices, I had failed to take into account the influences of their previous schooling, which was limited to what Paulo Freire (2000) calls the banking concept of education:

[In this method] the teacher issues communiqués and makes deposits which the students patiently receive, memorize, and repeat . . . The more students work at storing the deposits entrusted to them, the less they develop the critical consciousness which would result from their intervention in the world as transformers of that world. (pp. 73-74)

Over the course of time, this approach can weaken students' faith in their power to shape their own experience of the world, which leaves them at the mercy of those who tell them how to lead their lives. They thus become separated from what somatic theorists call their "somatic sensibility."

Thomas Hanna refers to *soma* as "the body as perceived from within by first-person perception. . . . It is a matter of looking at oneself from the inside out, where one is aware of feelings, movements and intention, rather than looking objectively from the outside in" (Green, 2001, p. 2). The *soma* represents a subjective view of our thoughts, feelings, and emotions—in other words, a first-person perspective. Somatic Theory focuses on embodied experiences such as sensation, movement and intention, which

carry memories pertaining to love, joy, passion, compassion, and sorrow. I would suggest that our understanding of the world is not restricted to our minds, but also deeply embedded in our bodies, in the form of experiential memories. If we take a minute to consider, we realize that what triggers memory is not necessarily language or thought, but sometimes a smell, a feeling or a color. A disembodied experience is emotionless; it can be recalled by our memory, but this recollection does not arouse the feelings that accompanied the experience when it entered our lives. Somatic sensibility allows us to recall the emotions connected with our experiences, and this gives us a more visceral understanding of how they function in our lives.

Though Somatic Theorists traditionally study embodied experiences, some have shifted their focus to a wider socio-political realm. Jill Green (2001) refers to this area of study as “Social Somatic Theory . . . a field that addresses how our bodies and somatic experiences are inscribed by the culture in which we live. . . . It is social and somatic because it addresses social-political issues related to somatic theory and practices” (p. 2). This is what cultural critic Sherry Shapiro (1999) calls “embodiment . . . a field that studies the process in which the body becomes a vehicle for socialization” (p. 24). Peter McLaren (1998) likewise describes his concept of “enfleshment . . . [where we] can move beyond representation to participation, by recognizing meaning outside a language of linguistic signification alone, that is, by recognizing the body as the primary site of meaning and resistance”(p. 244).

As I have studied Social Somatic Theory, I have found that it shares several commonalities with Critical Pedagogy. The first is a movement from personal experience

toward cultural influence, or “the general shift that moves outward from micro to macro dimensions and from self to society” (Green, 2001, p. 3). Both of these theoretical approaches also concur that Western culture has created a split between body and mind, favoring the mind over the body, which is seen as no more than a machine to be objectified and separated from our experience. Critical Educational Theory, as a liberating pedagogy, stresses the importance of using students’ experience as an important curricular tool to help them understand how their identities are shaped by the culture in which they live, and develop a critical consciousness. However, this pedagogical practice perpetuates the cultural imperative of body/mind separation, by failing to recognize the body as the site where identity is shaped, manipulated, and marked by culture. Sherry Shapiro (2002) writes:

. . . an excision of the flesh from educational discourse and practice means an excision of student experiences, emotions, passions, compassions, and meaning making from the ground of reason . . . It [the body] is a place of engagement with life’s pains, aches, desires, and ecstasies—a place of connections and relationships. (p. 343)

As I have described above, students come into our classrooms already accustomed to the banking approach to education, in which their individual ways of interpreting the world are disregarded and the learning process is detached from personal experience, which hinders the development of critical awareness. Critical Pedagogy improves students’ lives by encouraging them to use their experience as a path to creating meaning and understanding their identities, but it disregards another fundamental aspect of the learning process. As Sherry Shapiro writes, “to [completely] understand this process we

must also ask how the body absorbs and constructs particular ways of being as a vehicle for socialization” (Shapiro, 1999, p. 19). Our physical memories are marked by the culture in which we live, and our bodies serve as vehicles to interpret our experiences. Excluding the body from critical discourse thus amounts to objectification of cultural experience. Shapiro (1999) describes the two ways in which the body absorbs or constructs ways of being:

One is direct somatic learning in which the body becomes the receptor for behavioral influences addressed through language and physical environment and the second process is indirect somatic, noted, for example, in educational institutions, when the student learns acceptable ways of being particular to his or her culture by taking on roles. (Keleman, cited in Shapiro, 1999, p. 26)

While Critical Pedagogy may help to develop students’ critical awareness, it falls short of empowering them to create social change, because it ignores the body as a primary site for shaping knowledge. Instead it continues to weaken the vital connection between cultural experience and “body knowledge,” or what Don Johnson (1992) calls “body authority” (p. 112).

I describe *body authority* as the visceral feeling that helps us distinguish what is fair from what is unfair. Disconnection from this vital inner resource leaves us feeling insecure and doubtful of our capacity to make decisions, and we are more liable to let others decide for us. Accustomed to learning what is fair from unfair from outside sources, we tend to assume that change is beyond our realm of capability, and our capacity to see ourselves as agents of change thus becomes limited or incomplete. We are reduced to merely feeling sorry for those affected by injustice, because we feel powerless

to help them. What is worse, this sense of disconnection atrophies our ability even to imagine change. My students often say: “Yes, it’s terrible, but what can we do?,” or “That’s just the way things are,” or “In a perfect world things could be different, but this isn’t Utopia.”

Here lies my biggest challenge as an educator: my students’ lack of imagination. While they may be sharing their experiences, analyzing them to determine how they are socially constructed, linking them to issues of oppression, and understanding the need for change, they still feel powerless to create these much-needed changes, because they cannot imagine a better future. I believe the explanation is that the disconnection these students have felt for years between their experience and their body authority has shattered their belief in their own power to create change for themselves and others. If one cannot even imagine what a different world would look like, one cannot believe in one’s own capacity to create it. Maxine Greene (1995) writes:

It may be, however, that a general inability to conceive a better order of things can give rise to a resignation that paralyzes and prevents people from acting to bring about change . . . it may be the recovery of imagination that lessens the social paralysis we see around us and restores the sense that something can be done in the name of what is decent and humane. (pp.19, 35)

Greene (1995) defines the imaginative capacity as the “ability to look at things as if they could be otherwise” (p. 19). This is the skill displayed by the interior designer who walks into an empty room and creates a mental image of how s/he wants it to look, then works towards the realization of that image. We must be capable of imagining things as we want them to be before we can see ourselves as agents of change. This realization led

me to the first of three decisive concepts that have formed the foundation of my personal philosophy of education: *Imagination illuminates the path toward new possibilities.*

No matter how much we as progressive educators may intend to develop our students' social awareness and empower them to create change, if they cannot imagine the possibility of change, they will only learn to feel pity for those in need of aid. Pity is the realization of others' suffering, without the intention to alleviate their distress because it misses the connection that lies within the pain and our power to relieve it. In *A Spirituality Named Compassion*, Mathew Fox (1999) argues that pity separates us from those who are suffering by making them seem weak and inferior. The hegemonic forces of oppression can actually depend upon our sense of pity to help maintain the status quo, because it allows us to let others decide how we should help those who are powerless in our society. This then is the second fundamental precept of my educational philosophy: *Pity is the product of a lack of imagination.*

After reaching the two fundamental conclusions stated above, that pity is the product of a lack of imagination, and that imagination illuminates the path toward possibility, I became concerned that developing the imagination of my students might not be enough—they must also feel the desire to build the world that they imagine. Greene (1995) asserts that “the role of imagination is not to resolve, not to point the way, not to improve. It is to awaken, to disclose the ordinarily unseen, unheard, and unexpected” (p. 28). Looking back at my own experiences, I've found the ones that have touched me most deeply and encouraged me to take the path towards change are precisely those in which I found commonalities between my own suffering and that of others. They helped

me to understand that the pain of all who suffer from discrimination, prejudice, sexism, linguism, and all the other “isms” stems from the same root as my own personal suffering.

Zigmund Bauman once said that “to understand is to rediscover you in me” (cited in Pinar, 1994, p. 621), and this rediscovery embraces the notion that all people are equally human and deserving of respect. Freire (2000) calls this “true solidarity . . . found in the plenitude of the act of love, in its existentiality, in its praxis” (p. 50). Maxine Greene (1995) calls it empathy, and Mathew Fox (1999) refers to it as compassion, the term with which I feel most comfortable. He states that compassion is “a letting go of ego, of problems, of difficulties, in order to remember the common base that makes another’s suffering mine and in order to imagine a relief of that suffering” (p. 4).

Recalling Thomas Mann’s novel *Confessions of Felix Krull*, Maxine Greene (1995) describes the difference between seeing other people as small or seeing them as big. When we see people as small, we are looking at them from a detached-distant perspective. They seem weak and inferior, and we do not feel moved to alleviate their pain. On the other hand, when we see people as big, we see them in their full humanity and worth. To see people as small is to see them with pity, but to see them as big is to see them with compassion. As Sherry Shapiro (2002) writes, “[Compassion] is a counterpoint to any human practice led by a notion of sub humanity that dominates, effaces, and degrades others” (p. 346).

By this road I came to my third fundamental conclusion: *Compassion gives us the desire to embark on the path towards change*. Awakening my students’ imagination will

teach them how to dream the world as a better place, but without compassion for others, they will never feel the need or the possibility of making these dreams come true. The combination of imagination and compassion is what gives us our power to create and recreate our world and our culture, for the better of us all.

Infusing Aesthetic Experiences

I have briefly explained the importance of releasing students' imagination, to help them see the path towards possibility and develop the necessary compassion to create social change. Now I will argue for the infusion of particular types of experience into our Critical Pedagogical practices, as a way of facilitating this progression. The goal is to bring the body and its language into the classroom, along with our students' minds. For the purpose of this thesis I will concentrate on aesthetic experience, because it links my own work as an artist with my concern for social justice. My goal is the introduction of aesthetic experiences into Critical Pedagogical practice.

Maxine Greene (2001) defines aesthetics as follows:

. . . a particular field in philosophy, one concerned about perception, sensation, imagination, and how they relate to knowing, understanding, and feeling about the world . . . it is an adjective used to describe or single out the mode of experiences brought into being by encounters with works of art. (p. 5)

According to Herbert Marcuse (1969), the term has “a dual connotation pertaining to the senses and pertaining to the arts” (p. 24). However, an aesthetic experience can also be defined as the relationship created between an observer and a specific artwork, and the way that work of art affects the observer in light of his/her background and experience.

Susan Stinson (1985) discusses three different levels of aesthetic experience, and thus demonstrates why we must be careful with our definitions, because not all aesthetic experiences lead to social empowerment. Stinson's first dimension is limited to appreciation of the particular beauty of the artwork. According to her analysis, the observer is not moved at this level of perception, because the artwork bears no connection with his/her previous experience. For this reason, the first level of aesthetic experience cannot release the imagination or engender compassion in the observer. This is analogous to the banking method of education, in which students are limited to storing new information without applying critical thought or interpretation.

Stinson's second level of experience concerns the way in which the artwork moves the observer. The effect the work will have in this dimension depends upon the life experiences that the observer brings to the encounter, and thus upon the degree to which the observer can relate to the piece in question. Some will describe this level of experience as a transcendental moment in which they discover their connection to their own body authority, and this kind of primal reconnection can give the observer the strength and security to create positive change in her/his life. I have had this experience during the course of a past research project, when I studied the ways in which mambo dancers, myself included, learned to develop the body authority necessary to move towards positive change in their lives. The narratives of the dancers interviewed revealed how they had created meaning out of the transcendental moment in which they "found mambo" for the first time, and how this moment shaped the rest of their lives. The dancers learned to utilize mambo as an embodiment of passion and commitment to self-

actualization, and some found the strength to stop drinking, terminate bad relationships, or lose unwanted weight. Susan Stinson (1985) describes this kind of transcendental experience as a “source of knowledge of God and a major source of meaning in life” (p. 77).

Though I would not wish to devalue the positive effects that can be felt at this level of aesthetic experience, the particular type of encounter I am seeking would engender concern about social inequalities, and desire for social change. Aesthetic experience at Stinson’s second level can release the imagination and allow the observer to see a path towards a better life, but it does not encourage movement beyond the personal, into the social realm. It fails to engender compassion, because compassion “involves the relief of the pain of others . . . it is political as well as personal” (Fox, 1999, pp. 21, 109). For this reason, I agree with Stinson’s (1985) concern that “transcendent experiences may too often simply refresh us—like a mini vacation—making us better able to tolerate some things which we ought not tolerate” (p. 78). Without compassion, social enlightenment will have no relevant effect. As Mathew Fox has written, “Compassion leads to work” (Fox, 1999, p. 8).

Stinson (1985) describes a third level of aesthetic experience, which strengthens the relationship between the observer and the world around her/him. The work of art becomes a vehicle for appreciating other people’s suffering, and connecting it with our own. She writes, [this third dimension] “emphasizes the relationship of the observer /participant to the world; the aesthetic object is the lens through which we see/make sense of the reality of being a person in the world” (p. 78).

She continues quoting Maxine Greene saying that,

certain works of art are considered great primarily because of their capacity to bring us into conscious engagement with the world, into self reflectiveness and critical awareness, and to a sense of moral agency, and it is these works of art which ought to be central in curriculum. (Greene cited in Stinson, 1985, p.79)

It is my belief that in order to create an environment in which students can reach this level of aesthetic experience, we must expose them to participatory encounters with works of art that possess certain qualities that encourage sharing of experience, and recognition of common sources of oppression. The encounters must involve the body as a mediator of experience, and employ its language to explore the work of art. This is the only way in which we can truly appreciate the human emotions that are represented in the work. This process helps students to achieve what Maxine Greene (2001) refers to as “uncoupling” (p. 69), or using our imagination and our own personal history to help us *feel* what the artist means, rather than simply seeing or hearing it. As Greene (2001) describes, “We are convinced, indeed we have learned, that experiences with making kinetic patterns in dance enables persons to perceive such patterns on stage, not only with their eyes and minds but with their muscles and nerves” (p. 45). Encounters of this kind have an extraordinary capacity to release the imagination and engender compassion, because they engage our personal experience at the bodily level. This reconnects us to our body authority, which is the source of our power to create and recreate the world in which we live.

Creating this type of aesthetic experience for our students is of utmost importance if we as critical educators intend to empower them to commit to social justice. On the one

hand this process helps students to understand how oppression affects them personally, and this will allow them to initiate a healing process, or what bell hooks (1994) calls “self actualization” (p. 15). On the other hand, students can use this critical lens to see how, consciously or unconsciously, they have oppressed others, and thus to discover the commonalities in all human suffering. The compassion they learn through this kind of encounter will eventually empower them to create social change. “They will not have redeemed the crimes against humanity, but they will have become free to stop and to prevent their commencement” (Marcuse, 1969, p. 25).

Conclusion

Critical Pedagogy offers crucial tools to help students develop their awareness of human oppression and to recognize the ways in which existing social structures reinforce it. However, this educational approach overlooks the body as a mediator for interpreting personal experience and this weakens its effectiveness as a method of empowering students to initiate change. My appreciation of this missing dimension in current educational theory has led me to trace the important connection between imagination, compassion, and social empowerment. Through my work in the arts, I have been able to witness the immense power of aesthetic experience in releasing the imagination and developing compassion, which I see as necessary complements to existing critical pedagogical practices.

The intersection between Critical Pedagogy and Aesthetics is where I discovered the foundations of an alternative educational theory, which I call *Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy*. By exposing students to participatory encounters with artworks that encourage

sharing of experiences and the recognition of common sources of oppression, educators can help them develop the critical awareness and social empowerment they will need if they are ever to enable social justice. These encounters must rely on the body as a mediator for understanding the ways in which culture, gender, and social class can shape identity, and how the social identities thus created can perpetuate systems of domination. Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy infuses aesthetic experience into critical educational practices in order to enhance capacities that are indispensable for students' social empowerment: the ability to imagine change, and the compassion to create it.

In the next chapter, I will present an overview of my research project, which aimed to determine whether the critical aesthetic practices I employed in an undergraduate course in Social Foundations of Education succeeded in enhancing students' social awareness, and increasing their social empowerment. I will describe the Lincoln Center Institute's Aesthetic Education Program and its "Teacher Education Collaborative." The main goal of this program is to work in partnership with pre-K-12 educators and faculty from teacher education programs to develop experiential study units focusing on works of art (including dance, music, theater, visual arts, and architecture), which will provide students with aesthetic experiences. The knowledge gained from my involvement with this program, in conjunction with my Critical Pedagogical practice, has helped give shape to the pedagogical model I am proposing. The following chapter illustrates Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy as it would appear in action, and analyzes its potential for enhancing critical awareness and empowering

students to pursue social change through a process that incorporates the body, the imagination, and human compassion.

CHAPTER III

CRITICAL AESTHETIC PEDAGOGY: A NARRATIVE STUDY

In the first chapter of this dissertation I described my personal experiences, and how they shaped my identity, informed my decision to become a teacher and teacher educator, and made me a passionate seeker of transformative/alternative pedagogies that empower students to create social change. I also discussed how, in the course of my work in the arts, I have witnessed firsthand the immense power of aesthetic experience in enabling individuals to create meaningful change.

The second chapter provided a framework upon which to develop my theoretical analysis. Here I described the fusion of two philosophical theories into an alternative educational model, which I have called *Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy*. This model is based on the theory of Critical Pedagogy, with its emphasis on valuing students' voices and experiences in the classroom, enabling critical awareness, and challenging existing forms of schooling. After analyzing these fundamental elements of Critical Pedagogy, I discussed how, despite its relevance to my educational philosophy, this theory overlooks the importance of the body as a mediator for interpreting personal experience, which weakens its effectiveness in empowering students to initiate change. I then argued for the infusion of aesthetic experience into critical educational practices as a way of incorporating the crucial elements that I found absent in Critical Pedagogy. The

intersection of Critical Pedagogy and Aesthetics is where I discovered the foundation for my educational theory: *Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy*.

The object of *Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy* is to infuse aesthetic experience into critical educational practices in order to enhance capacities that are indispensable for students' social empowerment—the ability to imagine change, and the compassion to create it. By exposing students to participatory encounters with artworks that possess certain qualities that encourage sharing of experiences and the recognition of common sources of oppression, educators can create a sense of social empowerment that will help students to enable social justice. These encounters must rely on the body and its language as mediators for understanding the ways in which personal experiences of culture, gender, and social class can shape one's identity, and how this social identity can perpetuate systems of domination. This embodied process enables students to recall the feelings that have accompanied their own oppressive experiences, and this gives them a more visceral understanding of how these experiences continue to function in their lives. Through this process, students are encouraged to alleviate the oppression that afflicts others in society.

This third chapter will further explore the critical aesthetic process through a description of my involvement with the Lincoln Center Institute's *Aesthetic Education Program*, whose main goal is to “integrate aesthetic education into teacher preparation programs in order to ensure that the arts and imagination will assume an essential place in the education of children” (Holzer, 2004, p. 133). The experience I gained through my involvement with this program, combined with my previous knowledge of critical

pedagogical practices, has given shape to my theory of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy. It also provided opportunities that were critical to the development of this method: I was able to choose from among the LCI's large repertoire those artworks that seemed relevant to the type of aesthetic experience I hoped my students would embrace, and I participated in workshop treatments of the works I had selected.

The Lincoln Center Institute and the Aesthetic Education Program

For more than twenty-seven years the Lincoln Center Institute (LCI) has been developing a unique approach to education, which challenges students to expand their knowledge of the world through study of the arts. Working in partnership with educators and teacher education programs for pre-K through grade twelve, the Institute develops experiential studies focusing on specific artworks, including dance, music, theater, visual arts, and architecture. The LCI's approach is based on the ideals of Mark Schubart, the Institute's founder, and the writings of Maxine Greene, the Institute's Philosopher-in-Residence. Greene's work is based in turn on the writings of pragmatist John Dewey and several other existential philosophers. Greene's philosophy maintains that "understanding a work of art takes place in the encounter between the viewer and the artwork, and neither in the work itself nor solely in the perceiver" (Holzer, 2004, p. 132). From this point of reference, the Institute has developed its unique practice of aesthetic education:

Aesthetic education . . . is the intentional undertaking designed to nurture appreciative, reflective, cultural, participatory engagements with the arts by enabling learners to notice what there is to be noticed, and to lend works of art their lives in such way that they can achieve them as variously meaningful. (Greene, 2001, p. 6)

Maxine Greene has inspired teachers to think in new ways about the aesthetic experiences offered at the Institute. She urges educators to transform their own learning experiences into innovative classroom teaching practices that recognize perception, cognition, affect, and imagination as additional ways of knowing.

The institute's practice of Aesthetic Education is developed into carefully planned observations and analyses of particular works which are connected to participatory activities that highlight the possible relationship between an artist's choices and the viewer's aesthetic response. (Holzer, 2004, pp. 2-3)

Participants in these activities are encouraged to integrate prior life experiences into their new understanding of a particular artwork, and often, of their world.

My belief is that we can increase our effectiveness as educators by exposing students to artworks possessing certain qualities that encourage the sharing of experience, and recognition of common sources of oppression. To be effective, these participatory encounters must involve the body as a mediator of experience, and employ its emotional language to explore the work of art. This is the only way that we can truly appreciate the human emotions that are represented in the work. It is during such encounters that individuals begin connecting their own experiences to those represented by the artist, and exploring the common bonds of suffering that they share with others. This process can help students to develop a capacity for what Fox (1999) describes as "compassion: a letting go of ego, of problems, of difficulties, in order to remember the common base that makes another's suffering mine and in order to imagine a relief of that suffering" (p. 4). When students can truly feel the bonds they share with other victims of oppression, they

understand the urgency of alleviating the suffering it causes, and begin to create the necessary social change.

The LCI offers a vital spark to the aesthetic process described above. Each artwork in their repertoire is explored through workshop activities designed by a “teaching artist” to help participants understand the creative process, and connect the artist’s perceptions to their own life experiences. In so doing, “the teaching artist has involved [the participants] in observation, making choices, listening well, and ‘getting into someone else’s shoes.’ They have worked with them on empathy” (Holzer, 2004, p. 138). The hope is that, in accordance with Maxine Greene’s (2001) philosophy, these workshops will help participants to “uncouple,” (p. 69) or to use their own imagination and personal history to *feel* what the artist means, rather than simply seeing or hearing it. With no limitations imposed in the form of “right” or “wrong” answers, this process develops each individual’s ability to think in different ways. As a result, unexpected connections are made, alternative viewpoints are considered, and doors to new and unimagined worlds are opened.

This process is neither teaching “art for the art sake” nor using the arts as a vehicle for teaching other subjects, but rather a third process that incorporates some of the elements of both, involving perception, cognition, affect, and the imagination. (Holzer, 2005, p. 132)

For the development of its Aesthetic Education Program (AEP), the Lincoln Center Institute has created three different types of partnership with New York City educational institutions: partnership schools, focus schools, and Teacher Education Collaborative. In the partnership schools, K-12 teachers are teamed up with performers

and specialists in the visual arts. Participation in the AEP is open to all teachers and administrators at the partnership schools, but none are required to join. The focus schools have aesthetic education ingrained into the very fabric of their curriculum, and every teacher and pupil is involved in the process. The Teacher Education Collaborative works directly with faculty and students from teacher education programs to develop effective aesthetic education practices for the classroom, and places student teachers in LCI focus and Partnership schools.

As a faculty member in the Elementary and Early Childhood Education Department at one of the City University of New York (CUNY) branches, I was involved in the Teacher Education Collaborative for two consecutive years. It was during this time that I became interested in exploring the use of artworks in the LCI repertoire to expose students to a particular type of aesthetic experience, which I hoped would develop their compassion, release their imagination, and help them envision the possibility of creating social change. Susan Stinson (1985) believes that this type of “third-dimension” aesthetic experience “emphasizes the relationship of the observer/participant to the world; the aesthetic object is the lens through which we see/make sense of the reality of being a person in the world” (p. 78). Stinson also refers to Maxine Greene’s belief

that certain works of art are considered great primarily because of their capacity to bring us into conscious engagement with the world, into self reflectiveness and critical awareness, and to sense moral agency, and that it is these works of arts which ought to be central in curriculum (Greene cited in Stinson, 1985, p.79).

Foundations of My Research

Aesthetic experience differs in its effect depending upon what each observer brings to the encounter, and I understand that my own interest in this educational approach stems from the feelings of social inadequacy that haunted me during my formative years. Because I was raised in a culture that separates people according to family wealth, and because I felt alienated from this environment, I found myself searching for a space of social acceptance, which I finally discovered in dance classes. The reason for this, as I later understood, was that the dance classroom provided the only social environment in which I felt unquestionably accepted, regardless of my background. The dance floor was the first space where I encountered equality and social empowerment, because there nobody cared where I came from or who I was, as long as I had come to dance. This welcoming atmosphere gave me a new sense of security, and helped me develop the strength to create changes in my life. I believe that the LCI offers students a similar aesthetic experience, which can provide them with the same feeling of social empowerment that I discovered through the arts.

In the next part of this chapter I will present an overview of the research that I carried out to explore whether aesthetic education practices, such as those used by the LCI, can complement or enhance Critical Pedagogy in the development of students' social empowerment. I will also explain my reasons for choosing the analytical format of a narrative study, and justify the validity of this method for achieving my purpose. And as a starting point, I will describe the first year of my own involvement with the LCI as an observer and a participant.

My First Year at the Lincoln Center Institute

During this period I was exposed to numerous artworks from the LCI repertoire, and I participated in the accompanying workshops. Faculty involved in the collaborative joined in discussions of the assigned readings to help us better understand the aesthetic process. The LCI refers to these readings as contextual materials, and they included book chapters and articles by Maxine Greene (2000) and (2001); “What Happened to Imagination in Kieran Egan & Dan Nataner’s *Imagination and Education* (1988), as well as Phillip Jackson’s “Experience and the Arts” in *John Dewey and the Lesson of Art* (1998). For each artwork we also read and discussed its “*Windows on the Work*” a booklet published by the LCI for each artwork in their repertoire. Each of these collections comprised “an anthology (including interviews with the artists) and images designed to provide educators, librarians, artists, and teaching artists with contextual information pertaining to each of the focus works presented by LCI” (Lincoln Center Institute, 2003).

At the end of my first year at LCI, I was expected to choose one of the artworks we had studied to present to my own students, and meet with an assigned teaching artist for a workshop planning session. Two important elements of the aesthetic education process were developed at this meeting. The first of these was what the LCI refers to as the “line of inquiry,” which is found at the intersection between the artwork, the course content, and the teacher’s personal interest:

Weaving together questions, noticings, personal and curriculum connections, and contextual materials... creates a line of inquiry that will lead to a unit of study that includes activities related both to the work of art and the teachers’ curriculum. (Holzer, 2003, p. 8)

Secondly, from this “line of inquiry” we developed the workshop activities that we would engage in with the students before and after they viewed the selected work of art. These elements will be described below in greater detail.

As my final project I designed two sessions of an undergraduate Social Foundations of Education course, integrating the study and performance of Anna Deavere Smith’s *Twilight: Los Angeles*, a documentary drama set in the violent aftermath of the 1992 Rodney King trial and verdict. I developed the syllabus for my course around the play’s controversial issues of race, gender, social class, ability, identity, compliance, discrimination, and privilege (see Appendix A). Assigned readings were selected from *The Institution of Education* (2003), edited by Shapiro, Harden, and Pennell. Students were expected to read the assigned articles before class, consider them in the light of their prior experiences as students and their future role as teachers, and come to class meetings prepared to discuss them.

My First Experiment in Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy

In the final section of this chapter I will explore the critical aesthetic process as it should appear in action. As a specific example, I will describe my own experience in applying critical pedagogical practices within the LCI’s Aesthetic Education Program, and examine whether this enabled the development of a deeper social awareness and a sense of social justice in my students.

The tool used to assess the ultimate success of my critical aesthetic process was my students’ final assignment. This consisted of a narrative paper in which the students were asked to reflect on the entire semester’s assigned readings and related class

discussions in the light of their own personal experiences, using the LCI performances and activities as a backdrop. I conducted a narrative analysis of my students' reflective papers, looking for recurring themes that indicated an enhanced critical awareness, and empowerment to pursue social change.

Why a Narrative Study?

According to Kohler (1993), narrative analysis addresses the ways in which protagonists interpret experience: "The purpose is to see how respondents impose order on the flow of experiences to make sense of events and actions in their lives" (p. 2). My goal in this analysis was to investigate whether aesthetic experiences can be used to complement critical pedagogical practices in developing students' capacity for compassion and imagination, two qualities that can enable the pursuit of social justice. This educational process can easily be tracked by studying students' individual interpretations of specific aesthetic experiences, the ways in which they create meaning from them, and how they plan to utilize their new knowledge when confronted with similar situations. Evidence of this developmental process is precisely what I sought in their narrative papers. My instructions were as follows:

Throughout the semester we have talked about different issues related to education. In this paper, you should use the LCI's performance and activities as a backdrop to your reflections on the entire semester's assigned readings, along with their respective class discussions and your related personal experiences. In your paper you must use at least 7 references from the course assigned readings. This paper should be typed and double-spaced. Some of you may choose to emphasize some aspect of the performance, and this is acceptable as long as you provide a smooth transition between topics, issues, and concerns. Most importantly, your paper should be insightful, well written, and grammatically correct.

I purposely constructed this assignment to be as open-ended as possible, and I also withheld one piece of information from the students—I didn't mention what I would be looking for in their narratives.

I made this choice for several reasons. Firstly, if I told my students what I would be watching for, they would likely make sure it appeared in their papers. This would cloud the effects of my research, and I would not be able to determine whether my educational intervention had produced a direct effect on their social consciousness. By extension, I would not be able to determine whether this type of aesthetic education program enhances or complements critical pedagogical practices. Secondly, I hoped that this assignment would allow students the freedom to incorporate our theoretical class material, the effects of seeing the play, and their own prior life experiences, to begin developing their own personal philosophy of education. Thirdly, I believe that when individuals are allowed to speak freely about their experiences, the elements they consider most relevant and meaningful will naturally arise in their discussion. As Kohler (1993) writes,

Human agency and imagination [italics added] determine what gets included and excluded in narrativization, how events are plotted, and what they are supposed to mean. Individuals construct past events and actions in personal narratives to claim identities and construct lives. (p. 2)

I emphasized human agency and imagination in this quotation because these are elements that Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy aims to enhance, so as to empower students to create social change. Thus a narrative study can be a powerful tool for investigating whether a

combination of Critical Pedagogy and Aesthetic practices can increase students' social empowerment.

Establishing the Validity of My Research Methods

In conducting this research, I followed the protocols of the CUNY Committee for the Protection of Human Subject Institutional Review Board (IRB) (see Appendix B). As part of the IRB review process, I created a consent form for my students to sign, confirming their agreement to serve as participants in a research project (see Appendix C). This form clearly stated that all my students would have the opportunity to participate in the LCI Aesthetic Education Program regardless of their willingness to take part in my research, and that non-participation on their part would in no way affect either their final grade or their CUNY academic standing. The consent form explained the purpose of my research, withholding only the type of narrative I would be looking for in the final papers. It also stated that students would be free to withdraw from participation in the research project at any time. The total number of students in my two courses was 48, of whom 46 agreed to take part in the study and signed the IRB consent form.

I recognize that my position as both the researcher and the professor of the course, wielding the power to assign academic grades for the work completed, could put the validity of my research in doubt. Kohler (1993) would agree, as she has stated, "Meaning also shifts because it is constructed in a process of interaction . . . The story is being told to particular people; it might have taken a different form if someone else were the listener" (p. 11). However, my experience in educating future inner-city teachers has been that these students bring to the classroom high levels of ethics and honesty, and an

immense desire to create positive change in the lives of the children they will teach—they just don't know how to go about it. Here is where I hope that Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy can help, by opening new possibilities before them, and affirming their power to change the world.

The hypothesis I hope to prove through this research is that the critical pedagogical practices I employed, linking scholarly readings, academic discussions, critical thinking, and experiential knowledge, can develop students' social awareness, which is the first step in the process of social empowerment. In my educational model, the role of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy is to enhance a process that has already been initiated through critical pedagogical practices. Once the students' critical consciousness has been awakened through established critical pedagogical methods, they are led further into social empowerment through a process of aesthetics, which is intended to enhance their capacity for imagination and human compassion. In other words, the main purpose of this research is to investigate whether an educational focus on aesthetic experience can complement a method that has previously been proven to work — the critical pedagogical process.

Professional Development at LCI

During my first year at LCI, I was involved in what is known as an intensive “professional development” experience. This is a period “during which educators explore particular works of art in the Institute’s repertory and in exhibitions in the partnering museums, with the guidance of a team of teaching artists, after which many choose the works they want to study with their students in the coming year” (Holzer, 2003, p. 3).

These works are selected for their potential for exploration from multiple perspectives, or what Holzer calls their “meat and grit,” and the ease with which they can be incorporated into art education courses. For my entire first year at LCI, I took on the role that my future students would have in my classes. In this capacity I was exposed to a series of artworks, aesthetic workshops consisting of art-making explorations, and contextual materials related to each work that we studied. The LCI art-making workshops are intended to “become entry points into each individual’s transaction with the work of art. These transactions in turn lead to further insights about the work, shared collectively, and the generation of more questions to be explored” (Holzer, 2003, p. 3). Artists teaching the workshops draw on their own creative experience to recreate elements of the artistic process, in order to enhance the participants’ aesthetic development.

The contextual readings used in the program are “resource materials introduced to any exploration of a work of art so that teaching artists and educators can pursue questions arising from their initial exploration, and find out more about the context of a particular work” (Holzer, 2003, p. 4). One excellent source is the *Windows on the Work* series, a collection of background materials selected by the LCI focusing on each work of art in their repertoire.

After reviewing the contextual materials, workshop participants were presented with the selected work of art, which could be a photograph, painting, sculpture, or play. Then we finalized the workshop with a wrap-up of the whole experience, or what is referred to as “pulling back the curtains” of the AE process. Here we discussed various issues and questions pertaining to the artwork, as well as the aesthetic education

methodology behind the “line of inquiry” for the workshop. There were two aspects of this process that I found to be of particular interest. The first was the fact that the teaching artists never used their own work as a focus for instruction, in order to ensure that the importance of multiple perspectives was emphasized throughout the process, and that the teaching artist’s voice remained as one among many others. The second interesting aspect of the LCI method is that each work of art is viewed more than once, “so that participants can experience works in a deeper way and notice the difference in their perceptions over time” (Holzer, 2003, p. 4).

Over the course of the year I participated in several LCI workshops, each of which included exploration of contextual materials, repeated viewings of the selected artwork, and a final wrap-up session. The process was different for each workshop, depending on the teaching artist’s interests and artistic background, the faculty involved, and the work of art under review. Nevertheless, as Holzer (2003) states, all of the workshops taught at the LCI bear a number of hallmarks. Among these are the following:

- Selection of a work of art for study that is rich in possibilities for exploration;
- Collaborative brainstorming of many possible entry points into the study of an artwork;
- Creating of a generative question, known as the “line of inquiry,” as a beginning point for the exploration;
- Exploration workshops before experiencing the work of art;
- Use of contextual materials throughout the exploration process;
- Conversations punctuated by questions leading to description, analysis, and interpretation;
- Student-centered active learning that acknowledges each participant’s prior knowledge and life experiences;
- Use of multiple learning modalities in each exploration;
- Creation of vocabularies-verbal, visual, physical- that can be used to describe a work of art;

- Experiencing the work of art more than once;
- Group and individual reflection throughout the exploration and after a performance or a museum visit;
- Validation of multiple perspectives in the creation of individual and group understanding;
- Connections to the classroom curriculum and pedagogy; and
- Opening out of new possibilities for learning that includes generating new questions to be explored. (p. 2)

Choosing the Work of Art for My Course

After educators in these contexts have initial intense encounters with the works of arts, they become partners with teaching artists in the creation of classroom experiences grounded in particular artworks. These experiences are connected to the educator's curriculum and students. (Holzer, 2003, p. 5)

After devoting a year to the LCI professional development program, studying the LCI philosophy of aesthetic education, viewing artworks from their repertoire, and attending faculty workshops, I decided to become an active part of the collaborative. My exposure to numerous works from the LCI collection had provided a wide variety of pieces from which to choose the one that I would most like to bring into my own classroom.

For the fall semester of 2003, I decided to integrate the study and performance of Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles* into two sessions of an undergraduate Social Foundations of Education course. This documentary drama is set in the violent aftermath of the 1992 Rodney King trial and verdict, and its specific goal is to encourage its viewers to talk about discrimination in America. The playwright drew exclusively on dialogues from interviews, songs and visual materials (photographs, films, and pictorial documents) that she found in the historical record. *Twilight: Los Angeles* "is enacted by

four actors, each of whom plays several parts. In this production, actors play characters that are the same race and gender as they are, as well as characters from different races and opposite genders” (Holzer, 2004, p. 137).

This play is composed as a mosaic of narratives by various individuals recalling their experiences during the riots. The people interviewed are portrayed using their own words, speech patterns, mannerisms, and styles of dress. We hear different voices drawn from a variety of social groups—blacks, whites, Asians, Latinos, gang members, jurors, secretaries, police officers, rich, and poor. The PBS Stage on Screen website asserts that, “because she is able to speak the words and convey the deeply held sentiments of so many different people, Smith enables her audience members to hear what they might otherwise discount” (PBS, 2001).

Students in my class described the play as follows:

The play “Twilight: Los Angeles” by Anna Deveare Smith consists of a series of monologues taken verbatim from her interviews with hundreds of individuals involved in or affected by the 1992 Los Angeles riots. In 1992, violence and destruction occurred in South Central LA following the trial of the four police officers charged with the beating of Rodney King. The four Los Angeles police officers were acquitted after being caught on a home video repeatedly clubbing Rodney King for a speeding violation. This verdict sent the city into an outrage causing all hell to break loose on the streets of Los Angeles. Buildings were burned and stores were looted demonstrating the intensity of civil unrest in the community.

Anna Deveare Smith’s, “Twilight: Los Angeles” displays people’s reaction to the incomprehensible verdict by presenting the motives of the riots based on anger and betrayal caused by racial tensions.

The importance of Twilight: LA is that the audience becomes involved in understanding a historical representation of diversity. The audience learns to recognize human nature through narrations of history told by the voices that participated in the riots.

The Planning Session

The first step in any partnership between an educator and a teaching artist is a planning meeting in which the activities and questions that will facilitate students' encounters with a work of art emerge through a brainstorming process centered on that particular work. (Holzer, 2003, p. 5)

After choosing the work of art I wished to feature in my course, the next step was to meet with an LCI teaching artist for a brainstorming session about *Twilight: Los Angeles* and its place in my curriculum. The teaching artist's main responsibility was twofold: first, to help me create a "line of inquiry," which we would find at the intersection between the focus of my course, the performance of the play, and the contextual materials I wanted to include, and second, to design classroom activities that would help my students understand the key features of the artwork.

During this meeting, I explained to the teaching artist my philosophy of education, and described the key elements I considered necessary for my planned approach to the material, based on the principles of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy. Firstly, I emphasized my concern for allowing the students to bring their own experiences into the classroom, and link them to the issues of oppression to be discussed in the course. Secondly, I described my interest in a pedagogical approach that includes the body as a mediator of experience, and employs its language to explore the feelings that arise. I explained my belief that this method can help students to develop the compassion and imagination necessary to create social change. I requested that we prepare the line of inquiry and plan the aesthetic workshops in a manner that would reflect this philosophy, which I hoped would help to develop a passion for social action in my students. I wanted

to create the kind of aesthetic experience . . . “in which we discover a means to recognize our power to transform ourselves and to transform reality through our total engagement with it” (Stinson, 1985, p. 81). This discussion helped us to develop several important elements that we later included as part of the line of inquiry.

We then went on to discuss the focus of my course, and its clear connection to the issues that arise in *Twilight: Los Angeles*. These include but are not limited to the subjects of race, gender, social class, ability, identity, compliance, discrimination, and privilege. We concurred that the planned reading assignments and the LCI Windows on the Work for the play complemented each other perfectly, and could serve as the bulk of our contextual materials for the course. Student would eventually write:

Connecting the readings with Twilight L.A. turned the play into a more realistic form of questioning and a bunch of what ifs. These readings are very helpful for teachers and students but most of all very helpful to everyday knowledge.

The Lincoln Center Performance on the Story of the Rodney King incident on March 3, 1991 was a real eye opener for me. After seeing the performance I feel as of the whole semester tied into this performance in some way.

Throughout the readings, discussions, and the performance at Lincoln Center this course has opened my eyes to be more aware of the diversity and the discrimination that still exists today. The most important factor I learned is to become aware of my surroundings and to better understand how all children have many different experiences in life and I must try to involve them in the curriculum. The “Twilight: Los Angeles” performance along with the readings and the discussions we reflected upon in class will help me to serve my future students with a greater insight and understanding of the struggles and challenges all children, especially minority students, face in the classroom and in everyday life.

Reading the various articles we did during the semester, activities, and seeing the performance at Lincoln Center informed me on the different circumstances I’ll have to deal with in the teaching world.

The articles I have read during the semester have been exceptionally enlightening. Watching the play “Twilight: LA” has enhanced my perception because of the knowledge I have acquired during the semester.

Line of Inquiry

Our next step was to develop an overarching line of inquiry, and a series of study questions related to the focus of my course which would drive this line of inquiry. These are described below.

How does a series of events such as those captured in *Twilight L.A.* polarize racial, gender-based, and class-driven identities? How does this performance attempt to reconcile this polarization? In giving voices to different perspectives, does it inspire dialogue, compassion, or further resentment?

Questions that Drive the Line of Inquiry

Do multiple perspectives allow us to feel compassion for the types of characters portrayed in the show? Does embodying other people’s emotions bring compassion? Do particular works of art encourage people to define themselves in terms of particular identity groups, whether oppressed, marginalized, or mainstream? Does this particular show have a hidden agenda? To what degree does Anna Deveare Smith’s identity affect her technique/approach? What is identity? What kind of dialogue does the show inspire? How do contemporary issues of race, gender, and social class affect the classroom community? Schooling occurs within diverse communities that must constantly struggle with racial tension and conflict resolution. How can this performance prepare future teachers to manage this kind of environment more effectively?

Developing the Classroom Activities

The classroom instructions includes a number of activities discussed in the planning session, sequenced as follows: experiential workshops preparing students for interaction with a work of art, the interaction with the work, and a post-performance session in which students continue to make observations about what they have experienced and construct further connections. (Holzer, 2003, p. 8)

The articulation of our line of inquiry and its driving questions prepared us to design the workshop activities that were to be held in my classroom during the Teaching Artist's two visits, which were to occur one week before and right after the students viewed the performance. For the visit prior to the performance, we planned to dedicate the entire class session of two and a half hours to the workshop, and prepared four activities (Activities 1-4). We arranged to hold another workshop hour immediately after the play, using two more planned activities (activities 5-6). A brief description of all six activities will follow.

On the day of the first workshop the Teaching Artist introduced herself, and explained that she was an actor, but had no part in the theater piece we were to study. She then asked the students what they knew or had heard about the 1992 Los Angeles riots. The students were well-informed about the issue, although most of them had been very young when the events took place. They mentioned the beating of the black man named Rodney King by four white police officers, who were later acquitted of the related criminal charges. They also mentioned Reginald Denney, the white truck driver who was pulled from his truck and beaten on the streets, and the burning and looting of neighborhood stores owned by Koreans. The Teaching Artist then proceeded to present

an overview of the theatrical piece that they were going to see, and described Anna Deveare Smith's process of creating the play from interviews about the riots.

Activity 1: Gesture Explorations (In Two Groups, 10-15 Minutes)

We began the session with a body warm-up. After clearing the room of chairs and desks, the students were separated into two large groups with rotating leaders. The leaders were to switch after completing the commands they would be given. Each team leader was instructed to perform gesture explorations, using operative commands that were thematically connected to *Twilight: Los Angeles*. The gestures used to express each command were to be explored in different tempos and ranges of motion, from simple facial expressions to full body movements. The rest of the students were instructed to follow the leaders as a flock. The two groups were given paired commands representing contrasting but complementary concepts, such as "right" and "wrong," and each group was told to respond to the other. Thus, one group could be moving slowly to the command of *rage* while the other was executing full-range motions of *happiness*. The command pairs were as follows: revenge-complacency, riot-celebration, right-wrong, suffering-joy, shame-pride, and rage-happiness.

Discussion questions: What movement quality best articulates the experience of rage, celebration, etc. How did the groups react to one another? How do opposing dynamics reconcile themselves? Which range of motion better connected to the way you would feel in this situation?

During this first exercise, the students seemed uncomfortable and out of place. Some kept their body movements to the bare minimum, almost invisible, despite our

request to widen their range of motion. Other students burst into nervous laughter, and moved to the back of the flock to avoid becoming the leader. After the exercise, students confessed to feeling self-conscious and embarrassed at having to execute descriptive body movements and dramatize emotions. Some admitted that if they had been warned in advance, they would not have attended class on that day.

The teaching artist and I explained to the students that the purpose of these exercises was threefold: firstly, to help them loosen up and experiment with the connections between moving, thinking, and feeling. Secondly, to make them aware that the discomfort they felt in connecting to their bodies was not uncommon, because we all have been educated to control our bodies, and to think what we feel, rather than expressing it physically. Thirdly, to help them understand key elements of the theatrical piece they were going to see, which was bursting with a full range of extreme emotions. We assured them that this particular exercise would help them understand Anna Deveare Smith's process as she moved from transcribing the interviews to creating the work of art.

Activity 2: Reflective Writing (Individual Work, 10-15 Minutes)

The students were asked to describe an event that they had witnessed or experienced in school, either as a teacher or as a student, in which they or someone they knew had suffered some form of discrimination. They were told that their writing did not have to be in full sentences or grammatically correct, but that it had to include as many details as possible, to help conjure the memory of the event as clearly and specifically as they could. These details could include how the person in question was feeling, how they

expressed their emotions, and what words they used to express themselves at that moment or right afterward. This reflective writing was to be used in the next exercises.

Activity 3: Moving Tableaux (Group Work, 15 Minutes)

In groups of four, students were asked to share their written experiences, and to help each other create five-second scenes dramatizing each account. Each scene was to connect to the next, so that the entire performance would progress wave-like through all of the students' experiences. The groups were responsible for choosing which part of each experience to reenact, selecting the props they would use, determining the number of actors for each scene, and deciding how to connect one experience to the next. The teaching artist provided handmade frames (viewfinders) through which the rest of the class could view the scenes and discuss what they saw, focusing on the inherent group dynamics, noticing the reactions and emotions of each group member, and trying to avoid asking "charades" questions.

Discussion questions: What were the dynamics created in each tableau? How did each group connect their experiences together to make their performance flow? What did you notice about the movements made and the space used that makes each experience seem different from or similar to the others?

For this third exercise we specifically asked the students not to pose questions about any of the experiences they saw reenacted, and to avoid sharing their own experiences with members of other groups. The object of this activity was for the students to notice the inherent dynamics of conflict situations, and be exposed to multiple

perspectives on the same type of experience. In this activity there were to be no right or wrong answers, only multiple interpretations.

The students made a number of interesting observations about this exercise, and there were as many interpretations of each account as participants sharing their opinions. A large number of students agreed that in general, the representations tended to place the “oppressor” figure on a higher plane or with a taller posture, and the “oppressed” was usually placed on a lower level, or holding his or her body in a hunched position. Students also noticed that the groups that were most successful at creating flowing connections between the different reenactments seemed to be presenting one group experience, rather than a patchwork of unrelated events.

Activity 4: Monologues (Group Work, 1 Hour)

Remaining in the same groups, students were instructed to select one of their stories to work on in greater depth, and to develop relevant questions that they would ask if they were journalists interviewing strangers about the event. Using a tape recorder, one member of each group interviewed the storyteller. The interviewer “[was] instructed to get beyond the facts to the emotional terrain” (Holzer, 2005 p. 137). Each interviewer then became an actor, whose job was to enact the experience to the whole class. The third and fourth students in each group acted as artistic directors, and were expected to study and document the gestures and voice patterns of the storyteller during the interview, so that they could later instruct the actor on how to present a dramatic monologue of the story to the class.

For the second part of this activity, the storyteller moved to a new group and became a documenter. Each group listened to the tape of the interview, and transcribed the portion they chose to enact. The actor, with the assistance of the directors, was expected to recreate the vocal dynamics of the person interviewed (accent, vocal rhythms, etc.). The actors portrayed the story to the entire class, which then reflected on the performance.

Discussion questions: What kinds of questions were asked during the interview? Were the interviewers and actors objective? How did the different perspectives presented affect one another, and affect the audience? How did it make you feel to embody other people's emotions?

During this exercise the students seemed more at ease, and the room was filled with murmuring sounds and spontaneous laughter as they worked together in their groups. Watching the portrayal of the experiences, the students in the audience were silent and attentive. The actors, while admitting that they felt self-conscious about performing in front of a crowd, expressed more concern with honoring and respecting their peers' experience than with their own discomfort. They feared that a poor performance on their part would mock the emotions expressed during the presentation. The most interesting comment came from a student/actor who said that although he could never fully know how his peers had felt during and after their experiences, portraying their memories had helped him step into their shoes and feel similar emotions. The other student/actors concurred with this comment.

Activity 5: After Viewing the Performance: Expressing the Story through a Visual Medium (Individual Work, 30 Minutes)

Students were given magazines, newspapers, construction paper, scissors, and glue, and were instructed to create a collage with words and images that captured the dynamics of the events in L.A. We encouraged them to explore surprising juxtapositions of color and shapes. We placed all of the finished collages in a gallery, to be examined and discussed. These collages eventually became the cover sheets for the students' final papers.

Activity 6: Summary and Review (Whole Class, 30 Minutes)

We closed the event by “pulling back the curtains” on the entire workshop process. We discussed the performances, and the teaching artist and I presented an overview of the aesthetic education practices that had informed our line of inquiry and the related discussion questions.

The students indicated that they had been impressed by the power of the play and its message. Their reactions were passionately expressed, not only during the wrap-up session, but in their final papers as well. Here are some examples of their narratives:

When I first walked into the little theater in the Lincoln Center Institute to see a performance of Twilight: Los Angeles, by Anna Deavere Smith, I had no idea what to expect. When I looked at the nearly empty stage and the barefooted actors I thought that I was in for a second rate performance, I certainly didn't expect to be as profoundly affected by it as I was.

The actors were amazing in their multitude of roles, each portraying a range of emotions that forced me to sit up and take notice. Through their words, actions, and even moments of silence I was able to really 'hear' what they were trying to say, something I didn't do in 1992. They took an event that happened eleven years ago and made it real and relevant to lives of people today.

As I sat and watched the performance of Twilight Los Angeles I had an empty pit in my stomach. Where did all of that anger come from, and how do we prevent the L.A. riots from happening again?

Whether it be education or the Rodney King riots, we as people perceive things differently. What I saw as a revolution, others saw blacks destroying their own communities. "Twilight Los Angeles" made me see the riots in a whole new perspective. I did not know that the Rodney King riots were so tremendous! I also was greatly informed about the origins of the riots.

As I watched the performance along with the recorded live footage of the Rodney King beating and the Riots, I too could feel the pain and emotions of the unheard voices.

Smith was trying to reach the core of humanity and wanted to tell us that the solutions to our problems lie in the collaboration of individuals. She was not trying to propose to us a specific solution to social problems, since these lie in the hands of activists, legislators and most importantly in us – the audience.

This play significantly expanded my horizon by "reading between the lines" of each character as an individual with particular motives and I was astonished by the method of one character shared by two actors. That definitely raised eyebrows as far as realizing that as much as people don't think they generalize, sometimes one can be surprised. Ignorance is a word most would not relate to but most possess. Instead of turning away from ignorance one should ignite this word into a different meaning. Ignorance should be viewed as the never ending odyssey to obtain knowledge. The message of this play is ambiguous to everyone but one thing is clear it will impact an idea.

In some of the scenes they performed they made me feel really emotional. I wanted to cry in some of the scenes.

Recurring Themes

The tool I used to assess the ultimate success of this critical aesthetic process was my students' final assignment. This consisted of a narrative paper in which the students were asked to reflect on the entire semester's assigned readings and related class discussions in the light of their own personal experiences, using the LCI performances

and activities as a backdrop. I conducted a narrative analysis of my students' reflective papers, looking for recurring themes that indicated an enhanced critical awareness, and empowerment to pursue social change. Concentrating on these themes, I selected a pool of anonymous quotations from the papers to support my thesis.

Within my students' narratives, I found six recurring themes that demonstrated a new critical awareness, growing compassion, and a sense of empowerment to create social change. The themes I identified were as follows: (a) critical awareness in describing the theatrical production; (b) critical awareness in connecting the theatrical production to my course assignments; (c) deepening compassion evidenced by use of the metaphor "putting on someone else's shoes"; (d) deepening compassion evidenced by identification with a particular group of characters in the play; (e) critical awareness in describing their own future roles as teachers; and (f) empowerment to change social inequalities starting in their own classrooms.

Critical Awareness in Describing the Theatrical Production

The first theme that I identified in the students' narratives was a growing awareness of social injustice, exhibited in their descriptions of particular parts of the theatrical production, and the impact these moments had on them as spectators.

Quotations expressing this theme were presented on pages 82 and 83 of this dissertation.

This group of quotations exemplifies the power of the aesthetic moments created between the spectators and the performance, and how they affected the students in the light of their own social backgrounds and life experiences. In this case, the work of art became a vehicle for appreciating other people's suffering, and connecting it with their own. These

quotations feature emotionally expressive language, and exhibit an appreciation of the human emotions represented in the play. Expressions such as “profoundly affected,” “even in moments of silence I was able to hear,” “an empty pit in my stomach,” “feel the pain and emotions of the unheard voices,” “made me feel really emotional,” “it raised eyebrows” and “trying to reach the core of humanity” demonstrate a strong embodied connection to the work of art. These emotional expressions are evidence of the students’ initial steps toward connecting with their somatic sensibility. This can help them to recall the emotions connected with their own life experiences that were echoed in the artwork, and give them a more visceral understanding of the common sources of oppression and how they all come from the same root of suffering. The next step is to develop the imaginative capacity to find ways to alleviate this pain.

Critical Awareness in Connecting the Play to My Course Assignments

The second theme arose as the students related the theatrical production to my course assignments, and it is exemplified by the quotations found on pages 74 and 75. These excerpts confirm that the assigned readings used as the bulk for the contextual materials, class discussions, and planned activities designed with the help of the teaching artist provided a successful complement to the critical educational process.

Deepening Compassion Evidenced by Use of the Metaphor “Putting on Someone Else’s Shoes”

The production featured four actors who crossed gender and race barriers to portray a variety of different characters. The actors alerted the audience to their changes in role by taking off the shoes they were wearing and putting on a different pair, a

technique that fascinated the students. The following quotations exemplify Matthew Fox's (1999) description of developing compassion as "a letting go of ego, of problems, of difficulties, in order to remember the common base that makes another's suffering mine and in order to imagine a relief of that suffering" (p. 4). To put on someone else's shoes means to let go of one's own biases and complaints in order to enter another person's reality, and feel their pain. Zigmund Bauman defined this process as developing the capacity to understand or "to rediscover you in me" (Pinar, 1994, p. 621). A large number of the students used the metaphor of "putting on some else's shoes" to describe their future role as teachers, emphasizing the necessity of teaching children to be compassionate individuals.

Throughout the play the actors changed their shoes or took off their shoes. I viewed this changing of shoes as if the actors were literally "putting themselves in someone else's shoes". This theme was depicted throughout the play and I couldn't help but relate this back to being a teacher.

Teachers also need to "put themselves in their students' shoes". It is crucial for teachers to constantly be aware and conscious of the individuality amongst their students and to try their best to accommodate and care for each one on his or her own level.

Seeing how the actors would switch shoes mid-performance to take on someone else's character, I wondered why the same action should not be emulated in the classroom.

We must teach children to put themselves in their neighbor's shoes — to humble themselves to understand that we as human beings all possess the same emotions. In the play "Twilight: Los Angeles," the actors performing on stage carried out this poignant theme. As they (the actors) changed character they left their shoes off to the side of the stage. This poetic gesture acknowledges that we should not judge one another but rather put ourselves in the position of the other person, and learn to understand cultural difference rather than judge them.

The most important factor I learned is to "put myself in someone else's shoes." To become aware of my surroundings and to better understand how all children

have many different experiences in life, and I must try to involve them in the curriculum.

One of the things that happened in the play that I thought was the most interesting to me was when the actors took their shoes off. At first I didn't realize why they were doing it. Then later in the play as all four kept putting each other's shoes on I realized what it meant. It meant that while they were playing other characters they were in other people's shoes, to show how it felt to be in other people's shoes.

The purpose of this play is to ignite conversations about race. It will force you to put yourself in "someone else's shoes" and make judgment calls you might not normally make without seeing someone discriminated against first hand.

It was also interesting how they showed the characters in the play literally taking off and putting on shoes. They were literally trying to put themselves in the place of someone else. I think that this idea can teach a message of respect for one another, and if you think about it, we are really not so different.

Smith was trying to become something she was not, by walking in other people's shoes, and this performance encouraged us to act and move further in our American journey, and get to "we"— the people.

Deepening Compassion Evidenced by Identification with a Particular Group of Characters in the Play

As explained in the previous chapter, an "allegiance" in one's identity is constructed from a collection of related experiences. For example, positive experiences within one's culture, religion, social class, or gender group can create a sense of belonging and pride, which enforces an individual's allegiance to the group or subgroup in question. Conversely, negative experiences may cause an individual to reject any of these social groups. The following quotations demonstrate how students analyzed their own social allegiances, which caused them to identify with particular groups portrayed in

the play. This helped them to understand their own unrecognized biases, which may have perpetuated racism, sexism, and/or social class inequalities.

I never took notice of the seemingly small things that make being a white person a privilege in American society. With this in mind, our schools are in dire need of reform.

As I watched the performance along with the recorded live footage of the Rodney King beating and the riots, I too could feel the voice of the unheard. In some of the scenes they performed they made me feel really emotional. I wanted to cry in some of the scenes.

After seeing the performance I feel as if the whole semester tied into this performance in some way. Personally for me, since I am not considered a minority, I feel as if I have taken for granted the rights and privileges I am offered in everyday life.

We the audience are able to hear what the media otherwise discounted as not newsworthy. The importance of compassion is especially felt from Anna Deavere Smith's portrayal of a storeowner, Mrs. Soon Young Han. Mrs. Han represents the reality about the American dream.

In the "Twilight Los Angeles" performance, Twilight Bey says, "I see darkness as myself. I see the light as knowledge and the wisdom of the world and understanding of others, and in order to be a true human being, I can't forever dwell in darkness. I can't forever dwell in the idea of just identifying with people like me and understanding me and mine." It is up to me as a teacher of color to show my students the light.

What I saw as a revolution, others saw as blacks destroying their own communities.

Critical Awareness in Describing their Future Roles as Teachers

When students become aware of how their allegiances perpetuate oppression, they develop a critical consciousness which can help them to understand systems of domination and notions of justice. The next set of quotations illustrates this development,

as students describe a newfound understanding of their future role as teachers. These quotations can also be used to illustrate the students' process of finding their own voices, or what Peter McLaren (1998) refers to as "a constitutive force that both mediates and shapes reality within historically constructed practices and relationships of power" (p. 220).

In the past when I've been asked why I want to be a teacher my response was very simple, because I like children and it's an easy job. After taking this course however, I came to the realization that my task as a teacher is going to require a tremendous amount of time, patience and effort. The reason being that my responsibility will not only require me to teach these children how to read, write and count, but also how to be open-minded and diversified individuals.

As teachers, we have the greatest responsibility resting on our shoulders: we are, for better or worse, molding our future society. In sum, seeing Twilight L.A. was not only a learning experience, but a captivating one as well. It opened my eyes to see that everyday we are placed in groups or categories, starting as young as five, and in order to change this we have to start changing the institution of education. Thus, one hopes that with the integration of multiculturalism, as well as throwing out tracking, one can create an overall better learning system for children.

I believe that the most important thing you can realize before becoming a teacher is that entering a classroom with an open mind and heart will open doors for your students. This will also enhance your experience of becoming a successful teacher. It is also essential to understand that your students are not the only ones experiencing the learning process, but you as the teacher can learn a great deal from the students as well.

During this course I have learned there are ways and possibilities to change or improve the lives of children. As Anna Pennell (2003) expresses it, "I will not lose hope that change can and must be created" (p. 459).

This course allowed me to learn many things about our educational system and our society. There are still many inequalities floating around us, but I believe that if we continuously have teachers who are willing to put forth their effort into making a better educational system, then we can eventually have students who learn the values of love and equality. With these values, students will open their mind and heart and use them to love each other's differences and eliminate conformity.

Many of the readings that we have read and discussed in class, along with some of the videos we watched, help us to better understand how many types of inequalities are perpetuated through the education system.

As I reflect over all the issues we have discussed this semester I have come to self-actualize what I have to change to be a good teacher to my future students. I have to rid myself of any negative ideologies and truly understand who I am as a person before I can educate children on how to be a good person. Even though I know I have a long way to go, this class has helped me move a step forward towards gaining the knowledge I will need to educate children to the best of my ability.

As future educators, we must be aware and sensitive to every child's culture and traditions, and treat them with respect and validity. I realized that much of the misunderstanding that occurs between races, cultures, genders, abilities and social classes begins in the classroom.

Teachers unknowingly teach such things as racism, not by what they say or do, but more importantly by what they don't say and don't do.

Empowerment to Change Social Inequalities, Starting in their Own Classrooms

As seen above, some students demonstrated a newly developed critical awareness when describing their roles as future teachers. However, some of their narratives reveal only a reflective stance, while others demonstrated a progression beyond social awareness into empowerment to create social change, starting with the students in their own future classrooms. The quotations in the next group call for action in the interest of changing society, by teaching students democratic values such as open-mindedness, the desire to better one's community, the need to understand and accept difference and to eliminate injustices and social stereotypes.

I realized that for our society to change somebody has to take the first step, which I plan on doing in my classroom. However my obligation as a teacher will be to ensure that children are taught different perspectives so that they themselves can

choose their own path. This is at least as important as teaching them their basic academic subjects.

When I first entered this class, I would think about my future and how nice it would be to leave my neighborhood and move to a better one. Now I realize that I have the power to better the one I live in now. Unfortunately we live in an unjust world, especially when it comes to social classes. The richer the neighborhood, the more money paid in taxes, the more money for those specific schools. As a future teacher I know that this specific situation isn't going to change overnight, but now I know if I move away, I am allowing it to stay the same.

Just when I was becoming frustrated with school and questioning my reasons for returning to school at the age of thirty-two, I took this class and remembered why I wanted to teach in the first place. I want to make a difference in the lives of children, because unfortunately there are too many children who slip through the cracks of our society, unnoticed and neglected. Even if I am only able to reach out to one child who really needs guidance and someone to care about them, I will have done my job.

I believe in order to educate our students, it is our responsibility to teach them in detail that racism and stereotypes still exist today, and we are partially at fault because we can't see and accept people for who they are. We need to make them aware that these issues affect all of us in some way, and therefore we need to become better at understanding and accepting people. We need to work together as teachers to create a world of ideologies that recognizes these issues in our world today.

As a prospective teacher, it will be my job to eliminate these injustices and stereotypes within our society by teaching children to love and accept one another. Without love, there is just more room to discriminate.

There are certain events or moments in your life that touch you forever. I am taking education courses as a prerequisite to be able to work in public schools when I graduate with my speech pathology B.A. However, because of this course I am thinking of getting my master's in education. I over-tallied into this class and for that I am very grateful to you. This has been my favorite class here at this college, and the one that has affected and taught me the most. This class makes you think on your own and makes you want to change the world. Though I, by myself, in my own classroom cannot change the society we live in, if I can change the 30 students I have, it will be because this class taught me how.

The root of the problem is that we allowed socially constructed restraints of difference to divide us as a community... We must learn from history so that terrible acts like this never happen again. If we enlighten our children to be

empathic and respectful to one another, we then can change society's views on ethnicity, class, and race.

It is imperative that teachers empower students to become the best person they can be, regardless of the racial discrimination they may encounter in life, and one way they can begin to do this is to incorporate a diverse curriculum into the classroom.

There has to be a way to change the inequalities and racism that are imbedded in our system. It can start in the classroom; as future teachers we must incorporate into our hidden curriculum ways to change these stereotypes... of different groups based on their ethnicity and race.

We must change these injustices and inequalities, and this can start in the classroom. As educators we help form the future generations, and we must eliminate the problem at the core, through our education system. If we eliminate competition and the tracking system, and incorporate a well-rounded multicultural education, this will help us achieve the goals of an equilibrium society.

An Expression of Resentment

Despite my positive experience with the Lincoln Center Institute and the Aesthetic Education Program, I am aware that the aesthetic educational process will not satisfy the needs of every student. No single work of art can challenge all viewers, because the power of an aesthetic experience lies in the relationship between the artwork and the perspective that the observer brings to the encounter. Likewise, no single work of art will empower all students to become agents of social change, because some may not respond with deepening compassion. In point of fact, there was one student in this study who came away feeling very bitter about the aesthetic educational process in general, and my course in particular. His final paper did not express his discontent, but a letter was attached to it that said the following:

I disagree with much of what I wrote in my final essay. I had to act like a lawyer and defend things I don't agree with personally. Why? Because all the essays we read to compare to Twilight: LA boiled down to whites holding down the black people.

Rich white men are not, in the vast majority, stepping over blacks to get where they are. I have been set up so I would have to write a paper filled with half truths and exaggerations, holding high the black people but putting down whites.

While I enjoyed the class, it never prepared me to be a teacher. I am as unprepared as I was before the class. We spent half the time talking about society's racial problems, not school related problems. All that stuff is very interesting, but has nothing to do with my future career.

Conclusions

As a result of my research, I have concluded that the infusion of aesthetic experiences into critical pedagogical practices can indeed enhance the development of social consciousness, and thus promote the adoption of educational methods that advance social change. The three main steps in my process were as follows. First of all, the presentation of multiple perspectives allowed my students to see that the way in which people understand the world is deeply connected to individual experience. This knowledge helped the students to develop tolerance for difference, and respect for the multiple ways in which individuals create meaning, based on their cultural backgrounds. Secondly, aesthetic workshops that included the body as a mediator of experience helped the students connect with their somatic sensibility, which is the first step in developing compassion for victims of social injustice. Thirdly, exposing my students to carefully chosen works of art caused them to define their identities in new ways, strengthening what Maalouf (2000) refers to as social "allegiances" (p. 2). Some chose to identify with the Asian community, the African-American community, or the Anglo community, with

marginalized or mainstream groups. Some felt that what happened in Los Angeles in 1992 should be called a revolution rather than a riot, while others saw it as unnecessary violence. The students' attitudes toward the work of art reflected their choice of social identity.

I believe that Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy enhances critical awareness, and students will respond to this method in one of three ways: by moving toward critical reflection, social empowerment, or resentment. Their response will depend on the power of their aesthetic experience, and this in turn is influenced by the life experiences they bring to their encounter with the work of art included in the curriculum. In my class, the students who were best able to relate their repertoire of experiences to the artwork studied became empowered to create social change or, on the opposite side of the spectrum, as the last student described, came away with a deepened sense of resentment (I will further explore this particular issue in the final chapter of this dissertation). At the same time, those students who were slightly less affected by the work developed only critical awareness.

In this chapter I presented an overview of my research project, which aimed to determine whether the critical aesthetic practices I employed in an undergraduate course in Social Foundations of Education succeeded in enhancing students' social awareness, and increasing their social empowerment. My overall method was to link scholarly readings, academic discussions, critical thinking, and experiential knowledge in a unified approach to the course material. As illustration of this process, I described the Lincoln Center Institute's Aesthetic Education Program, whose main goal is to "integrate

aesthetic education into teacher preparation programs in order to ensure that the arts and imagination will assume an essential place in the education of children” (Holzer, 2004, p. 133). This program provided a practical framework for incorporating aesthetics into critical pedagogical practices, which contributed to the development of my *Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy*.

In the next and final chapter I will present an overview of this entire research project. Then I will describe what I consider to be the most important elements of my project, how they contributed to the success of my Critical Aesthetic Pedagogical method, and the limitations I encountered in its practice. The second part of this Fourth chapter will consider the challenges and implications that Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy may present for traditional forms of schooling, specifically for teacher education programs and K-12 public education, and the reforms needed in our school system to would allow a Critical Aesthetic process to take root and thrive.

CHAPTER IV

CONCLUSIONS

In this dissertation I have attempted to describe an alternative form of education, which I have called Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy. The object of this method is to infuse aesthetic experience into critical educational practices, in order to enhance capacities in students that are indispensable for social empowerment. By exposing students to participatory encounters that possess qualities that encourage sharing of experiences and recognition of common sources of oppression, I believe that educators can create a sense of empowerment that will prepare students to enable social justice. These encounters must rely on the body and its language as mediators for understanding how personal experiences of culture, gender, and social class can shape one's identity, and how social identity can perpetuate systems of domination. This embodied process enables students to recall the feelings that have accompanied their own experiences of oppression, and gives them a more visceral understanding of how these experiences continue to function in their lives. Through this process, students can experience aesthetic moments that will enhance two important capacities—the ability to imagine change, and the compassion to create it.

In Chapter I, I explored the social construction of my own identity. I described the feelings of displacement that haunted me throughout my formative years, as I moved across borders between countries, cultures, languages, and social classes. I discussed how

my early dancing served as an important source of personal affirmation, and provided a milieu in which I could experience social justice. I then related how a catastrophic accident changed my focus in life from dancing to teaching, and how I forced myself to create a new way of learning and understanding the world, while pursuing my master's and doctoral degrees. Finally, I explored how my own experiences of oppression as a student informed my decision to become a teacher, my dedication to teacher education, and my search for transformative/critical pedagogies that embrace human beings with dignity, and develop their awareness of social injustice.

My goal in Chapter II was to provide a theoretical framework for the fusion of two pedagogical approaches. My alternative theory of education is founded on Critical Pedagogy, with its emphasis on valuing students' voices and experiences in the classroom, enabling critical awareness, and challenging existing forms of schooling. After analyzing these fundamental elements of Critical Pedagogy, I discussed how despite its relevance to my approach, this theory overlooks other factors that must be considered if we wish to inspire a deeper awareness of social justice in our students. I then argued for the infusion of aesthetic experience into critical educational practice, as a way of providing the crucial educational elements that I found lacking. These include the development of body-awareness, imagination, and compassion.

Chapter III presented an overview of my research project, which aimed to determine whether the critical aesthetic practices I employed in an undergraduate course in Social Foundations of Education succeeded in enhancing students' social awareness, and increasing their social empowerment. My overall method was to link scholarly

readings, academic discussions, critical thinking, and experiential knowledge in a unified approach to the course material. As illustration of this process, I described the Lincoln Center Institute's Aesthetic Education Program, whose main goal is to "integrate aesthetic education into teacher preparation programs in order to ensure that the arts and imagination will assume an essential place in the education of children" (Holzer, 2004, p. 133). This program provided a practical framework for incorporating aesthetics into critical pedagogical practices, which contributed to the development of my *Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy*.

In this fourth and final chapter I will describe what I consider to be the most important elements of my project, and how they contributed to the success of my Critical Aesthetic Pedagogical method. I will also return to the case of my one resentful student, and discuss possible reasons for his resistance. Then I will analyze the limitations I encountered in the practice of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy. The second part of this chapter will consider the challenges and implications that Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy may present for traditional forms of schooling, specifically for teacher education programs and K-12 public education. Finally, I will propose reforms in our school system that would allow a Critical Aesthetic process to take root and thrive.

Most Important Elements of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy

As a result of my research, I have concluded that the infusion of aesthetic experiences into critical pedagogical practices can indeed enhance the development of social empowerment, and thus encourage student teachers to adopt educational methods

that will advance social change. The four main steps that I found to be crucial in this process were as follows.

First of all, I tried to establish a classroom environment in which students felt accepted and safe to share their personal experiences. This required clear pedagogical guidelines designed to assure that the dignity of every person present was preserved, no matter how unusual their opinions may have been, or how uncomfortable the other students may have felt. For this purpose I borrowed the classroom guidelines from a graduate course that I took during my doctoral work, and adapted it to fit my needs for this course. These guidelines were read and discussed in class at the beginning of the semester, and reread every time it seemed necessary. They were as follows:

As a member of this class, I agree to abide by the following recommendations:

1. To be an active participant.
2. To listen carefully when others are speaking.
3. To try new ideas.
4. To agree to disagree.
5. To recognize that there are no easy solutions to complex problems.
6. To consider the personal meaning of the subject discussed.
7. To support democratic classroom process.
8. To observe confidentiality.

The second crucial step in my Critical Aesthetic method was the presentation of multiple perspectives. This allowed my students to see that the ways in which people understand the world are deeply connected to their individual experience. This

knowledge helped my students to develop tolerance for difference, and respect for the multiple ways in which individuals create meaning, based on their cultural backgrounds. Peter McLaren (1998) defines culture as “a set of practices, ideologies, and values from which different groups draw to make sense of the world” (p. 175). The presentation of multiple perspectives fostered a belief that teachers must remain aware of their students’ backgrounds, languages, and cultures, in order to affirm the validity of their individual voices. My students’ final papers clearly demonstrated their understanding of the need to create a classroom environment in which differences are used constructively, and in which students exist primarily as human beings, whose opinions are accepted, valued, and encouraged.

The third step in my Critical Aesthetic process was to develop aesthetic workshop activities involving the body as a mediator of experience. These activities helped my students connect with their *body authority*, which is the first step in developing compassion for victims of social injustice. As I discussed in Chapter II, *Body authority* is the visceral feeling that helps us distinguish what is fair from what is unfair. Disconnection from this vital inner resource leaves us feeling insecure and doubtful of our capacity to make decisions, and we are more liable to let others decide for us. Accustomed to learning what is fair from unfair from outside sources, we tend to assume that change is beyond our realm of capability, and our capacity to see ourselves as agents of change thus becomes limited or incomplete. We are reduced to merely feeling pity for those affected by injustice, because we feel powerless to help them.

In turn, a reconnection to this inner force affirms our capacity to make our own decisions, and to see ourselves as agents of change. We are no longer reduced to merely feeling pity for those affected by injustice, because we feel empowered to help them. At the beginning of my course, typical student responses to injustice were *“Yes, it’s terrible, but what can we do?”* or *“That’s just the way things are,”* or *“In a perfect world things could be different, but this isn’t Utopia.”* But by the time we were through, they were writing: *“I realized that for our society to change somebody has to take the first step, which I plan on doing in my classroom,”* and *“Now I realize that I have the power to better one [neighborhood] I live in now,”* and *“We must change these injustices and inequalities, and this can start in the classroom,”* and *“As a prospective teacher, it will be my job to eliminate these injustices and stereotypes within our society by teaching children to love and accept one another.”*

The fourth step in a successful Critical Aesthetic process is exposing students to carefully chosen works of art that will help develop their social conscience. In my course, this step produced a twofold result. Firstly, controlled exposure to the selected work of art made my students define themselves in new ways. It gave them a newly politicized identity, by strengthening what Maalouf (2000) refers to as “allegiances” (p. 2) to various social groups with which they identified. The ways in which my students described the artwork reflected their choices of identity, in allegiance to ethnic, regional, marginalized or mainstream groups. This demonstrated that exposure to controlled aesthetic experiences can shift the focus of an individual’s social allegiance. In the course of my study, students came to recognize their varying allegiances, and how they had engendered

unrecognized biases that could perpetuate social inequality. This awareness helped them to find what Peter McLaren (1998) refers to as “their voices” (p. 220) and at the same time, to define themselves in new ways. They then used their newly discovered voices and perspectives to discuss the systems of domination and notions of social justice that were reflected in the artwork and related class assignments.

I found that this fourth and final step was the most important factor in the success of my Critical Aesthetic method. Once students had recognized their own social allegiances and how they had been influenced by their prior experiences, which in turn were shaped by the dominant ideologies of the culture in which they live, they responded to my method in one of three ways: by moving toward critical reflection, social empowerment, or resentment. Their responses depended on the power of their “aesthetic moment” of communion with the work of art, and how it affected them individually, in the light of their social backgrounds and life experiences.

To return to Susan Stinson’s (1985) description of the three dimensions of aesthetic experience, I can say that all of my students who were exposed to the participatory encounter with the artwork moved beyond the first dimension, because they all were able to connect their own previous experiences to the work of art, and thus to give it relevance in their own lives. In my class, the students who were only moderately affected by the artwork developed critical awareness, but did not achieve social empowerment. This group reached Stinson’s second level of aesthetic experience, which releases the imagination and helps us to envision a path towards a better life, but does not initiate movement forward in that direction. The students who were best able to relate

their repertoire of experiences to the artwork did achieve a new sense of social empowerment, and thus reached Stinson's (1985) third level, which she describes as emphasizing "the relationship of the observer/participant to the world," where "the aesthetic object is the lens through which we see/make sense of the reality of being a person in the world" (p. 78).

The Case of the Resentful Student

Some may take issue with my claim that even in the case of my one resentful student my Critical Aesthetic Pedagogical method achieved a measure of success. As I described at the beginning of this chapter, my alternative educational model includes several elements that I consider crucial for the development of social empowerment. One of these is the creation of classroom spaces in which students feel safe to share their opinions and personal experiences. I will remind my readers that at the beginning of the semester, the students were given a consent form to sign, confirming their agreement to serve as participants in my research project (see Appendix C). This form clearly stated that all of the students would have the opportunity to participate in the LCI Aesthetic Education Program regardless of their willingness to take part in my research, and that non-participation on their part would in no way affect either their final grade or their academic standing. It also stated that students would be free to withdraw from participation in the research project at any time.

With many of the students in my class I felt that I was "preaching to the choir," but this particular student was different. Over the course of the semester he shared some personal experiences and opposing opinions, but his discontent with my political views

was palpable in his silent, yet respectful presence in my class. Nevertheless, he still felt comfortable expressing his dissent in a letter that he attached to his final paper. To my understanding, the fact that this student presented me with this letter prior to the posting of his final grade proves that he felt safe in expressing his opinion, and that he clearly wanted his voice to be heard as a divergent element in my study. Otherwise he could simply have withdrawn from participating in my research at any time. The following are quotations from his letter:

I decided to write this to tell you my thoughts on this semester. First off, I would like to say you are a very good teacher, going to your class and seeing your passion and energy and intelligence really was a breath of fresh air. However, I had a few problems with the class.

I really didn't care about your political beliefs. I have no interest in seeing you climb up on a soap box to preach. I'm very sorry the rich white man is in the White House but if you don't like it, go vote. Don't talk to us about standing up for Democracy, and that "we have a choice" and then give us a one sided mini-speech against the White House.

The second crucial element that I consider relevant to this case concerns the presentation of multiple perspectives. My purpose in this regard was to help students appreciate that the different ways in which people understand the world are deeply connected to their individual experience. Although in the case of this resentful student, my method did not help him develop tolerance for difference, he did respect the other students to the extent that he did not initiate open conflict with them in class. By presenting me with a letter expressing his own perspective, he implied that he expected me to show the same regard for him.

The third critical aspect of my pedagogical approach lies in encouraging students to explore the ways in which their experiences shape their identity, and how they are marked by the larger culture in which they live. In the case of my resentful student, based on what he was willing to share in class, his identity incorporated several allegiances: he was a white, upper-class, suburban male, and none of these social groups were positively represented in the chosen work of art. This leads me to conclude that this student, like all the others who developed a sense of social empowerment in the course of my study, was deeply affected by the aesthetic experience included in my course. Even though he did not develop the type of social empowerment that I was looking for, he was still empowered to take a stand for what he saw as an unfair representation of the groups that corresponded with his own personal allegiances.

Thus I believe it is safe to say that even in the case of this resentful student, my Critical Aesthetic practices were somewhat successful. The pedagogical space that I created provided a safe milieu for him to share his opinion and be honest about his experiences and his identity, even if he had to do so in a private communication. He understood and respected the multiple perspectives of his peers, as well as mine, and I have even wondered if his letter was simply a test of my integrity—to see if I would react by giving him a lower grade, thus proving that I do not practice what I preach. In any case, I believe that his action implied an increase in his own sense of social empowerment, even if it was only to the extent of feeling free to disagree with a person in a position of authority.

Limitations of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy

One thing that I learned from this experience is that including powerful aesthetic moments in course curricula will not necessarily develop the positive outcome I am hoping for: empowering every student to create social change. I realize now that the sensitivities I wanted my students to develop were the ones that I myself found important, based on my own notions of equality and social justice, which in turn derived from my own personal experiences, allegiances, and identity. As I saw in the case just described, a powerful aesthetic moment may engender a negative reaction in some students, and even encourage a destructive form of imagination. I am reminded of Maxine Greene's speeches at the LCI after the September 11th attack. In one of these, she spoke of wishing to rewrite everything she had ever written about the imagination, to include the destructive ways in which it can be used. I cannot expect all students to react the same way when exposed to aesthetic experiences. I can only hope that the majority will develop a progressive perspective on social justice, rather than a regressive one.

I also understand that the power of aesthetic experiences lie in the relationship between the artwork and the perspective that the observer brings to the encounter. Likewise, no single artwork can empower all students to become agents of social change because some may not respond with deepening compassion. This experience has helped me to understand that in order to encourage the development of compassion in my students my emphasis should not be on searching for the perfectly evocative work of art, but on creating aesthetic experiences that are infused with moral concerns. Sue Stinson

(1985) agrees, when she writes that for “an aesthetic model for curriculum to be valid . . . it sensitizes—rather than anesthetizes—us to moral concerns” (p. 81).

Challenges and Implications for Schooling

The practice of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy will confront a number of challenges, and will hold various implications for our current educational system. In this section I will specifically discuss the implementation of art programs, as this is an indispensable element in the application of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy. To begin with, I will examine the level of support that teacher education programs would need in order to implement aesthetic programs in their curricula and I will consider the elements required for successful faculty training in this field. In the final section of this chapter, I will discuss the impact of the No Child Left Behind initiative on our K-12 schools, the value our school system places on art education programs, the cost of access to works of art, and the reforms that would be required to ensure the global implementation of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy.

Teacher Education Programs

Support from college administration: Interest in progressive pedagogies will always be initiated by concerned faculty members who submit requests to their departments for the implementation of new or revised curricula. Once interest has been sparked, the next step is to acquire support from deans and chairs.

One of the most difficult tasks in the introduction of new arts-driven curricula is convincing school administrators of the importance of this approach. For this to succeed, college administrators (deans and chairs) must value the arts as an indispensable part of

teacher education. In this case, they will be more likely to allow their departments to invest money in utilizing artistic venues available in the community, and to allow their faculty to spend time training for a curricular approach that is not measured by the No Child Left Behind mandated tests, which I will discuss later in more detail. Interested faculty must advance strong arguments in favor of the idea that artistic programs can be implemented in all curricular areas, and will enhance qualities in students that strengthen academic performance.

The success of the Aesthetic Education Collaborative run jointly by CUNY and LCI is due to the immeasurable support of former CUNY Dean of Education Nicholas M. Michelli, who made the following statement regarding arts education:

The arts and their survival are critical for democratic life, as a form of expression and as a means to enhance the quality of life. Furthermore, cultivating imagination is, from our perspective, an often overlooked aspect of preparing the young for life in democracy . . . We see aesthetic education as a key part of the vision permeating the teacher education programs. (Michelli, 2005, p. 13)

Unfortunately, as of December 2005, Dean Michelli is no longer at CUNY, and the continuation of this collaboration is currently at stake. Although the collaborative is still very strong, and although a large number of CUNY faculty owe their tenure to its efforts, due to the intense research interest and large volume of publications it has generated, there is still concern over budget shifts among all parties involved.

Once the necessary support is in place to include arts education methods across the entire teacher training curriculum, faculty seminars must be formed to discuss the Critical Aesthetic method. Faculty members involved should be strong believers in

alternative teaching approaches that encourage experiential learning, and that avoid the “banking method” of education. Four important factors should be considered in these seminars.

First of all, the seminars should include an introduction to Aesthetic Education and Critical Pedagogy as alternative teaching methods. To introduce the aesthetic approach, we can borrow from the LCI workshop model described in Chapter III. Readings and discussions should include, but not be restricted to descriptions of the LCI philosophy and practice, the dimensions of aesthetic experience, and the importance of imagination and emotional uncoupling as potential enablers of social empowerment. For seminar units on Critical Pedagogy, readings and discussions should focus on issues of identity and social allegiances, creating a safe environment for students to find their voices, and the importance of multiple interpretations in developing critical consciousness.

Secondly, in discussing the value of Critical Pedagogy for developing students’ critical awareness, consideration must be given to its limitations in this regard. Chief among these is the fact that it ignores the importance of the body as a mediator of experience, and thus perpetuates the body-mind split. Participating faculty should be made aware that we teach the way we learn, and that this may be one reason why the body-mind split has been perpetuated in our K-12 and teacher education classrooms. Faculty must be trained to consciously avoid approaches that reinforce oppressive models, and to utilize somatic methods that incorporate the body and its language into their daily teaching practices.

The third step should be to expose faculty members to participatory encounters with works of art. The encounters designed for this purpose must involve the body as a mediator of experience, and employ its language to explore the works of art. This is the only way in which we can truly appreciate the human emotions that are represented in the artworks. Encounters of this kind have an extraordinary capacity to release the imagination and stimulate social empowerment, because they engage us at the level of our personal experience. This reconnects us to our *body authority*, which I discussed above and in Chapter Two, and which is the source of our power to create and recreate the world in which we live.

Fourthly, interested faculty must learn how Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy can fit into their course curricula, and how they can model the critical aesthetic process in their pedagogical practices. Teacher education students need to see the connection between Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy and the worlds their students inhabit, so that they can implement these practices effectively in their future classrooms.

K-12 Schools: “No Child Left Behind”

We are living in an era of rigorous academic standards and accountability. Teachers are expected to demonstrate their students’ progress in ways that the public can understand—using statistics, test scores, ranks, and percentiles. The No Child Left Behind Act mandated that all public school students test at levels identified as “proficient” by state-defined standards by the end of 2014. Each state is responsible for establishing a timeline on which schools that receive Title I funds (federal monies granted to economically disadvantaged schools) will meet the new requirements for

adequate yearly progress (AYP). Each state must measure every public school student's progress using a standardized test in reading and math, and report each student's performance as "basic," "proficient," or "advanced."

If a school fails to make adequate yearly progress for a fifth year, the school district must initiate *plans for restructuring* the school. This may include reopening the school as a charter school, replacing all or most of the school staff or turning over school operations either to the state or to a private company with a demonstrated record of effectiveness. (U. S. Department of Education, 2004, para. 5)

According to Linda Darling-Hammond (2004), "26,000 of the nation's 93,000 public schools this year failed to make the AYP" (p. 5). Under these circumstances, public school teachers and administrators have been forced to drop all curricular activities that are not directly related to preparing for and passing these standardized tests. For that reason, arts education has little room to grow in the era of No Child Left Behind. Teachers are forced to "teach to the test," drill for rote learning, and train children to "bank" the information they receive in class. The students will then regurgitate what they have learned in a standardized test, and their performance will determine whether their teachers will be allowed to continue teaching.

The possibility of the arts playing an important role in children's education is ironically even slimmer in New York City, the artistic capital of our nation. Since the fiscal crisis of the 1970's, art education in NYC's public schools has essentially been eliminated. However, In 1997 Mayor Guiliani, with the assistance of the department of education, created Project ARTS (Art Restoration Throughout the Schools). This program was designed to restore arts education to all New York City public school

curricula over a three-year period, with one third of the schools joining the program each year. Seventy-five million dollars in funding was allocated for this project.

As of the 2004-2005 academic year, out of 1,356 New York City public schools, over 152 schools have no art education program, more than 160 elementary schools that have more than 500 students have one or no art teacher. All of these schools are categorized Title I-underprivileged and under NCLB impositions. (Moskowitz, 2005, p. 2)

Although funding for this program has been in place since 1997, the NYC Department of Education has repeatedly found ways to put these monies out of reach, with the explanation that “nearly half of its middle schools are already deemed in need of improvement” (NY1, 2004, para. 4).

Exposing students to works of art can be quite an expensive proposition. Luckily for the children of NYC, the city’s artistic and cultural institutions recognize the importance of art education programs, and understand the restrictions posed by low per-pupil expenditures in the public school system—\$6,911 per-pupil at the national average (National Center for Education Statistics, 2001). These institutions have therefore shouldered a large portion of the financial responsibility for promoting the arts in NYC public schools, when they are allowed to do so. However, in a city served by over 1,350 public schools with an average of 1,000 students per school, the monies allocated for arts education are spread very thin. Other states, specifically those that are held responsible for educating large numbers of poor minority children but cannot count on the support of local artistic and cultural institutions, have even fewer opportunities to expose their public school students to the arts.

The arts as an essential element in the education of all children: As I have argued in this thesis, Aesthetic Education is an indispensable element in the schooling of underprivileged children. Through the arts, children can learn to imagine possibilities, to “look at things as if they could be otherwise” (Greene, 1995, p. 19). The aesthetic process can enable students to broaden their perspectives, to overcome the taken-for-granted, and to envision possibilities for a better life. If we prevent underprivileged children from developing these capacities, we close the door to a brighter future for them, and for the country. “Too rarely do we have poor children in mind when we think of the way imagination enlarges experience. And what can be more important for us than helping those called at risk overcome their powerlessness?” (Greene, 1995, p. 36). Unfortunately, the essential capacities for imagination, compassion, and social empowerment are not measured by the No Child Left Behind assessment system.

Final Thoughts

Before Critical Aesthetic practices can take root in our public school system, we must first take a long, hard look at the NCLB Act. If we cannot eliminate it entirely, we should at least amend it to allow states and districts to adopt more appropriate criteria for measuring adequate yearly progress. This will allow teachers to abandon “banking” models of education and experiment with experiential methods, such as using the arts to help children understand the world, their roles in it, and their capacity to change it.

Last but not least, each state should take an interest in providing more adequate and equitable funding systems for their public schools. As things stand today, children attending public schools in disadvantaged neighborhoods receive the benefit of much

smaller annual per-pupil expenditures than children attending public schools in the suburbs and other privileged areas. The year by year perpetuation of this disparity demonstrates our politicians' lack of concern for the education of poor and minority youth, and it seems unlikely that they will voluntarily pursue an Aesthetic Education program that could teach students to question the inequalities and injustices of this system.

The biggest challenge that promoters of Critical Aesthetic programs will face is in approaching education administrators for approval to implement these methods in teacher education programs and in our public school system. The challenge is twofold: not only is this method costly, but it can empower students to challenge the status quo. Individuals educated in this way will begin to question existing power structures, and to consider how they can be changed to the benefit of the socially disadvantaged.

As I saw with my education students, when teachers feel socially empowered, they will teach in empowering ways. Their students in turn will grow up with a sense of social entitlement, which will allow them to take a stand when necessary in the name of social justice. This chain of empowerment is what I hope to initiate through Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy. As the rapper Tupac once said "*I don't want to change the world, I just want to spark the minds of those who will.*" (Lazin, 2003)

After reading my final remarks, I am afraid some of my readers may feel that my conclusions about the implications for Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy are somewhat bleak. Therefore I want to emphasize that I believe this method is well worth fighting for, because I myself have witnessed powerful changes in my students' consciousness as they

exit my classrooms. I have seen them blossom into newly empowered individuals, with a strong desire to change the lives of the children they will teach.

I believe in the power of a committed community to create change, because I have seen this process in action. I hope that through the practice of Critical Aesthetic Pedagogy, education students will begin to appreciate the importance of their role as teachers, and to exercise their power to change the world they live in. The educational communities they will help to build will contribute to the betterment of all people.

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APPENDIX A
CLASS SYLLABUS

Queens College, CUNY
Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education

Course Number: EECE 201 Section: 1R1B Credit hours: 3

Course Title: Schooling in a Diverse Community

Thursdays 1:00 - 3:30 PM KY 431 Fall 2003

Instructor: Yolanda (Jolie) Medina

E-mail: ymedina@qc1.qc.edu

Office: Modular 4 room 428

Telephones:

Office: (718) 997-5313

Home: (718) 544-5343 (before 9:00 PM, please)

Mobile: (718) 909-1101 (before 9:00 PM, please)

Office Hours:

Wednesdays 2:00 PM-4:00 PM.

Course description:

The primary focus of this course will be the idea that education is a ‘mirror’ of the American society, one that reflects the larger culture in which we teach and live. As a community of teachers we will look critically (question) at the values, beliefs, structures, and assumptions that form our contemporary world and how these relate to the school and classroom in which we teach. Central to our work will be the exploration of the kind of teacher each of us is committed to become and the kind of world we can (and must) create to be that teacher.

Since all of us are intimately familiar with the process of education and schooling, it is intended that the classes will try to move from theory to personal accounts. Therefore, I expect each person to bring their own beliefs and experiences concerning education and life to the classroom’s discussions. I also expect disagreements about issues raised. Attached you will find a guideline for discussions which we will read, discuss, and agree to abide by in order to assure a productive rather than a destructive discussion, and that the human dignity of each individual be respected and preserved.

This course includes class and small group discussions, group activities, classroom observations, videos, and one visit to the Lincoln Center Institute for a performance viewing. It is designed as a seminar and, as such, students are responsible for making significant daily contributions.

Course objectives:

As a result of this course, students will be able to:

1. Articulate historical and philosophical perspectives on the development of schooling in the United States including an understanding of its development in the socio-cultural context of society.
2. Demonstrate their understanding of cultural, socio-economic, and linguistic variations among populations.
3. Begin to ask critical questions about the relationship between schooling and society.

4. Utilize technology resources for research and presentations.
5. Develop initial practices of teacher-researchers who conduct collaborative and individual inquiry.

Students' requirements:

1. **Regular attendance:** Attendance for the entire class is expected. Any type of excessive absences, tardiness and leaving prior to class dismissal will reflect on your final grade. In the event of tardiness it is your responsibility to notify me the same day after class of your presence. Please speak to me regarding any expected absences. **Please, turn off all cell phones, pagers, etc, before entering class.**
2. **Reading assignments and class participation: Students are required to read all assigned materials prior to class,** contribute thoughtful insights to in-class discussions as well as participate in all class and small groups activities. Depending upon your participation in class discussions, I may, or may not, include a writing assignment due with each weekly reading. Some of you might not feel comfortable with participating in large group discussions, so I will make sure there are enough small group activities for everybody to be able to participate. If participating is still an issue for you, speak to me about it.
3. **Classroom observations:** See classroom observation guide. Check class calendar for due date.
4. **Lincoln Center performance:** October 30, 2003 from 2:30PM - 4:30PM. Your presence is required. Please speak with me about possible conflicts with this date and time.
5. **Final paper:** See final paper description. Check class calendar for due dates.

Textbook:

Shapiro, H. S., Harden, S. B. & Pennell, A.(2003). The Institution of Education. (Fourth Edition). MA: pearson custom Publishing. Available at QC bookstore.

Supplementary articles (on E-reserve):

Nieto, S. (2000). Affirming Diversity. The Social Political Context of Multicultural Education. Chapter 9: Multicultural education and school reform, pp. 303-320. New York: Longman.

Class Calendar:

September 4:

Introductions and course overview.

September 11: *The Hidden Curriculum.*

Read: Vallance, pp. 85-97.

September 18:

Read: Jackson, pp. 9-26.

Video: "2 Ball games".

September 25:

Read: Shapiro, pp. 27-33 and McCarthy, pp. 35-41.

October 2: *Social Class.*

First observation due: "Hidden Curriculum".

Read: Anyon, pp.127-139.

Video: "Affluenza".

October 9: *Race.*

Read: McIntosh, pp. 165-169 and Bileda, pp. 187-189.

Video: "Ethnic Notion"

October 16: *Tracking.*

Read: Braddock II, pp.121-126 and Lake pp. 191-194.

Video: "Off Tracks"

October 24:

Second observation due: "Social Class, Race, Tracking and Special Education".

Aesthetic Education workshop.

October 30:

Lincoln Center Institute

"Twilight Los Angeles" performance.

November 6: *Special Education.*

Read: Hudak, pp. 367-374 and Lashley, pp. 375-383.

November 13: *Gender Identity.*

Read: Risner, pp. 209-219.

Video: "Its Elementary".

November 20:

Read: Kimmel, pp. 221-225 and Phillips, pp. 203-208.

Video: "Tough Guise"

December 4: *Education as Liberation and Critical Multicultural Education.*

Third observation due: "Special Education and/or Gender in the Classrooms".

Read: hooks, pp. 519-523 and Pennell, pp. 457-464.

December 11:

Read: Nieto, S. "Affirming Diversity" Chapter 9, pp. 303-320 (E-Reserves).

December 18:

Final paper due.

*** * * * Important stuff * * * ***

* All papers may be rewritten for reconsideration of your grade.

* Conditions of the syllabus are subject to change throughout the semester. This depends upon your participation in class discussions.

* Readings, topics and assignments may also change throughout the semester.

Guidelines for discussion

As a member of this class, I agree to abide by the following recommendations:

1. To be an active participant.
2. To listen carefully when others are speaking.
3. To try new ideas.
4. To agree to disagree.
5. To recognize that there are no easy solutions to complex problems.
6. To consider the personal meaning of the subject discussed.
7. To support democratic classroom process.
8. To observe confidentiality.

Paper and group assignments descriptions:

Classroom observation guide: Conduct fifteen hours of observation in an early childhood or elementary school classroom. **Write a 2-3 page typed-double-spaced reflective paper for each 5 hours of observation based on the reading assignments and your observations.** Please note that the number of pages is given as a limit, not a requirement. Exceeding five pages will lead to dire penalties.

Observation responses are due October 2, November 13, and December 4. These observations are not only for your learning benefit but for the benefit of the entire class as well. So be ready to share. **In your writings and in our class discussions please keep all students' and teachers' names strictly confidential.**

To observe, call a school and ask to speak to the principal. Introduce yourself as an elementary education student at Queens College and explain that you would like to observe any classroom for a total of fifteen hours. You should try to complete your observations in no more than three days, five hours a day. Be prepared to adjust your personal schedule to accommodate the school. You should not, however, miss any Queens College classes in order to complete this assignment.

Once in the classroom, ask the teacher for permission to take notes, if not permitted; wait until after the observations. **Please remember to thank the teacher upon your daily departure.**

If the teacher or principal have any questions you cannot answer, please ask them to contact me at (718) 997-5313. Attached you will also find a letter for the teacher/principal.

Final Paper description:

Throughout the semester we will be talking about different issues related to education. This paper is intended for you to relate these issues to your experiences with the LCI. This paper should be typed and **no more than five pages**, double-spaced. Please note that the number of pages is given as a limit, not a requirement. Exceeding five pages will lead to dire penalties. In your paper you will, with a thoughtful combination of your opinion, critically analyze "Twilight: Los Angeles" using at least, **7 references from the required readings**. Some students may choose to emphasize more on some aspect of the performance, this is acceptable as long as you provide a smooth transition between topics, issues, and concerns and, most importantly, your papers is insightful, well written, and grammatically correct. Please remember to include an APA reference list at the end of your paper.

Student profile:

Please detach this form and submit it on the first or second day of class.

Name: _____ Last name: _____

Nickname: _____

Address:

Email*: _____

Local Phone*: _____

What do I need to know about you in order to help you in this class:

* Please notify me of any changes in phone number and email address during the semester.

I read and fully understand the requirements and discussion guidelines stated in this syllabus and I will follow them to the fullest of my intentions.

Student signature

date

APPENDIX B

IRB APPROVED PROTOCOL AND EXTENSION APPROVAL

PROJECT DIRECTOR COPY

Page 1 of Page 2

**QUEENS COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
THE COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (IRB)
65-30 Kissena Blvd., ORC, Kiely 305, Flushing, NY 11367 phone 718-997-5415/fax 718-997-5549**

TO: Yolanda Medina
Borough of Manhattan Community College

STUDY: Infusing Aesthetic Experiences in Critical Pedagogical Practices

IRB NUMBER: C-03-11-10-02

DATE: September 28, 2005

SUBJECT: Annual Approval

The Queens College of CUNY Institutional Review Board has approved the above study involving humans as research subjects for an additional year.

Approval Date: 9/28/05

Expiration Date: 9/27/06

This approval is for a one-year period. You should receive a courtesy renewal notice approximately six weeks before the expiration of this project's approval. However, it is your responsibility to insure that an application for continuing review approval has been submitted by the required time. In addition, you are required to submit a final report of findings at the completion of the project.

Consent Form: No consent forms are attached because no more subjects will be recruited and activities are limited to data analysis/publication.

Reporting: The principal investigator must report to the IRB any serious problem, adverse effect, or outcome that occurs with frequency or degree of severity greater than that anticipated. In addition the principal investigator must report any event or series of events that prompt the temporary or permanent suspension of a research project involving human subjects.

Modifications: All modifications of protocols involving subjects must have prior approval except those involving the prevention of immediate harm to a subject which need to be reported within 24 hours to the IRB.

If you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact me through the Office of Regulatory Compliance at 718-997-5415.

Continued good fortune on your project.

Sincerely,



Nancy Hemmes, PhD
Chairperson,
Queens College IRB

(PI Signature required on the following page)

PROJECT DIRECTOR COPY
Page 2 of Page 2

**QUEENS COLLEGE OF THE CITY UNIVERSITY OF NEW YORK
THE COMMITTEE FOR THE PROTECTION OF HUMAN SUBJECTS (IRB)**
65-30 Kissena Blvd., ORC, Kiely 305, Flushing, NY 11367 phone 718-997-5415/fax 718-997-5549

TO: Yolanda Medina
Borough of Manhattan Community College

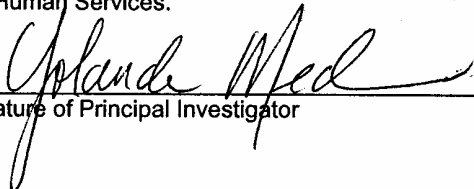
STUDY: Infusing Aesthetic Experiences in Critical Pedagogical Practices

IRB NUMBER: C-03-11-10-02

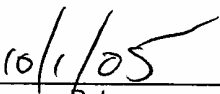
DATE: September 28, 2005

SUBJECT: Annual Approval

Verification to be Returned to IRB Office: By signing below, I acknowledge that I have received this letter and am aware of and agree to abide by all of its stipulations in order to maintain active approval status, including prompt reporting of adverse events/serious problems and annual continuing review. I am aware that it is my responsibility to be knowledgeable of all federal, state and university regulations regarding human subjects research including CUNY's Multiple Project Assurance (MPA) with the Department of Health and Human Services.



Signature of Principal Investigator



Date

Signature of Advisor for Student Research

Date

(Revised 8/2/05)

**Queens College/City University of New York
Institutional Review Board
Review Form
(All Answers Must Be Typed)**

PLEASE USE THE ENCLOSED CHECKLIST TO MAKE SURE YOUR APPLICATION IS COMPLETE BEFORE SUBMISSION!

Check applicable box:

Continuing Review]

Final Report]

For full continuing reviews, please submit the original and eleven (11) complete sets = 12 complete sets of this Review Form including the required attachments with QC IRB stamped consent forms for the current year, unstamped consent forms for the renewal year and one complete copy of the research protocol to:

For expedited continuing reviews, please submit the original and three (3) complete sets = 4 complete sets of this Review Form including the required attachments with QC IRB stamped consent forms for the current year, unstamped consent forms for the renewal year and one complete copy of the research protocol to:

For all final reports, please submit the original and two (2) complete sets = 3 sets of this Review Form including all required attachments to:

Assistant Director of Regulatory Compliance
ORSP/Kiely 305
Queens College/CUNY

Project Title: Infusing Aesthetic Experiences in Critical Pedagogical Practices.

Principal Investigator: Yolanda Medina

**Department/Unit: Borough of Manhattan Community College, CUNY
199 Chambers St. N601 NY, NY 10007**

Fax: 212-220-1271

Phone Number: 212-220-1260 Email Address: ymedina@bmcc.cuny.edu

IRB #: C-03-11-10-02

Protocol Expiration Date: 10/24/05

Type of review proposal previously received (i.e., full or expedited): expedited.

Submission date of this report: September 20, 2005

**Principal Investigator:
Yolanda Medina**

Please respond to questions 1 through 4 on a separate sheet of paper: (See attached)

- 1) Objectives of the Study:
- 2) Methodology (Brief Summary):
- 3) Briefly summarize your research findings thus far, including any amendments or modifications to the research since the last review and/or any other relevant information, including findings at collaborating institutions or recent significant literature in the field relevant to research risks.
- 4) Explanation of research plans for the upcoming year:
- 5) How many subjects have accrued to your project since its last review? None
- 6) How many subjects have signed consent forms? 46
- 7) Have there been any adverse events, unanticipated problems, or breaches of privacy/confidentiality involving risks to subjects or others since the last review?
No: Yes _____ (If yes, explain on a separate sheet.)
- 8) Have there been any voluntary or involuntary withdrawals of subjects from research or any complaints about the research?
No: Yes _____ (If yes, explain on a separate sheet.)
- 9) Please attach the QC IRB stamped forms for the current year.
- 10) Does your study involve individually identifiable protected health or mental health information (PHI), including demographic information and biological specimens identified to an individual, created or maintained by, or received from, a person or an entity covered by the Privacy Rule issued under the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) (e.g., a hospital; a physician, or a practice in psychology, psychotherapy, or social work; a health insurer, HMO, or health plan; or a community clinic, or a social service or mental health agency)?
No Yes _____
- 11) If your answer to question (10) is Yes, please list below or on a separate sheet the PHI that is necessary for your research and that you intend to use in your research.

Principal Investigator:
Yolanda Medina

- 12) If your answer to question (10) is Yes, please list below or on a separate sheet the name and address of each person or entity that is creating, maintaining or providing the PHI for your research.
-
-

13. If your answer to question (10) is Yes, please note that a person or entity covered by the HIPAA Privacy Rule can use or disclose PHI only under narrow conditions. Check below the authority under which you intend to obtain, use and/or disclose PHI in your research.

You will seek each subject's HIPAA authorization (this HIPAA authorization is required in addition to each subject's informed consent). *If so, please attach a copy of the appropriate CUNY IRB HIPAA Research Authorization form prepared by you (PI), or the covered entity's HIPAA authorization, to this application. (These forms are available at <http://www.cuny.edu> under Research and Funding on the Faculty and Staff page.)*

You intend to request a waiver or alteration of HIPAA authorization. *If so, please attach a copy of the CUNY IRB Request for Waiver or Alteration of HIPAA Authorization form prepared by you (PI). (This form is available at <http://www.cuny.edu> under Research and Funding on the Faculty and Staff page.)*

The covered entity will provide you with a "limited data set" for your research.** *If so, please attach a copy of the covered entity's Data Use Agreement to this application (consult the covered entity's Privacy Officer for additional information).*

* Until the revised *PI Manual* that includes instructions on the questions in this form related to the Research Authorization required by the HIPAA Privacy Rule is available, please refer your concerns about these questions to your IRB Chair or IRB Administrator.

** Until the revised *PI Manual* including information regarding "limited data sets" under the HIPAA Privacy Rule is available, please refer your concerns about "limited data sets" to your IRB Chair or IRB Administrator.

14. **CUNY Investigators whose research involves PHI are required to ask all non-CUNY personnel who will have access to research data (e.g., co-investigators, outside statisticians, contractors) to sign the *CUNY Subject Information Confidentiality Agreement*, a copy of which is available at <http://www.cuny.edu> under Research and Funding on the Faculty and Staff page.**

Principal Investigator:
Yolanda Medina

15. Have you (PI) completed the federally required CUNY Human Subjects Protection Education Program [see www.rfcuny.org/ResConduct/CBT]?

Yes X No _____

I certify that each of the following key personnel (as defined in the *PI Manual*) involved in this project either have completed an approved training program for the protection of human subjects in research, or they will have completed an approved training program and certificates have been submitted with this application before their participation in the research project actually continues and/or begins.

Principal Investigator's Signature Date: 9/20/2005

Please submit IRB Certificates of Completion for the principal investigator, co-investigator and for each key personnel listed below. Documentation needs to be provided for each year the protocol is renewed. YOUR APPLICATION WILL BE CONSIDERED INCOMPLETE WITHOUT THIS INFORMATION!

Name	Role on Project	Date Training Completed
Yolanda Medina	PI	September 2003

Reminder: Proposed changes in the study protocol, consent process or research instruments including questionnaires must be submitted for review and receive approval before they can be utilized.

Principal Investigator:
Yolanda Medina

Continuing Reviews: For full continuing reviews, please review the IRB Submission Deadlines are listed on our web page (www.qc.edu/ORSP). For expedited continuing reviews, submission can be at any time. A minimum of 3 weeks should be allowed for review once the application is submitted.

Failure to submit this report in time may result in the temporary suspension of a study's approval and a halt to the study until approval is given.

Final Reports must be submitted to the Assistant Director of Regulatory Compliance no later than 30 days after the expiration date of the protocol.

If you have any questions, please contact the Assistant Director of Regulatory Compliance at 718-997-5400. Thank you.

	9/20/05
Principal Investigator's Signature	Date

Signature of Advisor for Student Research (if applicable)	Date	5/13/05
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QUEENS COLLEGE/CUNY INSTITUTIONAL REVIEW BOARD

CONTINUING REVIEW/FINAL REPORT CHECKLIST

ALL APPLICANTS

- Have I given an email address that is used and checked regularly?
- Have I indicated the type of review previously done for my protocol?
- Have I responded to questions 1 through 4 on a separate sheet of paper?
- Have I attached a copy of the current stamped informed consent form now in use? (see question #9)
- Have I responded to all HIPAA questions (10 to 14) and submitted any required HIPAA attachments?
- Did I sign my application? (see pages 3 & 4)
- If I am a student researcher, did my faculty advisor sign my application? (see page 4)

IF YOUR PROTOCOL IS SUBMITTED FOR FULL CONTINUING REVIEW

- Have I checked the box for "Continuing Review"? (see page 1)
- Have I gotten all the required signatures needed for page 3 & 4?
- Have I completed all parts of question 15 and submitted the required IRB Certificates of Completion with the application? ***YOUR APPLICATION WILL BE CONSIDERED INCOMPLETE WITHOUT THIS INFORMATION!***
- Did I include one copy of my original research protocol with my submitted renewal application?
- Do I have 12 complete sets of this application (including all attachments, stamped and unstamped consent forms) ready for submission to the IRB Office? (IRB Submission Deadlines are listed at www.qc.edu/ORSP)

IF YOUR PROTOCOL IS SUBMITTED FOR EXPEDITED CONTINUING REVIEW

- Have I checked the box for "Continuing Review"? (see page 1)
- Have I gotten all the required signatures needed for page 3 & 4?
- Have I completed all parts of question 15 and submitted the required IRB Certificates of Completion with the application? ***YOUR APPLICATION WILL BE CONSIDERED INCOMPLETE WITHOUT THIS INFORMATION!***
- Did I include one copy of my original research protocol with my submitted renewal application?
- Do I have 4 complete sets of this application (including all attachments, stamped and unstamped consent forms) ready for submission to the IRB Office? (IRB Submission Deadlines are listed at www.qc.edu/ORSP)

IF YOUR PROTOCOL IS SUBMITTED FOR FINAL REPORT FOR REVIEW

- Have I checked the box for "Final Report"? (see page 1)
- Have I gotten all the required signatures needed for page 3 & 4?
- Do I have 3 complete sets of this application (including all attachments and stamped consent forms) ready for submission to the IRB Office? (due 30 days after the expiration date of the protocol)

**ANY QUESTIONS, CALL THE ASSISTANT DIRECTOR OF REGULATORY COMPLIANCE AT
718-997-5400**

5/13/05

Continuing Review Protocol Application

Yolanda Medina
September 19, 2005
Response to questions 1-4

1. Objective of this study:

As a Social Foundations of Education instructor I focus my teachings on Critical Pedagogical practices. These practices intend to create a critical awareness in future public school teachers of the social inequalities that affect teaching practices and their power and role as agents of social change to work toward social justice and to create classroom environments that will positively affect the future of the children they touch.

As a faculty member of the Elementary and Early Childhood Education Department at Queens College CUNY during the years of 2002-2004, I had the opportunity to work in a collaborative with the Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education, on a program called "Aesthetic Education". During the Fall 2003 and as part of this collaborative, I integrated into my undergraduate courses "EECE 201: Schooling in a Diverse Communities" the study as well as the viewing of Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles* performance.

My intentions for conducting this research is to investigate how aesthetic programs such as the one offered by the Lincoln Center Institute could enhance or complement the social awareness I am trying to create in a critical pedagogical classroom. In other words, my hypothesis is:

Can Aesthetic Education Programs, such as the one offered by the Lincoln Center Institute, enhance or compliment the possibility of developing social

awareness and social justice practices when combined with Critical pedagogical practices?

The findings of this research became a case study part of my doctoral dissertation entitled: “Critical Aesthetic Knowing: towards a theory of self and social understanding.” In addition, this case study is presently being used for several article submissions for publication as well as presentations in professional conferences.

2. Methodology:

The subjects selected for this case study are the 46 consenting students enrolled in the undergraduate course EECE 201: Schooling in a Diverse Community during Fall 2003.

The course’s primary assignment consisted on a reflective paper in which, using the LCI’s Aesthetic Education Program as a backdrop, students were to reflect on the entire semester’s assigned readings on race, culture, social class, and gender, along with its respective class discussions and personal accounts. With these reflective papers, I conducted a narrative analysis and looked for recurring themes that indicated a new understanding or awareness of the possibility for social change and students’ roles and power to create these changes. With these themes I created a pool of anonymous quotes to support this case study.

3. Research findings:

Within the students’ narratives, I found six (6) recurring theme that demonstrate a new awareness of social injustices and a sense of empowerment for creating social changes. Although my wish is to give voice to every single participant in this project, for

reasons of time and space restrictions I am forced to share a few prime examples of each theme.

1. Awareness of social injustices as they describe the performance:

When I first walked into the little theater in the Lincoln Center Institute to see a performance of *Twilight: LA*, by Anna Deveare Smith, I had no idea what to expect. When I looked at the nearly empty stage and the barefooted actors I thought that I was in for a second rate performance, I certainly didn't expect to be as profoundly affected by it as I was.

The actors were amazing in their multitude of roles, each portraying a range of emotions that forced me to sit up and take notice. Through their words, actions, and even moments of silence I was able to really 'hear' what they were trying to say, something I didn't do in 1992. They took an event that happened eleven years ago and made it real and relevant to the lives of people today.

The importance of *Twilight: LA* is that the audience becomes involved in understanding a historical representation of diversity. The audience learns to recognize human nature through narrations of history told by the voices that participated in the riots.

Smith was trying to reach the core of humanity and wanted to tell us that the solutions to our problems lie in the collaboration of individuals. She was not trying to propose to us a specific solution to social problems, since these lie in the hands of activists, legislators and most importantly in us – the audience.

2. Awareness of social injustices as they related the performance to their life experiences:

Josie Morales a witness to the Rodney King beating said (and she quotes) “I just knew in my heart this is wrong-you know they can't do that . . . We have to stay here and watch because it's wrong,” However she did not go and do anything to prevent it from happening. So to my childhood friends had simply watched instead of speaking out and making their voices heard.

In my recent observations of a school that I once attended, I noticed that while the students and systems have changed, many of the teachers have not. My kindergarten teacher is still frustrated that she can't get her students to remain quiet. When my former teacher looked at me and said “they get worse every year,” I laughed thinking how could they listen when they were told to lay their heads down on the hard table with their eyes closed. I want to be entertaining as a teacher unlike the boring ones I

can remember while going to Elementary school. I am inspired to bring theater into my classroom. In contrast to this teacher, I hope to say “my students get better every year.”

3. Awareness developed from connecting my course assignments to the play:

Throughout the readings, discussions, and the performance at Lincoln Center this course has opened my eyes to be more aware of the diversity and the discrimination that still exists today. The most important factor I learned is to become aware of my surroundings and to better understand how all children have many different experiences in life and I must try to involve them in the curriculum. During this course I have learned there are ways and possibilities to change or improve the lives of children. As Anna Pennell expresses “I will not lose hope that change can and must be created”¹

The “Twilight: Los Angeles” performance along with the readings and the discussions we reflected upon in class will help me to serve my future students with a greater insight and understanding of the struggles and challenges all children, especially minority students, face in the classroom and in everyday life.

¹ Pennell, A. (2003). Toward compassionate community: What school should be about. In S. Shapiro, S. Harden, and A. Pennell (Eds.), *The Institution of Education*. (4th ed.). (459). MA: Pearson Custom Publishing.

When I first entered this class I would think about my future and how nice it would be to leave my neighborhood and move to a better one. Now I realize that I have the power to better the one I live in now. I never took notice of the seemingly small things that make being a white person a privilege in American society. With this in mind, our schools are in dire need of reform. I realized that for our society to change somebody has to take the first step, which I plan on doing in my classroom.

There are certain events or moments in your life that touch you forever. I am taking this education courses as a requisite to be able to work in public schools when I graduate with my speech pathology B.A. However, because of this course I am thinking of getting my masters in education. I over-tallied into this class and for that I am very grateful. This has been my favorite class here at this College and the one that has affected and taught me the most. This class makes you think on your own and makes you want to change the world. Though I, by myself, in my own classroom cannot change the society we live in, if I can change the 30 students I have, it will be because this class taught me how.

4. Awareness through the gesture of putting on someone else's shoes: The play had four actors who crossed gender and race barriers to portray a variety of different characters. The actors alerted the audience of their changes in characters by taking off their shoes and putting on a different pair. This fascinated the students.

This poetic gesture acknowledges that we should not judge one another but rather put ourselves in the position of the other person, learn to understand cultural difference rather than judge them.

I couldn't help but relate this back to being a teacher. Teachers need to "put themselves in their students' shoes." It is crucial for teachers to constantly be aware and conscious of the individuality amongst their students and to try their best to accommodate and care for each one on his or her level. In addition, we must teach children to put themselves in their neighbor's shoe- to humble themselves to understand, we as human beings all possess the same emotions.

The most important factor I learned is to "put myself in someone else's shoes." To become aware of my surroundings and to better understand how all children have many different experiences in life and I must try to involve them in the curriculum.

So, what can be done in a multicultural environment to familiarize the children with differences that they encounter in their closely-knit socially intimate setting? Honestly, the solution to this dilemma seemed impossible to find. After having observed the performance of "Twilight: Los Angeles," at the Lincoln Center Institute, I was able to come up with a

potential answer. Seeing how the actors would switch shoes mid-performance to take on someone else's character, I wondered why the same action should not be emulated in the classroom.

5. Finding agency. What students will do when they become teachers:

My obligation as a teacher will be to ensure that children are taught different perspectives so that they themselves can choose their own path. This is as important, if not more, as teaching them their basic academic subjects.

There has to be a way to change the inequalities and racism that is imbedded in our system. It can start in the classroom, as future teachers we must incorporate ways into our hidden curriculum to change these stereotypes and inequality of different groups based on their ethnicity and race. It is also essential to understand that your students are not the only ones experiencing the learning process but you as the teacher can learn a great deal from the students as well.

After taking this course I came to realize that my task as a teacher is going to require a tremendous amount of time, patience and effort. The reason being that my responsibility will not only require me to teach these

children how to read, write, and count, but also how to be open minded and diversified individuals.

There are still many inequalities floating around us but I believe that if we continuously have teachers who are willing to put forth their effort into making a better educational system, then we can eventually have students who learn the values of love and equality. With these values, students will open their mind and heart and use them to love each other's differences and eliminate conformity.

My job as their teacher will be to make sure they all feel equal to one another and that there is no prejudice or segregation present in our classroom.

6. Development of compassion through identifying with a particular group in the play:

Personally for me since I am not considered a minority I feel as if I have taken for granted the rights and privileges I am offered in every day life.

As I watched the performance along with the recorded live footage of the Rodney King beating and the riots, I too could feel the voice

of the unheard. In some of the scenes they performed they made me feel really emotional. I wanted to cry in some of the scenes.

The importance of compassion is especially felt from Anna Deavere Smith's portrayal of a storeowner, Mrs. Soon Young Han. Mrs. Han represents the reality about American dream.

The essays we read to compare to *Twilight: LA* boiled down to whites holding down the black people. Rich white men are not, in the vast majority, stepping over blacks to get where they are. I have been set up to so I would have to write a paper filled with half truths and exaggerations, holding high the black people but putting down whites.

Despite my positive experience with the Lincoln Center Institute and the Aesthetic Education Program, I am aware of several important factors: First, that there is not one specific work of art can challenge all viewers because the power of an aesthetic experience lies in the relationship between the work of art and what the observer brings to that encounter, how the work of art moves the observer. Each person completes the work of art in different ways depending on his or her life experiences. I also understand that one specific work of art may not empower all my students to become agents of social change because individuals bring a collection of experiences that may or may not guide them towards feeling compassion. There was one student in this case study who came out feeling very bitter about this entire process and my course. His final paper, which did not demonstrate his difference of opinion, had a letter attached to it that said the following:

I disagree with much of what I wrote in my final essay. I had to act like a lawyer and defend things I don't agree with personally. Why? Because all the essays we read to compare to *Twilight*: LA boiled down to whites holding down the black people. Rich white men are not, in the vast majority, stepping over blacks to get where they are.

While I enjoyed the class, it never prepared me to be a teacher. I am as unprepared as I was before the class. We spent half the time talking about society's racial problems, not school related problems. All that stuff is very interesting, but has nothing to do with my future career.

This experience also helped me understand that in order to assure the development of compassion, my emphasis needs to be not in the search for the particular work of art, but on the creation of an aesthetic experience infused with moral concerns. Sue Stinson (1985) agrees that for "an aesthetic model for curriculum to be valid... it sensitizes-rather than anesthetizes-us to moral concerns" (p. 81). Therefore, the Lincoln Center Institute can show us one of many ways in which we can develop the aesthetic experience needed for a transformative pedagogy that promotes social change.

To conclude, I believe that programs such as the Lincoln Center Institute's Aesthetic Education can enhance several important elements key to the development of a transformative pedagogy that promotes social change. These elements are, but not limited to: an understanding that particular aesthetic experiences can make people define themselves with particular identities and that this particular choice of identity can inspire

a deeper understanding of common experiences with oppression, dialogue, action, or even further resentment. This program can also help develop an understanding of multiple interpretations as multiple perspectives, and last but not least, release of the imagination to help develop compassion and social justice. Some important elements that arose out of this experience:

1. Exposing my students to this particular work of art made them define themselves in a new way. It gave them a political identity or strengthened what Maalouf (2000) refers to as “allegiances” (2). Some chose to identify with the Asian community, the African American community, the Anglo community, the marginalized, or the mainstream groups. Some students argued that what happened should be called a revolution instead of a riot. Hence, how they chose to call the piece of art reflected their choice of identity. This particular choice of identity can inspire a deeper understanding of common experiences with oppression or promote dialogue, action, or even further resentment.
2. Multiple perspectives allowed my students to understand that the way in which we create meaning and understand the world is deeply connected to our individual experiences. There are no right or wrong ways of looking at one situation, there are multiple interpretations.
3. By portraying other people’s emotions, as in the activity explaining the experience of discrimination, they felt more compassion for the characters

in this particular play. Therefore, the embodiment of others' emotions brings compassion.

4. Finding different ways of reconciliation. Their final reflections showed different ways in which they reconciled with the events portrayed in the play. Some understood their role in the matter and moved toward immediate action; others moved towards a more reflective position, and still others moved towards anger and further resentment.

References:

- Maalouf, A. (2003). *In the name of identity: Violence and the need for belonging*. USA: Penguin Books.
- Stinson, S. (1985). Curriculum and the morality of aesthetics. *Journal of Curriculum Theorizing*, 6, 66-83.

4. Research plans for the upcoming year:

I am finished collecting and analyzing the data for my research. This coming year will be dedicated to presenting the findings in professional educational conferences and submitting articles for publication in several scholarly journals.

Yolanda Medina, Substitute Lecturer
Elementary and Early Childhood Education
Queens College, CUNY
November 05, 2003.

Critical Aesthetic Knowing: Towards a Theory of Self and Social Understanding

5. Purpose of research:

My work as a Social Foundations of Education instructor, at the Elementary and Early Childhood Education department at Queens College, focuses on Critical Pedagogical practices. These practices intend to create critical awareness in future public school teachers of the social inequalities that affect teaching practices and their power and role as agents of social change to work toward social justice as well as to create classroom environments that will positively affect the future of the children they touch.

As a faculty member of the Education Department at Queens College CUNY, I have the opportunity to work in a collaborative with the Lincoln Center Institute for the Arts in Education, on a program called “Aesthetic Education”. This program offers students and teachers the opportunity to be exposed to works of art such as dance performances, musical compositions, theatrical works, paintings, sculptures, buildings, poems, and stories. In addition and with the help of a teaching artist from the Lincoln Center Institute, we find intersections between the focus of my course and a particular work of art. This is accomplished by designing classroom activities that will help students, before the viewing, understand some key features of the artwork itself as well as to create an aesthetic experience that encourages the release of the imagination, the development of an awareness of the world in which we live, and an understanding of multiple perspectives.

For the 2003-2004 academic year I will integrate into one (each semester) undergraduate course, EECE 201: Schooling in a Diverse Communities, the study, as well as the viewing, of two Lincoln Center performances. Anna Deavere Smith's *Twilight: Los Angeles* will be studied in the Fall 2003 and William Shakespeare's *Mid Summer Night's Dream* will be studied in the Spring 2004.

My intention for conducting this research is to investigate how programs such as the one offered by the Lincoln Center Institute can enhance or complement the social awareness I am trying to create in my classrooms. In other words, my hypothesis will be:

How can Aesthetic Education Programs, such as the one offered by the Lincoln Center Institute, enhance the possibility of developing social awareness and social justice practices when combined with Critical pedagogical practices?

The finding of this research will be developed into a case study that will become the third session of my doctoral dissertation titled: "Critical Aesthetic Knowing: Towards a Theory of Self and Social Understanding." Please find in this packet a copy of my approved dissertation prospectus.

6. Source of Subjects and selection criteria:

The subjects selected for this case study will be the consenting students enrolled in an undergraduate EECE 201: Schooling in a Diverse Community during Fall 2003 and Spring 2004 semesters. This course maximum enrollment per semester is of 25 students.

7. Procedures:

The tool that will be used to measure if this Aesthetic Education program enhances the possibility of developing social awareness and social justice practices when combined with critical pedagogical practices will be the student's final assignment. This assignment will consist on a paper in which, using the LCI's Aesthetic Education Program (performance and activities) as a backdrop, they will reflect on the entire semester's assigned readings on race, culture, social class, and gender, along with its respective class discussions. In these reflective papers, I will be looking for narratives that demonstrate a new understanding of the possibility for social action and their roles in creating changes. These narratives will be used as anonymous quotes in the case study to support my hypothesis.

8. Potential harm:

This research involves less than minimal risk to human subjects. All students will have the opportunity to enjoy the LCI's Aesthetic Education Program regardless of their refusal to participate in the research. The consent form will have a clear statement indicating that non-participation of their part will, in no way, affect their final grade nor their Queens College academic standing. The consent form will also clearly state that, if decided later, they may withdraw their participation for this research at any time.

9. Confidentiality:

The students' names will be kept completely confidential. After grading all papers, I will proceed to select the papers of those students who consented to be part of the case

study. At this point, I will black out, with the use of a permanent black marker, all their names and personal information.

As stated before, I will be looking for narratives that demonstrate a new understanding of the possibility for social action. These narratives will be anonymous quotes in the case study to as tools to demonstrate how this particular Aesthetic Education program may have enhanced my pedagogical practices.

I will be the only person with access to these final reflections and I will keep them for a period of three years in a locked cabinet in my office at the Elementary and Early Childhood Education department at the Queens College campus. During this time, students may request the return of their final paper. After three years, I will proceed to shred the uncollected data.

10. Deception:

I will debrief the entire research process the day the final paper is due, which will be during the last class meeting of the semester (December 18 and May 17). The only information that will be withheld from the students is the specificity of what I am looking for in their narratives. The reason for this is that if told they will make sure it is in their papers. This will cloud the effects of the research. I will not be able to determine if the intervention had a direct effect on their social consciousness nor will I be able to determine how this aesthetic education program enhanced or complemented critical pedagogical practices. This will be explained to them on that particular day with a reiteration that their participation in this research will, in no way, affect their final grade and that they may withdraw their participation for this research at any time.

11. Oral and Written Consent process:

At the time of the consent process, an explanation of the purpose of this research as well as a description of the case study will be given to all the students (read verbatim from the consent form). During the semester, these students have already have been exposed to the Lincoln Center Institute's Aesthetic Education program, which includes: the aesthetic workshops to help students, before the viewing, understand some key features of the artwork itself and the viewing of the performance. At this time, the students will be asked to participate in the research by permitting their narratives to be used as anonymous quotes in the case study. After reading the consent form, time will be allowed to answer students' questions.

The only information that will be withheld from the students is the specificity of what is being looked for in their narratives. The reason for this is that if told they will make sure it is in their papers. This will cloud the effects of the research. The researcher will not be able to determine if the intervention had a direct effect on their social consciousness nor will be able to determine how this aesthetic education program enhanced or complemented critical pedagogical practices.

A debriefing of the entire research process will be done the day the final paper is due (December 18 and May 17). This will be accompanied by a reiteration that their participation in this research will, in no way, affect their final grade and that they may withdraw their participation at any time.

APPENDIX C

CONSENT FORM FOR PARTICIPANTS IN THE RESEARCH PROJECT

Queens College/CUNY
65-30 Kissena Blvd.
Flushing, NY 11367

CONSENT TO SERVE AS A PARTICIPANT IN A RESEARCH PROJECT

Project Title: Infusing Aesthetic Experiences in Critical Pedagogical Practices.

Project Director/Investigator: Yolanda Medina, Substitute Lecturer.
Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education (718) 997-5313.

You are being asked to participate in a research project conducted through Queens College CUNY. If you decide to participate, Queens College requires that you give your signed authorization to participate in this research project.

A basic explanation of the project is written bellow. Please read this explanation and discuss it with the Research Investigator. If you then decide to participate in the research project, please sign the last page of this form.

Infusing Aesthetic Experiences in Critical Pedagogical Practices.

The purpose of this research is to understand how Aesthetic Education Programs, such as the one offered by the Lincoln Center Institute, may complement the pedagogical practices utilized in the course EECE 201: Schooling in Diverse Communities. The findings of this research will developed into a case study that will be become the third session of the investigators doctoral dissertation titled: "Critical Aesthetic Knowing: towards a theory of self and social understanding".

If you volunteer to take part in this research, **your participation will consist in giving permission to the investigator to use narratives from your final reflection paper to create a pool of anonymous quotes that will only be used to support the case study.** As you know, this final reflection consists on a paper in which, using your experiences with the Lincoln Center Institute's Aesthetic Education Program (performance and activities) as a backdrop, you will reflect on the semester's assigned readings and class discussions.

There are no risks in being in this study. Your participation in this project is completely voluntary and will only be for the semester in which you are enrolled in the course EECE 201: Schooling in Diverse Communities. **DECIDING TO NOT PARTICIPATE WILL, IN NO WAY, AFFECT YOUR FINAL GRADE FOR THIS CLASS. You may withdraw your participation at any time without penalty. If you decide to not participate, your final paper will not be used for the pool of narratives. The investigator has the right to terminate your participation in this project if for any reason you fail to turn in your final paper or you receive a final grade of incomplete.**

Participation in this project will not incur any economic expenses nor there will be any compensation for your participation. However, it will be a great contribution to the building of a strong collaborative between Teacher Education and Aesthetic Education programs which promote the infusion of the Arts in pedagogical practices.

Queens College/CUNY
IRB APPROVED:

11/12/23 to 11/12/24

Your name will be kept completely confidential. Your narratives will become part of a pool of anonymous quotes that will only be used to support the case study. The investigator, Yolanda Medina, will be the only person with access to your final paper and it will be kept for a period of three years in a locked cabinet in Elementary and Early Childhood Education department at the Queens College campus located in Powdermaker Hall, office number 054 E. During this time, you may request the return of your paper. All uncollected data will be shredded after three years.

The approval stamp on this consent form indicates that this project has been reviewed and approved for the period indicated by the Queens College (CUNY) Institutional Review Board for the Protection of Human Subjects in Research and Research Related Activities.

You are not waiving your legal rights by agreeing to participate in this study. If you have any questions about your rights as a research participant, you may call: Office of Research and Sponsored Programs, Queens College (CUNY). Telephone #: (718) 997-5400.

If you have concerns or questions about the conduct of this research project you may call: Yolanda Medina, Substitute Lecturer/ Department of Elementary and Early Childhood Education, Queens College (CUNY). 65-30 Kissena Blvd. Flushing, NY 11367. Telephone: (718) 997-5313.

Consent Statement:

By signing this consent form, I agree to participate in this research project. The researcher has answered all the questions I had to my satisfaction. I understand that I may refuse to participate and that this refusal will not affect my final grade in this, EECE 201: Schooling in Diverse Communities class, and that I may withdrawal from this research at any time without penalty. I received a copy of this form. I consent to take part in the research project entitled: "Infusing Aesthetic Experiences in Critical Pedagogical Practices."

Printed Name of Participant

Participant Signature

Today's Date

Printed name of research/Study Investigator

Signature of research/Study Investigator

Today's date

Institutional Review Board Approval Stamp

Queens College/CUNY
IRB APPROVED:



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APPENDIX D

LCI LETTER OF APPROVAL TO USE THEIR AESTHETIC PROGRAM

your dissertation - Message

Page 1 of 1

 **WebMail - your dissertation** 

Date Sent: Monday, December 01, 2003 11:14 AM

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All best,
Mady

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