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by

Lauren Ellis Burrow

May, 2012

A NARRATIVE EXPLORATION OF OFFERING THEATRE ARTS EDUCATION TO  
LOW SES STUDENTS

A Dissertation Presented to the  
Faculty of the College of Education  
University of Houston

In Partial Fulfillment  
of the Requirements for the Degree

Doctor of Education

by

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May, 2012

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

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**“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the LORD, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”**

**(Jeremiah 29:11)**

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### Abstract

This narrative inquiry attempts to explore the researcher's passion and connection to theatre arts education, the review of literature that supports the need for the study, her personal struggle to present significant qualitative research in a quantitative world, and a synopsis of what *The Fifth Ward Project* --- a theatre program in a low socioeconomic (SES) elementary school setting --- meant to those who experienced it. Its primary purpose is to answer the overarching question of what meanings did the participants of *The Fifth Ward Project* make of their lived experience. By examining previously presented quantitative survey data (which explored the overall academic impact of the project) in combination with new qualitative interview and written materials data, the researcher hopes to extol the merits of theatre arts education (especially for low SES students) while also offering a revelatory look at the reality and obstacles of implementing said education in a low SES setting. Finally, as an emergent researcher and lover of the arts, she also considers the sub-textual question of whether or not the meanings made were enough.

This research can be used to add to the advocacy for the inclusion of theatre arts in the school curriculum and a starting point for discussion of what to be aware of when pushing for said implementation. This is a story of hopes and hindrances from the voices of those who shared in the experience of *The Fifth Ward Project*.

*Keywords:* theatre arts education, arts advocacy, arts for all, arts for low SES students, benefits of theatre arts

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## Chapter I

### Introduction

**“Research is a learning process ... every project should educate the researchers as well as the readers” (Malina, Norreklit, & Selto, 2011, p. 66).**

The following narrative inquiry explored my own passion and connection to theatre arts education, my personal struggle to present significant qualitative research in a quantitative world, the review of literature that supported my study, a justification for adding a qualitative phase in order to clarify the meanings of my previous quantitative results, and a summary interpretation of what the 2010 - 2011 school year theatre classes of *The Fifth Ward Project* --- a theatre program in a low socioeconomic (SES) elementary school setting --- meant to those who lived it. Altogether I sought to answer the overarching question of **what meanings did the participants of *The Fifth Ward Project* make of their shared experience.** I explored this question by examining the previously acquired quantitative data (which surveyed the overall academic impact of *The Fifth Ward Project*) in light of newly gained qualitative discussions. It was my intention to uncover the joys, obstacles, delights, and frustrations of both the teachers and the students. Finally, as an emergent researcher and lover of the arts, I will also be considered the sub-textual question of whether or not the meanings made were *enough*.

I wrote this introductory chapter for myself, my audience (i.e., my dissertation committee), and my future readers. I wrote this chapter because a reflective researcher is a stronger researcher; when you take the time to self-assess your own research, you learn what to do better the next time around. This chapter also acted as a “director’s extended cut with commentary.” It afforded me the opportunity to explain my vision to my

audience so that they could be more fully invested in my work as I attempted to turn their attention to the pressing need for theatre arts education in low SES school settings

This was partly a narrative extolling the merits of theatre arts education (especially for low SES students) and this was partly a revelatory look at the reality and obstacles of implementing said education in a low SES setting. This research could be used to add to the advocacy for the inclusion of theatre arts in the school curriculum and as a starting point for discussion of what we should be aware of when pushing for said implementation. This was a story of hopes and hindrances from the voices of those who shared in the experience of *The Fifth Ward Project*.

Often we do not consult the faces of education when making decisions concerning our students. “Seeing schooling small is preoccupied with test scores...while it screens out the faces and gestures of individuals, of actual living persons” (Greene, 1995, p. 11). It was my hope that my study would move past the merely evaluative needs of the outside stakeholders (i.e., Houston Endowment) to provide a narrative story that gave voice to the needs of the student and teacher stakeholders. This study sought to look past the “small” numbers of survey data in order to look at the “bigger” issue --- the true needs of students as expressed in the retrospective interviews.

The study also aimed to offer relief from the pressure to provide quantitative accountability for theatre arts success. Continuing down the path of lobbying for arts based on their worth to other subjects is one that arts advocates undertake at our own peril. For if we secure our place in the schools based on what we can do to improve the “core” curriculum, then we run the risk that teachers and students “will come to feel anger at being locked into an objective set of circumstances defined by others” (Greene,

1995, p. 124). If we continue to claim that we improve math scores and the like then soon we will probably be called upon to prove that we actually do so. And in today's emphasis on accountability, standardized testing is the "true" litmus test for such claims. There is still the possibility that theatre arts education does actually improve students' math abilities (Eisner, 2001, p. 7), but maybe we should just keep that our little secret. Perhaps we would better serve our students if we can convince the schools to include us in the curriculum on our own merits and on our own terms. This study encouraged me (and, hopefully, my fellow arts advocates) to be confident in asserting our worth based on our own merits as illustrated by student and teacher stories.

### **Why Theatre?**

Theatre is a part of all of us. From the time of the ancient Greeks, theatre has been a way to showcase the life we have lived, celebrate the life we are living, or re-imagine the life that could have been or should be. Theatre was part of what Maxine Greene (1995) referred to as "social imagination: the capacity to invent visions of what should and what might be in our deficient society, on the streets where we live, in our schools" (p. 5). Today, actors can stretch their imaginations to create new worlds and/or stretch their voices to comment on the conditions of the current world in order to provide an entertaining, informative, comedic, or dramatic escape for the audience. For children, participation in theatre arts education can open the worlds of imagination, critical thinking, and self-confidence in a collaborative and safe environment. Theatre can help the voices of young children to be heard, where previously no one was listening to them (Greene, 1995, p. 3). Theatre can allow children the opportunity to work through their issues of today or imagine the possibilities of their tomorrows. And participation in

theatre arts can be unquestionably and refreshingly FUN! This was the case for me. I fell in love with drama at an early age and it has remained a strong influence in my life ever since.

As a non-athletic child, theatre gave me a place to shine and pretend, an opportunity to feel a part of something, and the chance to take pride in my work publically. That is the beauty of theatre --- no matter your skill level, your ability, or your background there is always a place for everybody. On stage or off, the theatre welcomes all ages, all abilities, and all backgrounds to become a part of something greater. When I was in public elementary school it was offered both as a class and an afterschool club. Additionally, I was fortunate enough to be enrolled in summer acting classes at a local theatre. When I graduated onto private middle and high schools the focus on quality theatre arts education and performances often outweighed even academic obligations in other classes. My involvement with the theatre continued as I received an honors B.A. in Theatre Arts and then became a drama instructor for young children for many years. As a former theatre student and theatre instructor I have witnessed (from both the vantage point of the stage and the audience) the magic that can occur when one participates in this experience. I have felt the warmth of the spotlight and the internal sparks of confidence, imagination, and pride that it ignites. I have cheered as a student has found their voice and claimed their spot on the stage of life. I have grown as an individual within a team. And I have bowed to and applauded a job well done.

Today, the skills I honed on and off the stage, have interwoven themselves throughout my life --- I am constantly calling on my public speaking and presentation

skills as a student and teacher. Theatre gave me the confidence to walk into unfamiliar situations, the ease to work with a variety of people, and the freedom to play and perform with my students. During my doctoral studies, theatre, once again, took the center stage in my life.

In late 2009, I was a fresh new doctoral student listening intently (though with much trepidation) to the advice of seasoned students: *Pick a topic you LOVE or you will be sick of it by dissertation. Don't pick a topic just because your advisor hands it to you. Pick your research topic early so you can use all of your course assignments as stepping stones to completing your dissertation.* I was eager to dutifully follow their sage advice, but I had no idea what I wanted to study. Sitting in my Quantitative Methods course I was convinced I had to come up with some novel, ground-breaking study of scientific import and impact ... but what?! I had so many interests and felt I could use my research powers for so many goods. And then it just fell in my lap.

I saw the University of Houston's School of Theatre and Dance's (UHSOTD) Deluxe Entertainment Camp for Kids (DECK) program featured on a local news station. After seeing that my own university was hosting a theatre camp for area-children, I contacted Anne<sup>1</sup>, the Associate Director of Theatre Education, to discuss the program and to see if I might be able to work with/for the project in some capacity. In November 2009, we discussed an overview of the summer 2010 DECK program, specifics of the Houston Endowment grant, future projects, and the overall benefits of theatre education for young children. In January 2010, it was formally requested that I head up a research component for the DECK program.

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<sup>1</sup> Names of participants and schools have been changed for anonymity.

I evaluated the DECK summer experience by documenting the activities participated in by the campers and counselors with interviews of key staff members and pre- and post- attitudinal surveys of the participants (campers and counselors). After completing my internal evaluation of DECK, I was honored with the request to head up a program evaluation of *The Fifth Ward Project*, an on-going theatre arts program in low SES schools that was part of the same grant. It was perfect for me. Theatre had been a part of my life since I was seven years old, so I do not know how I had not seen it before! Eager to do right by them, I set to work learning about the project, its goals, its mission, and its needs so I could design the evaluation option best-suited to their program needs (Fitzpatrick, Sanders, & Worthen, 2004).

The formative program evaluation of *The Fifth Ward Project* served as the central focus of my previous research. The evaluation included the design of a student attitudinal pre-survey and a teacher rubric (see **Appendix A**) in order to measure if participation in the program impacted students' appreciation for theatre arts, creativity, problem solving, team work, and focus/concentration on school work. After successfully presenting my findings to UHSOTD, I presented the report to my doctoral committee for preliminary review. And this was where our story picked back up. The subsequent script details the process I underwent to transform my program evaluation report into a more meaningful, face-filled story of student and teacher experiences. What started out as an evaluation of a theatre arts program ended up as an exploration of what matters most and what makes a difference for low SES students --- in the classroom, in a teacher, and in arts advocacy.

**Why this Project?**

**The setting: History of *The Fifth Ward Project*.**<sup>2</sup> In early 2009, the University of Houston's School of Theatre & Dance (UHSOTD) received a \$260,000 planning grant from the Houston Endowment.

Houston Endowment supports nonprofit organizations and educational institutions that produce and maximize enduring benefits for the people of the greater Houston area. Jesse H. and Mary Gibbs Jones established Houston Endowment as a private philanthropic foundation in 1937 to help create a community where the opportunity to thrive is available to all. ("Houston Endowment," n.d.)

In partnership with Houston Independent School District (HISD), UHSOTD kicked off the use of the grant monies in June 2009 (June 4 – 26, 2009) by offering a three-week Summer Theatre Camp (DECK) for 80 children, ranging in ages from ten to twelve years old and in the 4<sup>th</sup> to 6<sup>th</sup> grade from four different Fifth Ward-area elementary schools. Following the success of the summer camp, the project continued as *The Fifth Ward Project*.

Juliet (program coordinator and lead teacher) and Hermia (assistant teacher) were hired to lead the 2009 - 2010 school year instruction of 3<sup>rd</sup> to 5<sup>th</sup> grade students at three Fifth Ward-area schools (Verona, Midsummer, and Tempest Elementary). The school year program brought one hour per week of theatre arts instruction during the school day to students who had not ever previously received theatre arts instruction (Anne, personal communication, October 29, 2009). Classes were divided into approximately 22 students per class with one school receiving instruction in the mornings and one school receiving

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<sup>2</sup> A report of the project's initial history, as summarized by the project's executives, is provided in **Appendix B**.

instruction in the afternoons. During the school year, the class included a physical warm up, a vocal warm up, theatre games, and a lesson from the Creative Dramatics Curriculum developed by Anne (Juliet, personal communication, August 15, 2010). Additionally, twenty 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders from two of the schools applied to attend afterschool theatre classes, two days per week. This component of the project resulted in the development of a play for HISD Mini-UIL One Act Play Festival<sup>3</sup>; this was the first time the Fifth Ward Schools participated in this festival.

In August 2010, the school year theatre classes were resumed and were offered to 158 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students, ranging from ages eight to twelve years old, at two Fifth Ward-area schools (Verona and Midsummer). In both instances, true to the demographic makeup of their Fifth Ward locale, the student population was made up entirely of either Hispanics (Verona) or Blacks (Midsummer) with approximately 59% - 84% of all students labeled at-risk and at least 96% receiving free/reduced lunch. **Appendix C** includes a publicly-accessed demographic make-up of Verona Elementary. Verona, which is a combination of two schools that were facing closure due to low enrollment, served as the setting for the students interviewed during this qualitative phase of my study.

**The plot: Goals of *The Fifth Ward Project*.** In general, this project existed to expose students to the skills associated with theatre arts with the intention that the

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<sup>3</sup> “The UIL One-Act Play contest is a competition where similarly sized Texas schools present an 18-40 minute play usually adjudicated by a single judge. The contest is held on a single day and is open to the public. There are five possible levels of competition: Zone, District, Area, Region, and State. At each level of competition the judge awards individual acting awards as well as selecting two productions to advance to the next level of competition. After the awards are announced the Judge gives an oral critique to each of the schools. Because of the wide participation and diversity of plays produced certain rules and guidelines have been adopted by the State One-Act Play Office. These rules are in place to ensure safety, allow for equity, satisfy legal standards, and make the running of the contest practical” (University Interscholastic League, n.d.).

acquisition of those skills would both provide unique enjoyment for the students and translate into classroom success. While Anne felt that there was a benefit for the students, school teachers, and the community, the formative program evaluation presented in my previous research focused solely on the benefit to *students* involved in the project. For the 2010 - 2011 school year theatre classes, the goals, according to Juliet, were that “students [would] carry over the focus and concentration skills, problem solving and creative thinking ... self confidence to speak in front of others in class... and teamwork skills” (personal communication, August 15, 2010).

These skills are considered imperative for success not only in theatre classes, but also in the 21<sup>st</sup>-century. In a letter to school and education community leaders, Arne Duncan, Secretary of Education, reminded us that “the arts can help students become tenacious, team-oriented problem solvers who are confident and able to think creatively. These qualities can be especially important in improving learning among students from economically disadvantaged circumstances” (“The Department of Education,” 2009). *The Fifth Ward Project* provided a means to ensure that all students --- regardless of socioeconomic status --- had access to a class that could positively impact both their academic and personal lives. And it was time to tell their story.

For the final phase of my study, I employed Greene’s (1995) vision of seeing big and seeing small (p. 10 – 11) to represent the significant academic data from my previous research but then also offer a deeper, more meaningful look at the personal data offered by the program’s teachers and select students. This more focused look gave priority to those motives that theatre arts advocates are often reluctant to give center stage to in the

debate for the inclusion of theatre arts in school settings --- the pure joy, imagination, creativity, and possibility that awaken when students participate in theatre.

### **The Terms**

I defined the terms, “**Arts**” and “**Arts education,**” to include the spectrum and teaching of the arts subjects including dance, music, painting and other visual arts, and theatre (unless otherwise noted).

Fitzpatrick, Sanders, and Worthen (2004) defined the term, “**Formative program evaluation,**” as an evaluation of a program “conducted to provide program staff evaluative information useful in improving the program” (p. 16)

I used Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) definition of the term, “**Mixed Methods,**” as a methodology in which the researcher includes a quantitative phase and a qualitative phase in an overall research study” (p. 20).

Juliet’s 2010 - 2011 School Year Theatre Class instructor’s rubric defined the term, “**Appreciation of theatre arts,**” as “student demonstrates an overall enjoyment of theatre arts activities by participating in both the role of observer (audience) and participant (actor) and actively seeks to improve their craft through practice (rehearsal) and training (theatre exercises)” (see **Appendix A**).

Juliet’s 2010 - 2011 School Year Theatre Class instructor’s rubric defined the term, “**Creativity,**” as “student demonstrates a willingness to experiment with and display their creativity by making interesting character choices, trying new activities, and seeking a response that is not the typical one to any given situation” (see **Appendix A**).

Juliet's 2010 - 2011 School Year Theatre Class instructor's rubric defined the term, "**Problem solving**," as "student demonstrates a willingness to solve problems on their own accord by using appropriate inter-relationship skills" (see **Appendix A**).

Juliet's 2010 - 2011 School Year Theatre Class instructor's rubric defined the term, "**Working with other (or Teamwork)**," as "student demonstrates a willingness to work respectfully and successfully with others to achieve a common goal" (see **Appendix A**).

Juliet's 2010 - 2011 School Year Theatre Class instructor's rubric defined the terms, "**Focus and concentration**," as "student demonstrates an ability to focus and concentrate on tasks presented to them or activities they are involved in during work, play, and instruction times" (see **Appendix A**).

The United States Department of Education (2000) defined the term, "**Low Socioeconomic Status (low SES)**," as students ranking in the lowest quartile when the following factors are considered: "parental education level, parental occupation, family income, and household items" (p. 315).

Baylor University's Center for Community Research and Mission Houston's Houston Profile Project (2003), Lyon, Rodabough, Driskell, Mencken, Embry, Terrazas, and Williams (2005), and OnBoard LLC (2007) defined the term, "**Fifth Ward**," as "The approximate makeup of Houston's Fifth Ward (which is located NE of Downtown Houston) is 48% Black and 48% Hispanic, more than 38% of the population has a household income less than \$15,000, more than half of adults do not have a high school diploma, and only about 6% of adults have a college degree" (n.p.).

### **Need for the Study**

This study answered the call for theatre education-related research on two stages. First, it brought notice to the idea that our nation is not truly interested in addressing the lack of arts in schools serving low SES populations. Second, it brought attention to the lack of recognition theatre education receives within arts advocacy, itself. And finally, it discussed topics of research that members of the arts community consider to be of highest importance for bolstering their advocacy (including topics like “teaching,” “curriculum,” “instructional context,” and “teacher preparation” (National Arts Education Association (NAEA), 2008, p. 2)).

Dramatic behavior “is a universal behavioural [sic] faculty innate in everyone. We are all actors. We all make dramatic use of ourselves to represent our experience to others” (Ross, 1978, pp. 74-5); and, therefore, all students should be afforded access to quality theatre arts instruction. Advocates of the arts know this intuitively and statements like Education Secretary Duncan’s call to recognize “the importance of the arts as a core academic subject and part of a complete education for all students” (“The Department of Education,” 2009) give the impression that the rest of the nation may be finally realizing this universal truth, as well. However, actions speak louder than words. At a time when schools are making critical and difficult decisions regarding curriculum budgets, the money flow reveals where the nation’s interests truly lie.

In his 2011 State of the Union address, President Barack Obama claimed that “what America does better than anyone else -- is spark the creativity and imagination of our people” (n.p.). However, minutes later in the speech he advocated that in order for our nation to be the best we must prepare “100,000 new teachers in the fields of science

and technology and engineering and math” (n.p.), commonly known as STEM. What President Obama appeared to be arguing was that by placing more emphasis on the study of STEM, at the expense of arts education, we would create a more creative and imaginative society. If we wish to continue to inspire creativity and imagination in our nation, though, it makes more sense to financially invest in the inclusion of quality arts experiences for ALL students from quality arts teachers, rather than seeking to emphasize STEM training and instruction at the cost of all other pursuits. However, “in a society that values measurement and data-driven research, the smiling faces of students are not enough to allocate scarce resources to funding arts education programs” (The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City, 2006).

To stand a fighting chance when it comes time for budget allocations, arts programs must often succumb to the pressure to argue their worth in terms of their ability to affect student outreach, “edutainment,” and/or employability (Woodson, 2004, p. 26). In essence, we must attempt to fit into President Obama’s mismatched logic as to what inspires successful creativity in our students (i.e. more class time focus on STEM). When we talk of core curriculum and the ability to compete in a global economy “what, it is insistently implied, can be more important than being ‘number one’ in the world? (Surely not the happiness and health of children, released to find their own ways of being children and of existing in the world)” (Greene, 1995, p. 32). We would never force Picasso to reign in his vision to a more conservative, easier-to-digest-and-justify paint-by-numbers approach, and neither should we have the arts prove *their* worth by the numbers. Instead, we should focus our attention on those research needs that truly

matter, those that provide effective advocacy for and showcase the value of arts education for our young students.

In 2008, the National Art Education Association (NAEA) invited its members to participate in an online assessment of the research needs they perceived as most important to the field of art education. As reported by NAEA (2008), their members perceived the following research needs as “highly important”: teaching (88.7%), curriculum (88.5%), instructional context (82.9%), and teacher preparation (80.1%) (p. 2).

This study presented the previously unheard stories of *The Fifth Ward Project* participants in order to address those areas of research that art advocates find to be most significant. By presenting the stories of theatre arts participants, I hoped to encourage the national dialog to demand the inclusion of the arts based on their own merits, and not their worth to *other* subjects (like STEM). I also hoped to shift the dialog within the arts community, itself, to readily recognize the inclusion of the theatre arts in their definition and discussions of the arts.

When the NAEA invited its members to comment on the research needs of their field, the invitation was to *visual* arts education, so I had to take the liberty to extend their concerns to *theatre* arts. I was forced to make generalizations and extensions like this one throughout this study. The truth is that while the nation needs to pay more attention to *arts* education, the arts community, itself, needs to pay more attention to *theatre* arts, specifically. Time and again, I found that strong and vocal proponents of the arts do not, in general, include “theatre” in their definitions of “arts education.” Both Greene (1995) and Eisner (1998; 2001), focused their influential words on the visual arts or those that

encourage bodily motion (interestingly, this usually includes “dance” but not “theatre”), while neglecting to mention or advocate for theatre arts. It was my hope that my study could remind the arts community to welcome theatre arts back into their family as they call upon the nation to welcome them all into their homes (i.e., their children’s classrooms).

### **Statement of the Problem**

The Texas Education Agency’s (TEA<sup>4</sup>) website requires that a school district that offers grades K-12 must offer an enrichment curriculum that includes Fine Arts. School districts must ensure that sufficient time is provided for teachers to teach and for students to learn Fine Arts (19 Texas Administrative Code, Chapter 74, Subchapter A , §74.1 , §74.2 , and §74.3). Fine Arts at the elementary and middle school levels include Art, Music, and Theatre. (Texas Education Agency, 2010)

However, in the years since No Child Left Behind<sup>5</sup> (NCLB) the Center on Education Policy reported that “44% of districts reported cutting time from one or more other subjects or activities (social studies, science, art and music, physical education, lunch and/or recess) at the elementary level” in order to accommodate “increased time for English Language Arts (ELA) and/or math in elementary schools since school year 2001 - 2002 (the year NCLB was enacted)” (Center on Education Policy, 2007). So while

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<sup>4</sup> “The Texas Education Agency (TEA) is the administrative unit for primary and secondary public education. Agency responsibilities include: managing the textbook adoption process; overseeing development of the statewide curriculum; administering the statewide assessment program; administering a data collection system on public school students, staff, and finances; rating school districts under the statewide accountability system; operating research and information programs; monitoring for compliance with federal guidelines; and serving as a fiscal agent for the distribution of state and federal funds” (TEA, 2010).

<sup>5</sup> NCLB Act of 2001 was passed to “ensure that all children have a fair, equal, and significant opportunity to obtain a high-quality education and reach, at a minimum, proficiency on challenging State academic achievement standards and state academic assessments” (U.S. Department of Education, 2004).

schools push to close the “achievement gap” by insisting more time is spent on ELA and math, the “everything gap” --- which equips low SES students with the tools, scaffolding, and reasons for learning --- is widened as time spent in other core subjects like the arts is slashed.

As a result of the arts education gap, the 2008 National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) indicated that “the average responding scores of 8<sup>th</sup>-graders in high-poverty schools<sup>6</sup> were 45 points lower in music and 43 points lower in visual arts than the respective scores of 8<sup>th</sup>-graders in low-poverty schools<sup>7</sup>” (Institute of Education Sciences, 2011, p.54). Luckily, the disparity of access to arts learning opportunities amongst low- and high-SES schools has become a recently championed cause by communities, celebrities, and arts agencies. However, the focus of their campaigns has primarily been on music and the visual arts (e.g., VH1 Save the Music Foundation) . The National Center for Education Statistics’ (NCES) recent report of selected national data on the status of arts education in public elementary and secondary schools reflected the headway they are making --- in 2009 - 2010 “most of the nation’s public elementary schools offered instruction that was designated specifically for music and visual arts (94 and 83 percent, respectively)...[in comparison, though, only] 4 percent offered instruction that was designated specifically for drama/theatre” (Institute of Education Sciences, 2011, p. 2). In fact, the 2008 Nation’s Arts Report Card, the fifth National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) still did not include an assessment of theatre due to the fact that “the small number of U.S. schools with programs in theatre

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<sup>6</sup> High-poverty schools are defined as schools where more than 75% of students are eligible for free or reduced-priced lunch [FRPL].

<sup>7</sup> Low-poverty schools are defined as schools where 25% or fewer of students are eligible for FRPL.

and dance resulted in too few data points for assessment in those disciplines” (Arts Education Project, n.d.).

So, while the TEA may be mandating theatre arts instruction in elementary schools, Texas schools --- like the rest of the nation --- do not seem to be complying. Similarly, while there are those championing the need for arts education in the schools, they do not appear to be including theatre arts in their dialog (Eisner, 1998, 2001; Greene, 1995). So whether due to budgetary limitations, time constraints, skewed educational priorities, and/or a misunderstanding of the potential long-term impact of the subject, schools continue to fail our students when it comes to providing them a complete and well-rounded education which includes theatre arts instruction. But, more importantly, they are failing to provide our low SES students with the opportunities for hope. “Far too seldom are such young people [i.e., “at risk” students] looked upon as beings capable of imagining, of choosing, and of acting from their own vantage points on perceived possibility” (Greene, 1995, p. 41) --- and that is simply unacceptable!

### **Purpose of the Study**

Anne requested that the formative program evaluation be conducted in order to analyze the effects of participation in the 2010 - 2011 school year theatre classes. It was deemed necessary so as to provide a more quantifiable representation to the Houston Endowment of the project’s benefits, growths, and possible improvements. The formative program evaluation offered a simple snapshot of quantitative data gathered about the participants, their self-perceptions in a variety of categories (including their overall academic abilities). It was in the end, however, what Greene (1995) would call a “small” look at this experience:

To see things or people small, one chooses to see from a detached point of view, to watch behaviors from the perspective of a system, to be concerned with trends and tendencies rather than the intentionality and concreteness of everyday life.

To see things or people big, one must resist viewing other human beings as mere objects or chess pieces and view them in their integrity and particularity instead.

One must see from the point of view of the participant in the midst of what is happening if one is to be privy to the plans people make, the initiatives they take, the uncertainty they face. When applied to schooling, the vision that sees things big brings us in close contact with details and with particularities that cannot be reduced to statistics or even to the measurable. (p. 10)

Since completing my obligation to the Houston Endowment, I have been freed to pursue my own “bigger” direction for the study. The purpose of offering a narrative story of the experience was to provide a more meaningful account of a shared experience. The study sought to give a voice and put a face on theatre arts education so that we could begin rethinking what theatre arts truly means to its participants and why that should be enough!

The purpose of my research was to: (1) provide a personal narrative reflection of how my life chose my dissertation topic --- theatre arts education --- and how my doctoral degree requirements led me on the quest to discover the research methodology best suited for researching and advocating for said topic, (2) offer a more comprehensive picture of *The Fifth Ward Project* based on the re-examination of my original research and the new exploration of the meanings made of *The Fifth Ward Project* by its teachers and student participants, and (3) determine if the meanings made were *enough*. As a

secondary objective, I hoped to open a dialog with fellow theatre arts advocates as to the needs associated with successfully implemented theatre arts classes: (1) the type of teacher is needed in order to offer the best experience to low SES students and (2) the type of research is needed for advocating for theatre arts education for this specific subgroup of children.

### **Research Questions**

The original program evaluation questions --- *Did The Fifth Ward Project impact students' appreciation of theatre arts? Creativity? Problem solving? Team work? Focus/concentration on school work?* --- served as the catalyst that sparked the need for a qualitative phase for my research. Through the collection of quantitative survey data and qualitative, retrospective interviews I sought to make sense of the overall experience by exploring the following research question: **What meanings did the participants of *The Fifth Ward Project* make of their lived experience?**

### **Why this Method?**

**To thine own self be true?** I had heard the stereotypical scenario of first-year psychology students foolishly (and often ineffectively) attempting to self-diagnose their friends and family as they learned each new term and medical condition. What many do not know is that a similar phenomenon can happen with doctoral students in education programs. With each new research method that I learned, I developed a semester-long allegiance to that type until I learned about the next, greatest way to solve educational issues. It became increasingly frustrating trying to cram my own research topic into the method-du-jour, though. Despite my gallant efforts to comply with research protocols and reporting templates, I was usually left with the unmistakable feeling that my work

was incomplete. The following was written to provide a personal record of how I waded through the numbers and the narratives to discover, on my own, the perfect balance of “what” and “why” in order to uncover the meanings made during a shared experience of a theatre arts program for low SES students.

**A new direction and a new method for my research.** Regrettably, I must admit that when I presented the formative program evaluation data for my previous research my motivations and arguments centered on the typical arts advocacy claim of academic skills improvement. I spent much of that report searching high and low for past literature that could help my case for the quantifiable need for theatre arts in low SES schools as based on the transference of skills to core academic areas or the ability to improve test scores; the results were thin and not too terribly convincing. I was *determined* to make a case appear out of thin air, though. My desperate search was much like novelist, poet, academic, medievalist, literary critic, essayist, lay theologian and Christian apologist C. S. Lewis’ quest to scientifically disprove Christianity in support of his atheistic beliefs. By undertaking his journey to disprove God’s existence, he actually ended up persuading himself of the truth in Christianity. He recounted his journey in the pamphlet *The Case for Christianity* (1942). Similarly, I set out with great conviction to demonstrate that the theatre arts could save students by improving success in other academic subjects. Then along came Elliot Eisner and Maxine Greene who helped me realize that there just was not enough evidence to support such claims. Through my research journey I learned that instead of pushing to prove something that I could not, I should embrace the fact that I did not need to prove it. I recounted my journey of realization that the arts were enough

merely on their own merits in my dissertation “A Narrative Exploration of Offering Theatre Arts to Low SES Students” (2012).

In one of his many articles for *Art Education*, Eisner (2001) sagely summed up the simple yet significant reason why we must include theatre arts education as part of every child’s core curriculum based merely on its own qualitative merits and not its testable worth. Eisner (2001) encouraged:

It would be a shame if in our pursuit of excellence in our schools we forgot the primary reason we are there. That reason, I have suggested, has to do with what teachers can give students at a human and deeply personal level. Such contributions may never show up on the SATs, but we know that they are the most important contributions that we can make (p. 10).

And while he was mainly referring to his specialty, the visual arts, I felt justified in claiming his rationales for a sister art --- theatre arts. Bam! It was like being hit by a freight train going at full speed!

Burger and Winner (2000) echoed Eisner’s sentiments by asserting that “studying the arts should not have to be justified in terms of anything else. The arts are as important as the sciences: they are time-honored ways of learning, knowing and expressing.” And David Hornbrook (1985) and Peter Abbs were known for leading a revolt against the state of theatre arts education in the British school systems, claiming that “devoid of art, devoid of the practices of theatre, devoid of artistic and critical terminology, drama became a method of teaching without a subject” (Abbs, 1992, p. 2). Finally, Greene passionately believed that “we must make the arts central in school

curricula because encounters with the arts have a unique power to release imagination” (1995, p. 27).

A new, wonderful possibility for the direction of my research swept over me: giving a “voice” to the experience of those participating in the theatre arts classes. I realized my research should be devoted to listening to the storied experiences of those students and teachers who saw first-hand how theatre arts can influence those skills that low SES students so desperately need to be taught (Jensen, 2009), but that cannot be quantified on a test (or survey) --- like self-confidence, respect for self and others, and creativity.

In her book, *Releasing the Imagination: Essays on Education, the Arts, and Social Change*, Maxine Greene pored over the importance of our experiences. She referred to Mary Warnock (1978) when encouraging us to believe that there “is more in our experience of the world ‘that can possibly meet the unreflecting eye, that our experience is significant for us, and worth the attempt to understand it ... there is always *more* to experience and *more in* what we experience than we can predict.’” (p. 202, as cited in Greene, 1995, p. 22). In that spirit, I reviewed my own experience with the arts --- what they meant to me and how they continue to shape my life today --- and reexamined their true place in young students’ lives. Reluctantly but realistically, I reconciled myself to the fact that the arts are not *necessary* for successful graduation to college or *necessary* for successful employment/life outside of school. No, the arts merely offer life, hope, the prospect of discovery, and light (Greene, 1995, p. 133). The arts are an innate and *necessary* component of our lives because they ensure that we do not live a life devoid of magic, of hope, of possibility. The arts are what separate us from other species --- not

our language, not our ability to use tools, not our ability to make tools; no, it is our ability to choose to pursue, create, and appreciate art in all its forms. The expression of ourselves through the arts is what makes us uniquely human. So, how do you capture the stories of humans with quantitative surveys and statistical interpretations? The answer was --- you do not.

**Have your pie chart and eat it, too.** One could argue that qualitative research may not have a place in the scientific studies of drug use or in brand marketing for a new shoe, but education is not concerned with products --- it is concerned with *people*. And people want to know why; people want to share their voice; and people have a heart. The study of people is a qualitative need prompted by quantitative results that left us asking “why?!” It’s not a case of fact vs. fiction, but rather a case of facts and factors. “We, as the ... research community, have to face the fact that both numbers and words convey meaning and both are needed if we are to understand the world. Gherardi and Turner (1987) suggest that the issue is one of knowing when it is useful to count and when it is ‘difficult or inappropriate to count at all’” (as cited in Malina, Norreklit, & Selto, 2011, p. 60). Qualitative research can provide the important factors that determine the quantitative facts. It can reveal and explore those extraneous variables that we are taught to account for, those factors that sometimes would go un-identified without a probing investigation with qualitative techniques.

Think about it. “Numbers alone do not tell the story ... Qualitative analysis includes context and adds understanding that numbers alone cannot” (Malina, Norreklit, & Selto, 2011, p. 64). Why would you not want to know “why” you are getting the numbers you are getting from your subjects? Why would you not want to give a “voice”

to your participants that represent the data you are confidently reporting? Why would you not want to give some “heart” to arts advocacy? Educational research is, at its heart, a study of people. And people would sometimes rather eat the pie than be forced to fit into a pie chart. This is where qualitative methods become advantageous. Qualitative methods allow us the opportunity to interpret people’s motives and/or rationales. And that is what education research is about --- *why* is this happening and *how* can we use our new-found knowledge to help the people affected? It is difficult and delicate but, if done with care and precision, it can be infinitely more substantial and insightful than a solely quantitative analysis.

As a mother of three young children, I should have known that my research topic needed a healthy dose of qualitative research injected into it. After all, when my son insists on pinching his big sister when she steals his building blocks I do not create a frequency table measuring the number of times he pinches her and expect to find a cause that I can address and discourage, nor do I spend time computing the probability that he will do it again. No, I *talk* to him and give him a chance to explain the situation in words, *not* numbers, so that I can attempt to find a rational and effective way to discourage his hurtful actions. Sure, there was a quantitative observation and hypothesis of the situation that prompted my curiosity to investigate it, but in the end I would rather know *why* he was doing it not just that he *is* doing it. And for all those nay-sayers who still think qualitative methods are the “easy” answer, you try verbally decoding the motives and frustrations of a 2-year old. Trust me; it is much easier to tabulate a toddler than tinker with trying to interpret their ever-changing attitudes and ever-evolving perspectives.

So, I chose to take the “road less traveled” and offered an alternate ending to the previous direction and methodology of my research for *The Fifth Ward Project*. While I included my previous arguments for the inclusion of arts education --- academic skills improvement --- I amended them to include the arguments that Greene (1995), Eisner (2001), and others had made --- the arts need to be included not for “arts sake, but for our sake” (Burger & Winner, 2000).

## **Chapter II**

### **Review of Related Literature**

#### **We Prepare for Tomorrow by Learning about Yesterday**

Just as great actors hone their craft by studying the great performers before them, so must a great researcher enhance their work by recognizing the visionaries upon which their work is founded upon or situated in. This chapter was included to provide an overview of related literature by offering brief discussions of topics and themes connected to theatre arts education and, specifically, *The Fifth Ward Project*. The chapter begins by detailing the historical background of theatre in society and in education. Following the historical background, the learning theories that can be associated with theatre arts education were discussed. Next, the benefits of theatre arts education (specifically to low SES students) were highlighted; included was research that both supports and limits the transference of skills learned in theatre arts classes to other subject areas and the consideration of “other” benefits. Other theatre arts education programs from across the United States were briefly reviewed in comparison to *The Fifth Ward Project’s* “artist in residence” set-up. Finally, the characteristics of an effective theatre arts teacher for low SES students were generalized and an argument for my chosen mixed methodology was offered.

#### **History of Theatre Arts in American Schools**

“From the very beginning of civilization, the theatre has helped us discover and understand ourselves and our relationship with our world [and] with others...” (Bruch, 1990, n.p.). Since the time of the ancient Greek tragedies, theatre has endeavored to entertain, move, and educate us. Since then, theatre has continued to serve a multitude of

purposes in societies around the world. It is believed that theatre was present on American soil before the arrival of Columbus, as Native American tribes practiced theatrical experiences. Theatre's place in Western history continued through the settlement of Jamestown, as the site of President Abraham Lincoln's assassination, and even heavily influenced early film, radio, and television productions. Theatre's place in the history of American education is just as notable --- as Robinson (1980) explains, "The use of drama in schools goes back as far as schooling itself" (p. 141).

While theatre arts education may have been a part of American education from the start, "recognition of drama as an active educational field, distinct and unique, only began in the 1940s ... [when it] freed itself from the status of merely serving as a tool to teach the English language" (Urian, 2000, p. 2). At that time Peter Slade came along with "child drama," which "aimed at an educational concept with the child at its centre [sic]" (Urian, 2000, p. 2). Next came "development through drama" which "aimed at assisting and supporting development of the child" (Urian, 2000, p. 2). Then in the 1990s "there was a move back towards consideration of educational drama, which is also making its return in productions of school plays" (Urian, 2000, p. 3). The recent priority of theatre arts education in schools has dissipated, though, as schools tend to see it as an entertaining, ancillary activity (Greene, 1995, p. 134) that can be pursued after school. Those arts agencies that seek to advocate for the return of theatre arts education to the school day often emphasize two limited approaches to drama education, as characterized by David Hornbrook (1985): (1) drama as an emotional tool which contributes to the emotional development of those who attempt theatre and (2) as a tool for teaching various subjects. But in today's climate of high-stakes testing and immense pressure to succeed

in academic subjects, the limited scope of these approaches leaves theatre arts' place in American education seriously at risk.

Ironically, the skills that students need in order to close not only the “achievement gap” but also the “everything gap” probably will not be found on a standardized test, but lay waiting in the activities of theatre arts classroom. Theatre arts gives students what the modern classroom is often lacking --- an authentic, interactive experience that taps into multiple intelligences and constructs social situations for learning real-world values, skills, and knowledge. “The art world is a *constructed* world” (Greene, 1995, p. 136). It is a space that can be created by and for students --- a common best practice that has long been touted by educational theorists for successful student learning.

### **Learning Theories of Theatre Arts Education**

While many in the theatre arts field would argue that “educational drama has no established and agreed [upon] theory” (Urian, 2000, p. 2), there are actually many learning theories that arguably fit with the typical activities/skills associated with theatre arts education. There is one, often cited theory of learning, though, that I and Roper and Davis (2000) argue does *not* fit as a foundation for theatre arts education --- Gardner’s (1993) Multiple Intelligences (MI) Theory. While many arts advocates and community theatre websites cling to MI as the champion for the non-traditional (i.e., non-testable) benefits of theatre arts education, the truth is that Gardner never referenced nor dealt with theatre but instead focused his interests (like most of today’s arts advocates) on music and visual arts. Rather than trying to jam theatre into six of the nine intelligences, theatre arts advocates would be better suited to realize their commonalities with social learning theories like Vygotsky’s (1978) constructivism of learning, social development theory,

and social constructivism theory of learning; Bandura's (1977) social learning theory; and Jean Lave's (1990) situated learning theory.

Theatre arts education, like social learning theories, depends on social settings that allow for group interactions and real experiences in order for learners to construct their own meaning and arrive at their own knowledge. A theatre arts classroom provides an equivalent shared space of "interchange and shared discoveries" (Fosnot, 2005, p. 116) and what Vygotsky's social development theory named as the More Knowledgeable Other (MKO) --- a teacher or even a peer "who has a better understanding or higher ability level than learner, with respect to a particular task, process, or concept" (Learning Theories Knowledgebase, 2011a). In providing an MKO, students can learn theatre arts skills in a Zone of Proximal Development (ZPD), which is the distance that exists between a student's ability to perform a task with adult guidance and/or with peer collaboration and the student's ability to solve the problem on their own (Vygotsky, 1978). In the elementary school classes of theatre arts, the curriculum, like social constructivism, often recognizes that "no-one has the answer sought or a solution to the problem involved but that, by working together, an outcome can be achieved that is superior to what any individual participants could have achieved alone" (Wells, 2002, p. 4). It is this purposeful collaboration amongst classmates that allows many to argue that theatre arts education also borrows its theory of learning from Bandura's (1977) social learning theory.

As in Bandura's (1977) social learning theory, theatre arts education requires "attention, memory, and motivation" (Learning Theories Knowledgebase, 2011b). In the theatre arts classroom students must pay attention to one another on- and off-stage in

order to understand their role in the context of a scene. Additionally, by paying attention to others' performances, their own performance can improve and grow. Memory is a key skill in theatre arts production, as students must first memorize lines if they are to share their craft with an audience. Finally, theatre arts education often relies on the responsive support of individuals or the group to motivate students to develop new interests, skills, and understanding --- which may or may not have planned by the teacher but are in direct response to student improvisation.

In Lave's (1990) situated learning theory, the learning is unintentional and situated within authentic activity. The learning and acquisition of knowledge, as a result, implies the need to "think on the fly." Theatre arts education is often associated with improvisational activities that seek to determine how well students have internalized theatre skills. Finally, the curriculum of situated learning "requires instructional design that draws on apprenticeship models common in real life" (Lave & Wenger, 1990). Theatre arts instruction is often characterized as an apprenticeship model of learning in which students study the craft of an expert in order to acquire the behaviors and skills necessary for success in the field.

In conclusion, many individuals associated with theatre arts education do not usually concern themselves with the learning theories that could be associated with it. They consider that line of thought to be "'heady' and something that gets you out of your body ---a big 'no-no' to the artist" (Anne, personal communication, July 14, 2011). As a result, theatre arts education does not have a clearly defined theory of learning from which it originates, but instead can arguably pull from many of the social theories of learning to create its own compilation of learning theory foundations. Regardless of *how*

the student is learning in the theatre arts classroom, though, there is evidence that the student *is* learning --- and not just “head” knowledge.

### **Benefits of Theatre Arts Education**

“Theatre arts benefit the student because they cultivate the whole person ... Theatre honors imagination and creativity, and students who engage in theatre benefit from learning these skills and many others that prepare them for the 21<sup>st</sup> century” (Colorado Department of Education, 2009, p. 7). *Table 1* in **Appendix D** illustrates some of the ways in which theatre arts education can teach children to acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century skills like: creativity and innovation, critical thinking and problem solving, communication, collaboration, information literacy, media literacy, ICT (Information, Communication, and Technology) literacy, flexibility and adaptability, initiative and self-direction, social and cross-cultural skills, productivity and accountability, and leadership and responsibility. In addition to the 21<sup>st</sup> century skills of creativity, problem solving, and teamwork, *The Fifth Ward Project* believed its theatre arts classes also taught appreciation of theatre arts and focus and concentration for other school work.

In 1999, *Champions of Change: the Impact of the Arts on Learning* compiled several major studies that presented qualitative and quantitative data on how the arts can improve academic performance and transform learning environments. *Learning in and Through the Arts: Curriculum Implications* (Burton, Horowitz, & Abeles, 1999) was among the seven major studies compiled by *Champions of Change* (1999). Burton, et al. (1999) echoed the conviction of many arts teachers when they reported that students participating in arts education experienced higher levels of creative thinking, cooperation,

risk-taking, willingness to share their ideas and thoughts, and an overall sense of pride in their general school work (p. 38 – 41, *Figures 1 – 5*).

Other findings from studies in *Champions for Change* (1999) as cited in The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City (2006) included:

◆**The arts reach students who are not otherwise being reached.**

Researchers found that the arts provided a reason, and sometimes the only reason, for disengaged youth to become engaged with school or other organizations.

◆**The arts reach students in untraditional ways.** Young people considered classroom failures often became the high achievers in arts-learning settings. Success in the arts became a bridge to learning and eventual success in other areas of learning.

◆**The arts connect students to themselves and each other.** By engaging his or her whole person in creating an artwork, the student feels invested in ways that are deeper than "knowing the answer." Attitudes of young people toward one another also are altered through their arts learning experiences.

◆**The arts transform the environment for learning.** When the arts become integrated into the learning environment, schools and other settings become places of discovery. The school culture is changed and the conditions for learning are improved.

◆**The arts provide learning opportunities for the adults as well as young people.** In effective programs, teachers, parents, and other adults

become coaches and active facilitators of learning. Young people gain an understanding that learning in any field is a never-ending process, and the dynamics between the young and the less-young learners are altered.

◆**The arts provide new challenges for those students already**

**considered successful.** Boredom and complacency are barriers to success.

For students who outgrow their established learning environments, the arts can offer a chance for unlimited challenge. In some situations, older students may also teach and mentor younger students, providing them additional challenges and opportunities for growth.

◆**The arts connect learning experiences to the world of real work.** The

arts mirror the workplace, where ideas and knowledge matter. The ability to generate ideas, to bring them to life and to communicate them — both in the classroom, in the community and in the workplace — are keys to success.

◆**The arts impact students in need of an extra boost.** Arts education increases learning and achievement among economically disadvantaged and learning disabled students. Students needing remedial instruction and very young children also benefit greatly from arts education. (p. 1)

Findings in 2002's *Critical Links: Learning in the Arts and Student Academic and Social Development* echoed what decades of research and studies (*Learning in and through the Arts: Curriculum Implications* (1999); *Champions of Change: the Impact of the Arts on Learning* (1999); *Critical Evidence: How the Arts Benefit Student Achievement* (2005); *1<sup>st</sup> Steps: How Arts Education Creates Better Students, Better*

*Opportunities and Better Futures* (2006); and *Learning, Arts, and the Brain: The Dana Consortium Report on Arts and Cognition* (2008)) have claimed about arts education: a positive relationship between arts education and learning in other academic areas. In the study overview, James S. Catterall noted that learning in the arts "transfers" to assist learning in other contexts. The sixty-two studies included in *Critical Links* (2002) linked arts learning to capacities such as spatial reasoning, persistence, social tolerance, and even SAT scores.

Despite the many reports claiming skill transference success, though, there are many others (The Dana Foundation, 2009; Burger & Winner (2000); American Youth Policy Forum, 2000; & Eisner, 1998) that warned against the validity of those broad conclusions. In their study, Winner and Hetland (2007) "found little academic improvement in math, science, and reading in their arts education program enrollees" (p. E1). They went on to argue (to much controversy) that their study's results highlighted the inherent issue with other arts advocacy studies: namely, that they were arguing that correlations are causations --- and you just cannot do that! Similarly, Eisner (2001) pointedly asserted that "while one day we might find that more experience in the arts boosts academic performance, at the moment there is no body of research that supports that general conclusion" (p. 7). Despite their reluctance to give credence to correlation studies of skills transference and reports of academic improvement, many of the objectors still advocate for the inclusion of theatre education in American schools. Winner (as cited in The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City, 2006) pointedly reminded us why societies have always included the arts in every child's education. The reason is simple. The arts are a fundamentally important part of culture, and an education

without them is an impoverished education leading to an impoverished society. Studying the arts should not have to be justified in terms of anything else. The arts are as important as the sciences: they are time-honored ways of learning, knowing and expressing. (p. 1)

And, Eisner (2001) echoed her sentiment by lamenting:

It would be a shame if in our pursuit of excellence in our schools we forgot the primary reason we are there. That reason, I have suggested, has to do with what teachers can give students at a human and deeply personal level. Such contributions may never show up on the SATs, but we know that they are the most important contributions that we can make. (p. 10)

“Many people still consider the arts to be mere entertainments, without practical use. And ‘it is true enough that the arts will not cure a toothache [or] help very much in surmounting the pressures placed on us by the material world’” (Donoghue, 1983, p. 129 as cited in Greene, 1995, p. 134). But we in the theatre arts field know that theatre arts education provides skills not only necessary for academic success, but also for success in a 21<sup>st</sup> century world --- skills that ALL students, not just those that can afford the luxury of theatre arts education, will need in order to compete and thrive in the future.

### **Benefits of Theatre Arts Education for Low SES Students**

Arts Education Project (AEP) (2002) encouraged that art “could be a valuable asset for teaching students of all ages --- especially those in poor communities” (p. 72). In his 2011 State of the Union address, President Barack Obama appeared to join the call for the inclusion of arts education in ALL schools for ALL children, in order to develop the creativity and innovation they will need to compete and succeed in a global 21<sup>st</sup>

century workforce, economy, and life. The call is needed because in addition to addressing the skills all students need for academic success, theatre arts education can also address non-academic skills and life issues that low SES students are more prone to encounter than their high SES counterparts.

Rocco Landesman, National Endowment of the Arts chairman, as cited in Bauerlein (2010), claimed that

some students don't fit the NCLB regime and other subjects don't inspire them.

Talented but offbeat, they sulk through algebra, act up in the cafeteria, and drop out of school. The arts 'catch' them and pull them back, turning a sinking ego on the margins into a creative citizen with 'a place in society' (p. 44).

Mary Warnock (1978) reaffirmed that "it is a primary purpose of education to deny people the opportunity for feeling bored (p. 202)" (as cited in Greene, 1995, p. 22); a purpose I believe theatre certainly fills. Merriam (1999) added that

the creative experience [of theatre arts] is one way to provide students with a taste of success. There is no pass or fail, no right or wrong way of creating an art project. It is all a matter of individual expression, and achievement is within the reach of every child, regardless of their fluency in English. This helps develop a sense of pride. (p. 31)

Other studies such as the YouthARTS Development Project indicated that "youth involved in arts programs significantly decreased their frequency of delinquent behavior and experienced fewer court referrals" (North Carolina Arts Council, 1999, p. 1).

Finally, Merriam (1999) recounts the intangible benefits of theatre arts education to a low SES student participating in Los Angeles' *Inner-City Arts* program:

A drama teacher asks the children from Ninth Street School to act out their dreams. One becomes a Ninja Turtle, he says, so that he won't die. The child's family is homeless. Being a turtle, he feels, will protect him. He will have permanent shelter. The children cling to their innocence. It is their birthright. And the imagination helps them to maintain it. (p. 33)

Eric Cooper, president and founder of the National Urban Alliance for Effective Education, argued that "arts education enables those children from a financially challenged background to have a more level playing field with children who have had those [referring to theatre arts activities] enrichment experiences" (as cited in Smith, 2009, p. 1). In summary, a strong theatre arts education could help schools close a variety of gaps (and not just academic) that have left many children behind. However essential this study may be for students' personal growth and educational enrichment, though, is there really room to fit theatre arts education in the already busy, jam-packed school day schedule of today's elementary schools?

### **Theatre Arts Programs Around the Nation**

*The Fifth Ward Project* was not the only program designed to expose students to the skills of theatre arts for the purposes of enjoyment and education. Throughout the nation several community programs exist to promote the benefits of theatre arts education for youth. These programs were enacted in response to the perceived educational gaps in theatre arts and seek to provide an opportunity for low SES students to experience the same benefits of theatre arts as their more affluent counterparts.

Most of these programs exist as stand-alone activities provided by the community to students after the regular school day ends. For example, in Detroit there is the Mosaic

Model for Youth Development through the Arts. The Mosaic Model, which served as the inspirational framework for *The Fifth Ward Project*, is “an internationally acclaimed youth development program that concentrates on helping young artists excel on stage and in life” (“About Model,” n.d.). The Mosaic Model relies on high expectations, a safe and supportive environment, and active participation to improve skills, self-image, and societal commitment in youth.

Other programs provide spaces for students to attend during the normal school day. For example, Inner-City Arts, founded in 1989, “provides elementary, middle and high school students, many living in Los Angeles' poorest neighborhoods, with the tools and skills they need to succeed academically and personally” (“What We Do,” 2011, n.p.) through effective arts education. Elementary and middle school students come to the Inner-City Arts campus during the school day “for in-depth instruction in the visual and performing arts” (this is the only arts instruction many students will have during the school day) (“What We Do,” 2011, n.p.). Additionally, the program provides after school programs for elementary and middle school students and opportunities “for focused, long-term study devoted to a particular art form” for middle and high school students on the weekends (“What We Do,” 2011, n.p.).

Finally, other programs, like Chicago Arts Partnership in Education (CAPE) develop arts-integrated curricula for in-school exposure to the arts. The Chicago Public School District, which “saw significant student improvement in reading and mathematics in 14 high-poverty schools in which the Chicago Arts Partnerships in Education (CAPE)” was instituted (The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City, 2006, p. 5). “By 1998, more than 60 percent of CAPE sixth graders were performing at grade level on standard

tests, while the remainder of the CPS schools averaged just over 40 percent” (The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City, 2006, p. 5).

The methods for dealing with the theatre arts education gap differ across the nation, but collectively they all strive to eradicate the discrepancy that exists for low SES students who often do not get the much-needed exposure to theatre arts in their schools and/or personal lives. While each method of intervention has its merits, *The Fifth Ward Project* offered yet *another* method of delivering theatre arts education to impoverished youth --- what I characterized as the “artist in residence” method, the impact of which this study sought to explore and report.

### ***The Fifth Ward Project* --- An “Artist in Residence” Program**

*The Fifth Ward Project* differed from some of the other programs offered across the nation in response to the theatre arts education gap in that it essentially provided an “artists in residence” (or “Teaching Artists” (TAs)) experience during the normal school day. The theatre arts classes were part of the normal school curriculum and schedule and took place in a normal school classroom. For the 2010 - 2011 school year, a state-certified teacher (Juliet) was in charge of instruction and a University of Houston theatre arts undergraduate (Hermia) served as an assistant. “Artists in residence” in the days of yore were poets, painters, and musicians who were housed in castle courtyards or boarding schools so that they could pass on their wisdom to students while still pursuing their daily artistic activities. Today, like in the case of *The Fifth Ward Project*, they can merely be experts in various artistic fields who are brought into schools to inspire students, make them aware of career aspirations, and expose them to artistic opportunities not previously made available to them.

In my experience as a creative writing TA, my mere presence would ignite the energy of the classroom. From the moment they caught the first glimpse of me arriving in their classroom doorway I would hear the high-pitched squeals of excitement spreading over the classroom: “The writer is here! The writer is here!” And despite their best efforts to adhere to their classroom rules, students often times could not contain their excitement and would leap from their desks to greet me with hugs and wide smiles. Likewise, at the mere mention of Juliet’s name when I introduced myself to the students during their paired interviews, I was greeted with exclamations of: “Oh, I MISS HER!” There was the unmistakable shimmer in their eyes as they attempted to contain the excited energy that they associated with Juliet and the former theatre class time. So, what type of teacher is necessary to ensure that ALL students have access to these “sudden shimmers when artists visit” (Greene, 1995, p. 10) their school day?

### **Characteristics of Effective Theatre Arts Teachers in Low SES/Minority Settings**

Currently, the majority of theatre arts teachers could be considered “artists in residences” or TAs. As a general rule, when these TAs teach in low SES schools they see their students on a limited basis, are not considered part of the regular faculty, and often are awarded only short-term assignments before having to move on (due to lack of funding or schedule limitations). As a result, TAs face numerous obstacles that are in addition to the typical issues facing every teacher in low SES school settings, but an effective theatre arts teacher can surmount the odds when they rely on the principles that inherently makes theatre arts an effective and enjoyable class.

**Engagement.** “Engagement is job one for TAs in schools. ... They must win students' commitment quickly, and they've found the best way to do that is to take

students' interests and ideas seriously” (Rabkin, 2012, n.p.). Good theatre performances hinge on engaging the audience in the subject matter by making it relatable and relevant to them. Likewise, good theatre education depends on engaging the students in the process by opening it up to the pursuit of their ideas and interests.

**Imagination.** Greene (1995) emphasized the need for all teachers to embrace and exhibit imagination in themselves so as to encourage imagination in their students: “Imagination is as important in the lives of teachers as it is in the lives of their students” (p. 36). Theatre arts instructors inherently acknowledge and appreciate the importance of imagination because at the heart of theatre and theatre arts education lays the *need* for imagination --- to construct new worlds and new ideas worth sharing.

**Collaboration.** Today, student-centered learning is generally accepted as the most effective instruction method for today’s classrooms and often demands that the method of instructional delivery center on collaborative work. According to Pajewski and Enriquez (1996), based on their cultural influences, collaboration in the classroom is especially essential to Hispanic students: “When they are called upon, they will often freeze, get confused and embarrassed as they try to answer. They feel much more comfortable responding in groups, doing exercises together, and helping each other” (n.p.). Since this study was set in a low SES school that served a predominantly Hispanic population (see **Appendix C**), I felt that Pajewski and Enriquez’s (1996) advice was particularly relevant for ascertaining the effectiveness of both the instructor and theatre arts class offered by *The Fifth Ward Project*.

Unfortunately, many of today’s traditional academic subjects do not have the luxury to set up effective group work scenarios during the limited class time afforded for

their instruction; they must instead focus on drilling skills for individual performance accountability. Theatre arts, however, essentially mandates the need for group work in class. Professional theatre allows for the break out of solo stars, but mainly it asks for the cooperation and collaboration of an ensemble. Similarly, theatre arts instruction works best when it allows for a space where ideas and individuals can come together to create safe, spontaneous, new worlds.

“TAs think about ‘connections’ as a social concept -- they build connections between students by encouraging them to learn about and from each other, and by structuring collaborative projects” (Rabkin, 2012, n.p.). As cited in Greene (1995, p. 39), Arendt (1958) referred to a shared arts experience creating an “in-between” among students (p. 182). While Arendt was referring to this experience occurring after a journal is shared or an art creation is displayed, I feel that the same can occur when students perform for their peers in class or on stage. Theatre arts education is a collaborative experience that builds connections between and confidence in its participants to create a constructivist-based classroom.

**Respect.** Ruby Payne (2008) highlighted the need for respect in low SES classrooms, but clarified that “building a respectful relationship doesn’t mean becoming the student’s buddy. It means that teachers both insist on high-quality work and offer support” (p. 48). As a professional craft, theatre demands attention to detail, dedication to the process, and high standards of professionalism to achieve remarkable and memorable work. As an educational pursuit, theatre demands the same high-quality efforts to produce worthwhile experiences for the participants and audience. Teachers of theatre arts have the fortunate position of being in charge of meaningful play times, but

they must remember and stress to the students that the play time is *meaningful*. “Making a thing or experience meaningful is a fundamental goal of art making, and when TAs refer to 'making meaning', they are referring to putting knowledge to use to create something that matters -- both intellectually and emotionally” (Rabkin, 2012, n.p.). So while theatre arts classrooms are filled with fun and play, they should also be filled with a respect for how hard you must work at making play meaningful.

**Teacher efficacy.** Craig (2011) reported that:

Several studies have shown a correlation between teacher expectations and student achievement (Benner & Mistry, 2007; Diamond, Randolph, & Spillane, 2004; Rosenthal & Jacobson, 1992). Some researchers suggest that teachers hold lower expectations of African American and Hispanic students than of White and some groups of Asian/Pacific Islander students (Anderson-Clark, Green, & Henley, 2008; Diamond et al., 2004; McKown & Weinstein, 2008). Other researchers have found that teachers hold lower expectations for low-income students (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008; Benner & Mistry, 2007). (p. 4)

These lowered expectations feed students' low performances and perpetuate a vicious cycle of poor learning outcomes in low SES/minority settings. Theatre arts classrooms break this cycle because they generally welcome ALL students --- of ALL abilities and ALL backgrounds. If a theatre arts teacher can confidently recognize that they have the skills to reach all students, regardless of any barriers, then their high self-efficacy (Rubie-Davies, 2007 as cited in Craig, 2011, p. 18) will allow students to succeed and provide mastery experiences for all students.

Low SES students thrive when presented with classrooms that foster engagement, imagination, collaboration, respect, and an expectation of high standards --- skills naturally associated with theatre arts. If theatre arts teachers can incorporate these skills of their craft into their teaching, then they should be well-suited to reach all of their students, despite their often limited time with them. Once an appropriate and effective teacher is enlisted, though, what is then necessary to ensure that they have a classroom in which to teach?

### **The NCLB Challenges that Theatre Arts Education Face: Arguing for Qualitative Matters in a Quantitative World**

McCarthy, Ondaatje, Brooks, and Szanto (2005) pointed out that students from lower income families often get little exposure to the arts if they are not provided by schools ... Arts education can help close the gap between socioeconomic groups, creating a more level playing field between children who may not be exposed to these enrichment experiences outside of school and some of their more privileged peers. (n.p.)

So, why are today's low SES students not receiving the government-mandated allocation of time in arts classes like many of their higher SES peers routinely enjoy? In 2011's *Reinvesting in Arts Education*, the President and the President's Committee on the Arts and Humanities (PCAH) again called our attention to the fact that those most in need of the creative power of arts education are those who are *not* receiving it due to budgetary constraints or school time being allocated for the narrowing subjects tested by NCLB's standardized tests.

NCLB was enacted to ensure that ALL students receive a fair, equitable, and successful education; however, what has often resulted as schools try to meet its requirements is a shortage of time to teach what is not tested (i.e., the arts). Ironically, it is high achievement on these tests that could ensure proper funding for those non-tested classes that are being cut in order to better prepare students for testable subjects. So, how can arts advocates convince external funding sources to invest in them when they cannot show improved scores on a measurement that is not designed to measure them?! The answer is to use quantitative methods in conjunction with qualitative techniques to highlight their impact on student achievement and lives. As explained in the next chapter, theatre arts advocates need to mix methods in order to support their research for a data-driven society who needs to see their true hART!

### **Chapter III**

#### **Methodology**

“You can’t pursue any kind of inquiry without a relatively clear framework that’s directing your search and helping you choose what’s significant and what isn’t... If you don’t have some sort of a framework for what matters — always, of course, with the proviso that you’re willing to question it if it seems to be going in the wrong direction — if you don’t have that, exploring the Internet is just picking out the random factoids that don’t mean anything... You have to know how to evaluate, interpret, and understand... The person who wins the Nobel Prize is not the person who read the most journal articles and took the most notes on them. It’s the person who knew what to look for. And cultivating that capacity to seek what’s significant, always willing to question whether you’re on the right track — that’s what education is going to be about, whether it’s using computers and the Internet, or pencil and paper, or books” (Chomsky, 2012).

#### **Quantitative Student Surveys and Teacher Rubric**

My study of *The Fifth Ward Project* began with the project supervisor’s request to provide a more quantifiable representation of the project’s benefits, growths, and possible improvements for its 2010 – 2011 school year theatre classes to the Houston Endowment (the “human impact” of the summer 2010 DECK had been previously captured on video by the project staff and used as an advocacy tool for the project). After discussions with the project’s executives, it was determined that an objectives-based, formative program evaluation would be conducted to analyze the overall academic and social impact of the project on student participants. After review of techniques commonly associated with

program evaluations, I decided that student surveys and a teacher rubric would be the most effective and efficient instruments for gathering data.

Originally, the evaluation sought to use the attitudinal surveys and teacher rubric to answer the following evaluation questions: Did participation in *The Fifth Ward Project* impact students' (1) appreciation for theatre arts, (2) creativity skills, (3) problem solving skills, (4) ability to work with others/teamwork, and (5) focus and concentration on work activities? As is common in longitudinal studies, *The Fifth Ward Project* executives wished to cast a wide net with regards to student background information, so I also included survey items that sought to determine students' attitudes towards general academic and arts-related subjects and perceptions of their own academic abilities, theatre abilities, and social values.

### **Characteristic of an Effective Program Evaluation**

In order to know the definitive success of a program, it must be evaluated. "Evaluation provides formative feedback that helps guide a program as it is being implemented. It also provides summative data that clearly demonstrates that the program is accomplishing its stated goals and objectives" (The American Psychological Society, 2002, p. 1). According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention's (CDC) website, "there are six connected steps<sup>8</sup> that together can be used as a starting point to tailor an evaluation" (Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC), 2004, p. 1).

In the first step, evaluators engage the stakeholders in order to understand their questions or values as they will influence the remainder of the evaluation. In the second step, the evaluator describes the program in detail to express the mission and objectives of the evaluated program. In the third step, the evaluator focuses the evaluation design in

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<sup>8</sup> In the case of *The Fifth Ward Project* all six steps were adhered to the best of my abilities and capacities.

order to determine the design option best-suited to the stakeholders' needs for the evaluation. If the evaluation design is pre-planned then it will have "the greatest chance of being useful, feasible, ethical, and accurate" (CDC, 2004, p. 1). In the fourth step, evaluators gather credible evidence that will communicate a complete and credible depiction of the program. "Although all types of data have limitations, an evaluation's overall credibility can be improved by using multiple procedures for gathering, analyzing, and interpreting data" (CDC, 2004, p. 1). In the fifth step, evaluators justify conclusions on the basis of evidence that includes standards (as set forth by the Joint Committee on Standards for Educational Evaluation), analysis and synthesis, interpretation, judgment, and recommendations (CDC, 2004). In the final step, the evaluator must make a conscious effort to disseminate the evaluation's findings.

### **Characteristic of an Effective Survey**

Surveys allow researchers to obtain information that cannot be obtained in other ways (Fowler, 2009, p. 3). They gather information from a group of people about a certain topic in order to measure the nonphysical world (e.g., attitude, emotion, perceptions, knowledge, demographics) (Horn, 2011). In the case of *The Fifth Ward Project* a longitudinal, attitudinal survey was created to analyze the entire population of participants in the 2010 - 2011 school year classes.

According to Fowler (2009), good survey design relies on the combination of "sampling, design questions, and data collection"<sup>9</sup> (p. 4). Fowler distinguished a *sample*: "a small subset of a population representative of the whole population" from a *census*: "a means of gathering information about every individual in a population" (p. 4). With

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<sup>9</sup> In the case of *The Fifth Ward Project* all three elements were considered to the best of my abilities and capacities.

regard to question design, Fowler (2009) declared that the researcher must consider the extent to which they will utilize literature reviews, expert consultants in question design, and pre-testing of questions (p. 7). Finally, Fowler (2009) described the multitude of ways by which a researcher can collect data and how each method can affect the cost and quality of the survey data (p. 7).

Horn (2011) summarized the steps in survey research as follows<sup>10</sup>:

1. What is the purpose of your survey?
2. Who is the target population? What will your sample look like?
3. Choose how the data will be collected.
4. Write good questions.
5. Design a questionnaire that is easy to answer, interesting, and important.
6. Organize survey team appropriately (optional) and administer instrument.
7. Enter the data and analyze it.

### **Evaluation Design for the 2010 - 2011 School Year Theatre Classes of *The Fifth Ward Project***

**General overview of pre-survey and teacher rubric development<sup>11</sup>.** In order to evaluate the 2010 – 2011 school year classes of *The Fifth Ward Project*, I created a pre-survey for students and a student evaluation rubric for the teacher, which are included in **Appendix A**. The original content of the rubric items was crafted by me based on interviews with the key stakeholders involved with the program (i.e., the project coordinator/lead teacher and the project supervisor) and my personal expertise in theatre arts education. After consulting past literature and receiving final input from Juliet, the

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<sup>10</sup> In the case of *The Fifth Ward Project* all seven steps were adhered to the best of my abilities and capacities.

<sup>11</sup> Details of individual survey item development are included in **Appendix E**.

following were determined to be the measurable/observable benefits of the 2010 - 2011 school year theatre classes: *appreciation for theatre arts, creativity skills, problem solving skills, ability to work with others/teamwork, and focus and concentration on work activities*. These skills were chosen as the criteria of the rubric and “mastered,” “proficient,” “needs improvement,” “does not demonstrate,” and “not yet observed” were chosen as the performance ratings. I then used the rubric criteria and additional categories related to theatre arts to generate the pre-survey items for the students.

The final survey contained 4 demographic items, 7 open-ended, 16 Likert-type scale (with choices: “Love it!,” “Like it,” “Don’t care,” “Don’t know,” “Dislike it,” and “Hate it!”), and 4 multi-choice items (with choices: “Excited,” “Confident,” “Happy,” “Don’t care,” “Don’t know,” “Dislike it,” “Worried,” and “Terrified”) for a total of 31 survey items. Since the pre-survey was the initial phase of an intended longitudinal study, I felt justified in creating an exhaustive number of survey items in order to “mine the most data from the largest population” (Horn, personal communication, February 28, 2011). To help create a shared definition of the anchors, the Likert-type scale and multi-choice items included emoticons.

Formal validation scales were not included with this survey; however, I felt confident that the responses reported on the surveys reflected non-biases on the part of the respondents. For example, select open-ended survey items (e.g., “What do you want to be when you grow up?” and “What is your favorite subject and why?”) were answered with non-theatre-related responses; I felt that if students were trying to respond in a socially desirable way that they would have provided theatre-related responses. Additionally, almost half of the multi-choice items indicated negative feelings on the part

of the respondents; again, I felt that this indicates candor on the part of the students as they were willing to express vulnerability and weaknesses in certain skill areas.

**General overview of pre-survey sample and execution.** Since I only had access to participants at Verona Elementary for the qualitative phase of my study, I chose to only present the pre-survey data for that population sample. The entire student population of Verona reflected its Fifth Ward locale in that it was made up of an almost entirely Hispanic population with approximately 59% - 84% of the students labeled at risk and at least 96% receiving free/reduced lunch. Students were required to pass the TAKS grade level exam to participate in DECK, but all 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade students were eligible for the school year component during their rotating enrichment times. The median age of the respondents was 9.8 years; 75 were 4<sup>th</sup> graders and 83 were 5<sup>th</sup> graders for a total sample size of 158. Two of the respondents spoke limited English, so their surveys were read aloud to them by the instructor and I translated their responses when reporting them.

The paper and pencil surveys were given on the first day of classes (August 23, 2010) to all 158 students who were participating in the 2010 - 2011 school year theatre classes to determine their initial attitudes towards and abilities in academic and arts-related subjects (specifically theatre arts) and their perceptions of their own social values. Since the survey was distributed to the students during class time, the response rate was 100%.

**General overview of post-survey development<sup>12</sup>.** In order to complete the quantitative evaluation of the school year classes, I created a post-survey for students to

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<sup>12</sup> Details of individual survey item development are included in **Appendix F**.

take in the spring of 2011. The original content of the post-survey items was crafted by me based on a descriptive interview with Hermia, analysis of the pre-survey responses, and member checks with Juliet. The final survey contained: 6 demographic items, 1 open-ended item, 6 Likert-type scale items, 3 multi-choice items, and 15 yes/no-type items for a total of 31 survey items (the final version of the post-survey is included in **Appendix I**). The Likert-type scale, multi-choice, and yes/no-type items included emoticons to help create a shared definition of the anchors that I chose.

**General overview of post-survey sample and execution.** Since I only had access to the 4<sup>th</sup> grade participants at Verona Elementary for the qualitative phases of my study, I chose to only present the post-survey data for that population sample. The median age of the respondents was 9.4 years. This time only 54 4<sup>th</sup> graders responded, which was a loss of 28% from the original 75 that responded to the pre-survey. The rate of loss for respondents was due in large part to the transient nature associated with low SES populations (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012).

The paper and pencil surveys were given during the last month of classes (May 2011) to all 54 students who were participating in the 2010 - 2011 school year theatre classes in order to determine their final attitudes towards skills learned in the theatre classes and to measure their perceptions of their own social values. The response rate was 100% since the survey was again distributed to the students during class time.

### **Validity and Reliability of Pre- and Post-Surveys**

**Reliability.** Since item changes were made between the pre- and post-survey, I ran the reliability statistics only on those items which I felt remained the same from pre- to post-survey.

**Cronbach's alpha.** I began my tests of reliability with Cronbach's alpha. "When the items on an instrument are not scored right versus wrong, Cronbach's alpha is often used to measure the internal consistency. This is often the case with attitude instruments that use the Likert scale" (Siegle, 2002, n.p.). The alpha coefficient for 6 of the pre- and post-survey items was .393 ("Reliability Statistics" is *Table 2* in **Appendix J**), suggesting that the items had relatively low internal consistency (since a reliability coefficient of .70 or higher is considered "acceptable" in most social science research situations). The split-half reliability coefficient for the pre- and post-surveys were .345 (part 1, which consisted of 3 items) and .262 (part 2, which consisted of 3 items) ("Reliability Statistics for Split-Half Reliability" is *Table 3* in **Appendix J**), again suggesting that the items had relatively low internal consistency.

**Paired samples T-test.** A paired samples T-Test was conducted on those items that I felt remained consistent between the pre- and post-survey and no significant correlation was found between the pairs (the "Paired Samples Correlations" is *Table 4* in **Appendix J**). There was only a significant value between 4 of the 18 pairs (the "Paired Samples Test" is *Table 5* in **Appendix J**). There was a large negative difference (-6.369) between students' feelings about theatre post- and pre-participation in *The Fifth Ward Project* and a large negative difference (-7.886) between students' self-assessment of "being a good theatre student" post- and pre-participation in *The Fifth Ward Project*, suggesting that students redefined their understanding of what theatre was and what skills it took to be successful at it. There was a small positive difference (2.244) between students' feelings about performance post- and pre-participation in *The Fifth Ward Project* and a small positive difference (2.857) between students' feelings about class

presentations post- and pre-participation in *The Fifth Ward Project*, suggesting that *The Fifth Ward Project*'s intervention worked on these skill areas.

**Test-retest method.** Next, I employed a test-retest method in which reliability was the correlation between the scores on the same instruments given twice to the same group of people. There were 9 significant correlations between the 10 items that I felt were consistent between the pre- and post-survey, but they were low (ranging from .308 to .503) since a correlation coefficient is considered "acceptable" if  $\geq 0.70$  (the "Correlations" is *Table 6* in **Appendix J**).

**Factor analysis.** Finally, a factor analysis for both the pre- and post-surveys was computed and both are included in **Appendix K**.

Overall, the pre- and post-surveys did not appear to be internally consistent instruments of measure over time. Low reliability was a signal of high measurement error which reflected a gap between what students actually believed and what scores I received from them. Several factors may have contributed to this, for example: students' initial unfamiliarity with theatre terms when taking the pre-surveys versus their new understanding of theatre terms when taking the post-survey; the re-wording of some items between pre-survey and post-survey; or the general unreliability of responses from young children whose attitudes, understandings, and beliefs are still forming and constantly evolving.

### **Validity.**

The artificiality of the survey format puts a strain on validity. Since people's real feelings are hard to grasp in terms of such dichotomies as 'agree/disagree,'

‘support/oppose,’ ‘like/dislike,’ etc., these are only approximate indicators of what we have in mind when we create the questions. (Writing@CSU, 2012)

**Content validity.** Content validity is a non-statistical type of validity that involves “the systematic examination of the test content to determine whether it covers a representative sample of the behavior [sic] domain to be measured” (Urbina & Anatasi, 1997, p. 114). In order to improve content validity both Juliet and Anne were used as experts to review the survey content and the selection of survey items for the pre-survey. For the post-survey Juliet participated in an official “review and comment” session to determine whether the items covered a representative sample of the subject domain. In both instances it was determined, by the experts, that the survey items were representative of the subject domain. However when the pre-survey responses were compared to the initial ratings by the teacher’s rubric, it prompted me to question the concurrent validity of the instrument.

**Concurrent validity.** “Concurrent validity refers to the degree to which the operationalization correlates with other measures of the same construct that are measured at the same time” (Writing@CSU, 2012). In this case the surveys were administered to current students and then correlated with their scores from the teacher’s rubric. In general, students’ responses on the pre-surveys did not match scores from the teacher’s rubric, which prompted me to include a qualitative phase in my final study. My hope was to receive more valid information about the student experience by using qualitative instruments to explain and clarify the discrepancies between the quantitative results.

**Use of Survey Data for Qualitative Analysis of *The Fifth Ward Project***

Since “surveys just look at particular aspects of people’s beliefs and actions without looking at the context in which they occur” (de Vaus, 1981 as cited in Horn, 2011), it is often necessary to analyze their results in light of or in conjunction with knowledge gained from other research techniques. It is particularly necessary to add secondary analysis techniques when dealing with attitudinal surveys since attitudes are “an affect for or against, evaluation of, like or dislike of, positiveness or negativeness towards a psychological object” (Mueller, 1983 as cited in Horn, 2011) and the measurement of these complex constructs may never be truly valid (Horn, personal communication, February 07, 2011). It was for these reasons and the previously discussed validity and reliability concerns with the survey results that the quantitative data from the formative program evaluation (originally presented in my program evaluation report) was only integrated into the qualitative discussion when it was able “to provide a bigger and richer picture” (Pope, 2006 as cited in Horn, 2011) of *The Fifth Ward Project* experience.

**Mixed Methodology --- Know Thy Enemy**

As was previously detailed in my Introduction (“Chapter One”) and as was further explored in my Results (“Chapter Four”), after presenting the quantitative results during a preliminary stage required by my University’s doctoral program, my doctoral committee and I decided to complete the study with a qualitative phase. This section details how my study went from a solely quantitative report of survey data to a mixed methods study containing both a quantitative and qualitative phase.

Many methods-purists try to boil down the debate to one between merely “numbers” and “words,” but in order to fully understand (and subsequently utilize) both methods, one must dig deeper and familiarize them self with the characteristics, strengths and weaknesses, language, and approaches of both qualitative and quantitative research. In **Appendix L**, *Figure 3* offers a concise overview of some of the basic differences and commonalities between qualitative and quantitative methods; *Table 15* illustrates how each method defines the essential elements of an accurate research study: *reliability*, *validity*, *sampling*, and *generalizability*; *Table 16* addresses the general strengths and weaknesses of quantitative research; and *Table 17* addresses the general strengths and weaknesses of qualitative research.

For many pro-quantitative research “die-hards,” the argument hinges on the unscientific nature of qualitative research, but as Malina, Norreklit, and Selto (2011) point out, “Unlike the stereotype of qualitative research as loose and random, theory building requires methodological rigor on par with quantitative methods. Although a compelling story makes a good read, the impact of qualitative study comes from rigorous method” (p. 65). Again, *Table 15* in **Appendix L** illustrates how common quantitative terms are addressed in light of common quantitative definitions and how when it comes down to it, we are all really just the same.

My ultimate goal in getting to know the two methods was so I could steal their strengths and minimize their weaknesses as I employed both in the “super” research method known as mixed methods. Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) advised that “gaining an understanding of the strengths and weaknesses of quantitative and qualitative research puts a researcher in a position to mix or combine strategies” (p. 18). Armed

with the battle plans of both quantitative and qualitative methodologies, I realized I could allow the voices of the participants to take the center stage of my research, while allowing the quantitative results to be in charge of the stage spotlight. I employed mixed methodology to accomplish what other arts advocacy reports sometimes struggle to do --- convince those scientists who rely on statistics and head knowledge to prove the worth of an experience, while also impacting those researchers who are looking for an argument of the hART!

### **Mixed Methods --- The Joining of Super Powers**

Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004) summarized that the majority of mixed methods research designs can be developed from the two major types of mixed methods research: 1) *mixed-model* in which researchers mix qualitative and quantitative approaches within or across the stages of the research process or 2) *mixed-method* in which the researcher includes a quantitative phase and a qualitative phase in an overall research study (p. 20). Morse (1991) (as cited in Horn, 2011) further simplified Johnson and Onwuegbuzie's (2004) summary by offering a visual representation of three different mixed-method designs:

1. Quantitative → Qualitative
2. Qualitative → Quantitative
3. Quantitative + Qualitative

Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004, p. 21-2) offered five major rationales for conducting mixed methods research:

1. *Triangulation*, which they defined as seeking corroboration of results from different methods and designs studying the same phenomenon.

2. *Complementarity*, which they defined as seeking elaboration, enhancement, illustration, and clarification of the results from one method with results from the other method.
3. *Initiation*, which they defined as discovering paradoxes and contradictions that lead to a re-framing of the research question(s).
4. *Development*, which they defined as using the findings from one method to help inform the other method.
5. *Expansion*, which they defined as seeking to expand the breadth and range of research by using different methods for different inquiry components.

In light of the definitions of Johnson and Onwuegbuzie (2004) and Morse (1991) and with the support of my doctoral committee I chose to follow Catherine Pope's (2006) encouragement to use qualitative research to "[facilitate] interpretations of findings from quantitative research" (as cited in Horn, 2011) and conducted a mixed methods study for the completion of my dissertation. By completing a qualitative phase in my study of *The Fifth Ward Project* I also complied with Greene's (1995) visionary research purpose of not just emphasizing the stakeholders' "small" concerns, but also representing the participants' "bigger" meaning-making.

### **Qualitative Interviews and Written Document Analysis**

**Narrative Inquiry.** Using a narrative research approach, the qualitative phase of my study included structured, unstructured, and semi-structured interviews of the teachers and select students and analysis of written documents from the lead teacher's personal blog in order to clarify, enhance, illustrate, and elaborate on (Johnson & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 21) students' responses to the initial quantitative phase of the

study. The ultimate goal of my mixed method study was to capture the overall meaning of the participants' experience with *The Fifth Ward Project*.

***The characters: Participants interviewed***

*Hermia.* The assistant teacher was from a large New England city where she started a dance team at her high school while also teaching different styles of dance at a local dance studio. She transferred to the UHSOTD where she was an undergraduate on the performance track with a minor in business. Before becoming involved with *The Fifth Ward Project*, she performed in and taught dance at her neighborhood YMCA.

She was hired to teach dance at the summer 2009 DECK camp and was charged with creating choreography for the student body. After teaching dance for DECK, she continued to teach theatre and dance at Midsummer Elementary (one of the three schools participating in *The Fifth Ward Project* in 2009 – 2010). At the conclusion of her teaching at Midsummer she again participated in the 2010 summer DECK camp. In 2010 – 2011 she expanded her teaching duties to include classes at both Midsummer and Verona Elementary.

*Juliet.* The program director and lead teacher held a Masters of Fine Arts from a Southern University and an EC-12 Theatre Arts and Visual Arts Certification. She taught photography, typography (visual arts aesthetics using words and images), and drama production throughout the country and for various populations (including adults with disabilities and young children). In order to develop multiple theatre experiences for elementary school-aged students in the Fifth Ward, she created the pilot Theatre Arts program (which came to be known as *The Fifth Ward Project*) funded by the Houston Endowment. In addition to teaching the 2009 – 2010 school classes at Verona,

Midsummer, and Tempest Elementary, she participated in the DECK camps and taught the After School program with students from the participating schools. In 2010 – 2011 she taught at Midsummer and Verona and continued the After School program.

*Verona students.* Student accessibility was limited by the fact that only the Verona school principal (one of two principals with schools participating in the 2010 – 2011 classes) was willing to give complete cooperation; therefore, the qualitative portion of this study only focused on select students from that elementary. “The typical student is Hispanic, low income, below average in academics, [and] afraid to express themselves with words. Most students are in tutoring along with what is called Saturday tutoring. The typical student is very introverted” (Hermia, personal communication, February 23, 2011).

*The script: Interview design.* Initially, I relied on the students’ survey responses to gain a snapshot of the impact of the theatre classes on their academic abilities and arts attitudes. However, when student responses were not internally consistent throughout the survey, I decided there was a justifiable need to utilize other research techniques to gain a better understanding of and fuller picture of the experience. Since I was unable to actually observe and/or participate in *The Fifth Ward Project’s* theatre classes I determined that retrospective interviews with both the teachers and select students would allow me the best “look” at the experience.

*Hermia’s interview design.* Due to scheduling conflicts I was unable to administer a face-to-face interview with Hermia. Therefore, in order to ensure that I received comprehensive answers that followed the specific protocol that I had designed and did not require follow-up questions, I chose a structured interview format for her to

answer as a written submission via email. Since I was more concerned with the meaning of the experience, rather than the description and/or interpretation of a cultural group, I did not feel that my study was an ethnographic one; however, I did use stage-three (“dialogical data generation”) of Carspecken’s (1996) five-stage scheme for conducting critical ethnography to design the items for Hermia’s structured interview. It featured topic domains, lead-off questions (those questions which the researcher will ask of the interviewee in order to elicit responses pertaining to the topic domain), covert categories (those categories that the researcher implicitly wishes for the interviewee to discuss but will not be expressly asked so as to not guide or bias the interview), and follow-up questions (those questions that the researcher predicts will needed to be asked based on their forecast of the direction of the interview). A copy of the interview protocol is included in **Appendix M**.

Hermia’s involvement in the interview process was completely voluntary; however, she opted to participate and gave consent for her answers to be used to further the study. While her interview was not digitally recorded, the written transcript of her responses became part of the ongoing narrative record.

*Juliet’s interview design.* Juliet was initially informally interviewed to set up the pre-survey constructs. She was later informally interviewed again to clarify pre-survey results and served as a member check for post-survey items. Finally, she was formally interviewed in order to provide the crux of the qualitative phases of my study --- descriptive accounts of *The Fifth Ward Project* experience as she perceived it and as she assumed the other participants perceived it.

Since I never had the opportunity to observe the theatre classes and a considerable amount of time had passed since the last class convened, I chose to craft an unstructured interview with only suggested topics for discussion (refer to **Appendix N**) so as to allow her to venture in her own directions in order to tell stories and share experiences throughout our conversation. For the final interview, Juliet met me at a local coffee shop. It was my hope that by not limiting our discussion with formal protocol and creating an informal, friendly atmosphere that I could gather better insight and understanding into the experience of *The Fifth Ward Project*. At the conclusion of her interview she provided me with suggestions for student interviewees (based on their participation in the classes) and a link to her personal blog (see <http://artsforall-ebw3.blogspot.com/2010/08/get-ready-get-set.html>). Juliet's involvement in the interview process was completely voluntary, but she gave permission for the interviews to be used to further the study. Her final interview was digitally recorded (with her permission) and transcribed to become part of the ongoing narrative record.

*Verona students' interview design.* In order to clarify student survey responses and gain a better overall understanding of *The Fifth Ward Project* experience, two sets of interviews occurred at four separate times with select student participants.

For the group interviews, 2 classes of (then) current 5<sup>th</sup> grade students were interviewed. Each class was a mix of male and female students (with the majority of the sample population being male) and consisted of about a dozen students in each case. These classes were selected based on my availability with their schedule. For the paired interviews, 9 former students (4<sup>th</sup> graders at the time of participation in *The Project*, 5<sup>th</sup>

graders at the time of the interviews) --- 3 female and 6 male --- were chosen (based on their availability on the interview days) from a list provided to me by Juliet.

For the group interviews, 2 sets of students were made available to me during a final class meeting in May 2011. Since I decided to conduct these interviews before choosing to include a qualitative phase in my study, the sessions were conducted merely as informal discussions (with no interview protocol set up) about students' general feelings about *The Project* and other school-related topics. Students were invited to sit in a semi-circle of chairs while I relied on my improvisational skills from my own theatre experience to guide the direction of the questions based on their responses. Though given the option to opt out, each participant gave permission for the group interviews to be recorded. Each group interview was digitally recorded and transcribed to become part of the ongoing narrative record.

The paired interviews, conducted over a two-day time span in February 2012, sought to generalize and clarify students' previous responses to the surveys and gain students' personal, reflective accounts about the classes. In hopes of prompting genuine answers to a topic that the students had not been intimately involved with in quite some time (it had been 9 months since the last class), I created a semi-structured interview protocol (see **Appendix O**). Based on availability, 9 former students were selected from Juliet's list of suggested students. I randomly paired the 9 former students in order to expedite the building of rapport with them and as a means to create a safe and comfortable atmosphere so that they could share those opinions that they might not have otherwise expressed in an individual interview setting (Morgan and Krueger (1993) typically assigned this phenomenon as a characteristic of focus groups). My instincts

were validated when a 10<sup>th</sup> student could not be located for pairing and the lone interviewee proved to be the shyest and produced the least amount of usable data.

As with the other interviewees, each student was given the option to opt out, but each participant gave permission for their interviews to be recorded. Each interview was digitally recorded and transcribed to become part of the ongoing narrative record.

*The director's notes: Interview and written document analyses.* Since these students were representative of the larger population that they came from, I chose not to individually distinguish them when discussing their responses. I felt that their words echoed the overall sentiments of the entire population and should be considered as such. Again, while I did not consider my study to be critical ethnography, I did appreciate the rigor of Carspecken's (1996) template for "preliminary reconstructive analysis" (stage two). Therefore, I employed an ethnographic-style analysis on both the interview responses and written document data (i.e., Juliet's personal blog) to construct initial meaning fields and low-level codes in order to uncover the interviewees' intended meanings. These analyses were used, in conjunction with the quantitative data from the surveys, to highlight essential statements that clarified and summarized the shared meanings experienced by *The Fifth Ward Project's* participants.

*Validity and reliability of qualitative analysis.* "How can an inquirer persuade his or her audiences that the research findings of [a qualitative] inquiry are worth paying attention to" (Lincoln & Guba, 1985, p. 290)? Some researchers, like Stenbacka (2001) argued "that since the reliability issue concerns measurements then it has no relevance in qualitative research. She added the issue of reliability is an irrelevant matter in the judgement [sic] of quality of qualitative research. Therefore, if it was used then the

'consequence is rather that the study is no good' (p. 552)" (as cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 601). Others, like Lincoln and Guba (1985) argued that researchers should adapt the quantitative terms to suit their qualitative study; use "inquiry audit" (p. 317) as a measure to enhance "dependability" (p. 300) of qualitative research; and/or acknowledge that "since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of [validity] is sufficient to establish [reliability]" (p. 316).

Similarly, there is dissension among researchers as to whether or not the quantitative term "validity" is even applicable to qualitative research. However, most can agree that there needs to be "some kind of qualifying check or measure for their research" (Golafshani, 2003, p. 602). The solution, again, for many is to define their own terms to suit their qualitative needs --- "terms, such as, quality, rigor and trustworthiness (Davies & Dodd, 2002; Lincoln & Guba, 1985; Mishler, 2000; Seale, 1999; Stenbacka, 2001)" (as cited in Golafshani, 2003, p. 602).

I tend to believe that a researcher's test for validity and reliability is an integral part of the "reflective" process and helps to strengthen both the researcher and their research. Therefore, to ensure the reliability of my qualitative study I employed the following to strengthen my validity --- I used digital recordings for my interviews, member checks for my interview and document analyses, and some of Carspecken's (1996) validity requirements for stage-two (e.g., used stage-three techniques and conducted member checks on reconstructions) (p. 141) and stage-three (e.g., used consistency checks on recorded interviews, conducted consistency checks between observed activity and what is said in interviews, used member checks, and encouraged subjects to use and explain the terms they employed in naturalistic contexts) (p. 165 –

166). Throughout my entire study process I checked myself for researcher bias by voicing my ideas and making my written interpretations available to colleagues for critique.

The qualitative phase of my study resulted from an overwhelming need to clarify my quantitative results before the closure of *The Project*. Johnson & Onwuegbuzie (2004), referred to this valid rationale for the use of mixed methods as “complementarity” (p. 21). However, since I had not consciously pre-planned for this qualitative phase of my research, I had to work against a narrow timeline and limited access to participants when I chose to include it in the final study. The limitations of this mid-stream switch in methodological designs were most evident when my study had to include a variety of types of one-shot interviews protocols. For example, since some of my interviews were conducted before I knew the qualitatively-focused direction my final research would take, I engaged in the practicality of group and informal interviews with broad questions and general structuring before realizing the benefits of individual interviews with carefully designed protocol. Future interviews, though, were more rigorously structured and precisely prepared so as to elicit more reliable responses.

While methodologists may advise adhering to a single type of interview style for consistency and validity, I did not view my choice to employ multiple types to be a weakness. Instead, I felt that my choices met the unique demands of each interview scenario. My confined timeline would only allow me to formally interview each population one time; therefore, in order to effectively gather the most data in the least amount of time and to meet the parameters of each interview situation I carefully picked the most appropriate interview type throughout my data-gathering time. For example,

since the goal of Hermia's interview was to find out specific information about only certain portions of *The Project* I chose a structured interview format with precise, detailed questions that could elicit specific responses about particular topics. Additionally, since this interview would take place via written response, the chosen interview style allowed me to pre-plan the inclusion of the follow-up and ad-libbed questions that sometimes need to take place when trying to accommodate unexpected responses offered during a face-to-face interview. On the other hand, I chose an unstructured interview format when speaking with Juliet because I wanted to gather a general, overall familiarity with multiple aspects of *The Program* and the various perspectives of its participants. Since I did not have access to the theatre classes for student observations, I needed Juliet's reflections to paint a broad picture as a surrogate. For that reason, I did not want to limit our conversation with a pre-designed direction, but rather I wanted to allow the responses to organically steer the follow-up questions. In each case I felt that the chosen interview design met the objectives of the interview situation.

I admit that the entire study would have benefitted from initially conducting the same type of interview design with each population and *then* choosing different interview designs to follow-up based on the various degrees to which I needed to clarify and/or have interviewees elaborate on the responses gathered. However, time did not afford such a luxury to me. Further recommendations for enhancing the generalizability and impact of the study were considered in "Chapter Five," while the recognition and reconciliation of additional limitations are addressed in the next section.

*Limitations.* I love theatre! I admit it. I love teaching theatre! I admit it. The theatre has been a part of my life for over 20 years and I believe that I am a better student, employee, and person because of it. I admit it. And I admit that this value orientation (Carspecken, 1996, p. 5 – 6) both enhanced and limited my study. The final section of this chapter was included before the reader embarks upon the Results (“Chapter Four”) as a response to the inherent flaws of my methodological design (as discussed in the previous section). It was my hope that by acknowledging and explaining the limitations of my study I could continue to build its validity and reliability in the eyes of the reader.

As a connoisseur of theatre arts, I was able to uniquely understand and make more informed judgments about *The Fifth Ward Project* and its participants’ statements than non-theatre researchers. However, the meanings and judgments I made were based on my status as a connoisseur of theatre arts. I do not apologize for my love of theatre arts education or its interlinking to my facts (why would we study something we were not passionately drawn to?!), but I must acknowledge that my shared background with Juliet as a theatre arts teacher and our similar interactions with students and teachers in low SES settings may have somewhat limited my ability to critically interpret her responses about her students and the experience. My values as a theatre arts educator defined the lens through which I viewed *The Project* and its people --- an acknowledged limitation and benefit.

The choice for my final methodological design (i.e., mixed methods) was predicated upon my need to add a qualitative phase to clarify quantitative results in a study that was quickly nearing its end. The inherent flaw lay in that the quantitative data

was gathered without thought as to the qualitative direction that the study might someday take. As a result, the majority of the qualitative data catered to the most accessible voice (i.e., Juliet's) as the purveyor of reflection and meaning-making for *The Project*, its purpose, and its impact for all involved. Some may argue that the accuracy of her statements are restricted by an economic and social background quite dissimilar from the population which she served or that they are skewed due to her whole-hearted belief in what *The Project* stood for and offered to the students. I, however, did not find fault in her statements about her perceptions. And while that may have been the theatre arts-lover in me speaking, Carspecken (1996) offered a valid reason for trusting Juliet's perceptions: "most mainstream research epistemologies implicitly depend on [their] experience of sense perception to derive their definitions of validity, truth, and so on" (p. 11). I believed that was the case for Juliet, as well --- she relied on her perceptions to make her truth for herself.

There was no shame or detriment to the study in reporting Juliet's statements; the limitation came in that I was unable to corroborate or contradict her perceptions with my own, first-hand observations of the classes. Instead, I relied on our common background and belief system in order to interpret her responses. Since the lens through which I viewed her perceptions was so similar to her own, I was unable to thoroughly challenge them. Wolcott (1994) believed that self criticism was a significant methodological finding; therefore, by recognizing my limitations I made significant steps towards once again strengthening the core of my study.

In addition to allowing my love for theatre arts to guide my choice to conduct research on *The Fifth Ward Project*, I also admit that that love guided my aspirations that

my results would help it to survive another year. Some, like Guba (1990, p. 24 as cited in Carspecken, 1996, p. 5), could use my value statements to argue bias on my part as a researcher. But I also admit that I was an ethical researcher who was willing to honestly report my findings, whether helpful or not. I demonstrated that while “orientations provide the reasons why people conduct their studies” they do “not guarantee the findings of ‘facts’ that match absolutely what one may want to find” (Carspecken, 1996, p. 6). Just as C. S. Lewis was willing to publicize his dismal fail to disprove Christianity through his intellectual search for “truth,” so I was willing to admit my inability to prove the worth of theatre arts education on the basis of its academic prowess. In so doing, I took a more unfamiliar path and allowed my thematic findings to emerge before me along my final research journey.

My values may have been the motivation for the undertaking of my research; however, they did not cloud the ethics of reporting my researcher, in its entirety. My value system empowered the analysis of my study (Guba, 1990a, p. 24 as cited in Carspecken, 1996, p. 5), but I would welcome the critique of others with similar and dissimilar value systems to challenge, elaborate upon, and ultimately enhance the findings of my research. By committing to present and publish my research to a wide and varied audience, I can enable and encourage others to examine my study for a variety of reasons and with a variety of motivations in order to yield the most well-informed findings. And while I felt that I was honest in the reporting of my findings, I must also admit that my findings were found while looking through certain intrinsic lenses that I could not separate myself from based on my own experiences and values. And because of this, I can amend my admitted limitations.

Postmodern methodologists would argue that all perceptions are inherently flawed (or at least open to limitless interpretation) and there is no absolute truth (Carspecken, 1996, p. 15, 19). Therefore, I need not apologize for the apparent narrow scope under which Juliet made her statements or by which I offered my interpretations of them. Instead, I can take comfort in knowing that by reporting the statements in their entirety with only limited interpretation by me, I more readily allowed the original voices to shine throughout my narrative record. I did my best, here, to acknowledge my researcher bias and indicated throughout the Results (“Chapter Four”) and Recommendations (“Chapter Five”) where additional interpretation may be needed in future studies and how more effective methodological designs could allow for additional observations and interpretations. Finally, I welcome the judgments of others with their more experienced lenses --- which may make them more jaded or more idealistic than I am --- to bring to this study their own value-driven interpretations. The floor is open to discussion...

## Chapter IV

### Results

*The Fifth Ward Project* was created to expose low SES students to the skills of theatre arts. It was the hope that this project would present a selected, at risk student population with the chance to enjoyably and successfully acquire necessary academic skills for transference to other core subjects. On paper, this was a chance for a teacher to offer a class that would allow “students [to] carry over [to other academic classes] the focus and concentration skills, problem solving and creative thinking ... self confidence to speak in front of others in class... and teamwork skills” (Juliet, personal communication, August 15, 2010). But, as I found out in my personal discussions with the participants, this actually turned out to be a chance for a teacher to offer something much more meaningful to the students at Verona Elementary School.

As Juliet recounted, *The Fifth Ward Project* was a chance to share her much loved curriculum with a student population often forgotten and disregarded. Often times our use of the term “at risk” comes not from a place of concern, but rather from a place of fear that their “condition threatens our security and comfort” (Greene, 1995, p. 33). As a teacher, Juliet was in the unique position to demonstrate to these at risk kids that they did matter and had every potential within them to become more than their environment. And as a theatre arts teacher, she could demonstrate to these kids that *theatre* could be the vehicle that drives that potential. Greene (1995) advocated imagining other worlds --- “the unseen, unheard, and unexpected” (p. 28) --- and Juliet, unlike many other teachers in low SES settings, did just that. Juliet embraced the same liberating spirit with her students that Greene (1995) associated with the Reverend Martin Luther King, Jr. for his

congregation: “Regard, responsibility, imagination, yes, and a love from them as worthy human beings: these are what moved them beyond themselves and changed their very lives” (p. 40). It was Juliet’s imagination that allowed her to connect with, inform, and impact the setting in which she taught. But, Juliet’s imagination did not come without obstacles to overcome. The following scenes describe the physical, personnel, and participant problems she encountered how she resolved them, and why it meant so much for her to do so.

Again, I remind my reader that this study set out with the primary purpose of allowing the participants to present their voices, perceptions, attitudes, and beliefs on a larger stage and to a wider audience by sharing them, with me, the researcher. In order to let their voices sing true, I offered interpretations only when necessary to clarify and/or further develop their sentiments. Once more I remind my readers that perceptions will always be subject to interpretation, but since they form the truth for those that perceive them (Carspecken, 1996, p, 11) we must agree to bow to their validity (if only at the initial level). Once again, I acknowledge the limitation of my lens when attempting to interpret and assign meaning to the participants’ statements. Since my interactions with and perceptions of attitudes and values within low SES educational settings so closely mirrored Juliet’s experiences, I welcome and encourage future responses to the meanings I offered in this final study.

### **Lights Out, but the Show Must Go On --- Physical Obstacles Encountered and Resolved**

**My kingdom for ... a stage.** When working in low SES settings, teachers must learn to “survive” school shortages (just as the students must often do in their own

neighborhoods). In the theatre world we have a motto that aligns perfectly with these shortages: “Beg for it. Borrow it. Make it.” This motto serves theatre teachers well when they have no budget for props, costumes, or scenery to enhance their curriculum; but what do they do when they do not even have a space to teach their curriculum?! In her personal online blog Juliet lamented the reality of dealing with a lack of classroom space while teaching at Verona:

*The school buildings are very old, moldy and trying to keep up as much as possible with the daily use of hundreds of students. ... Last year I had to teach in the cafeteria for most of the year, until some of the teachers told me about some empty classrooms. As a result, I taught the second half of the year in a classroom that was never truly emptied of boxes, so while it was a good size and most things were cleared out, it was as if I were teaching in a storage room with lots of boxes and an old ping pong table. ... [This year] Since this school [Verona] merged with another one and more than tripled the enrollment, most of the students will be new to me and I am basically starting all over again. (EBW3, 2010a; 2010g; 2010b)*

Juliet embraced the overcrowded elementary school with its lack of classroom space by relying on the improvisational skills that all thespians share. She approached her hardship as simply “another large year of learning” (EBW3, 2010b). She made a usable classroom out of a storage closet and later was satisfied with a temporary building. The real obstacle actually turned out not to be a lack of physical space, but in helping students “imagine” a safe, shared space within the physical spaces she found (an accomplishment I later detailed when addressing student-related obstacles).

***Some Like it Hot, but not this hot --- issues with A. C. and power!*** Juliet met the lack of physical classroom space head on, but other hardships were beyond her personal control:

*We are having one of the hottest summers ever and when I got to school this morning, around 7:00am, all the lights were off in the building. Silly me, I thought I was just one of the first people in. When I got to my classroom, out in the portables, it was soooo incredibly hot, and remember it is only 7:00am in the morning. I soon realized that the main building did not have any power, but our room did have lights and I turned the AC on to cool things down. ... Then their teacher showed up and said that the power is out for the day and they are busing the kids to another school. It is around 10:30 am at this point. So, that was the end of that for today. Very hot and very short day. I sure hope the power is back on tomorrow! (EBW3, 2010b)*

While lack of physical space and basic needs (yes, air conditioning was a *need* in a Texas school) were definitely unwelcomed difficulties, Juliet did not allow them to deter or derail her goals of teaching and reaching her students. However, as happens in most great stories, our heroine faced far more compelling challenges besides environmental factors throughout her journey. Juliet overcame the school building, but could she survive the school staff?!

### **How to Dodge the Rotten Tomatoes Being Throw by the Groundlings --- Personnel Obstacles Encountered and Resolved**

**“I don’t think we’re in Kansas anymore.”** “I am a white person and I do not teach a single white student” (EBW3, 2010i). As recounted to me, Juliet’s most

frustrating hurdles were put up by the adult inhabitants (i.e., traditional classroom teachers) of a school setting in which the unfamiliarity of her skin color, teaching methods, and even class subject often times left her feeling unsupported, unwelcomed, and disrespected. How was she supposed to “navigate a community” that sometimes resented having to include “an outsider” that did not appear to “understand their world” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012)? When asked to speculate as to why the Verona teachers appeared to be reluctant to welcome her and *The Fifth Ward Project* into their school, her answers fell into two categories. Some of the reasons she gave were racially charged while the others spoke to the assumption that the teachers were just growing frustrated (justifiability so) with being subjected to the program du-jour.

Some of Juliet’s initial comments indicated that she believed teachers’ hostility towards her and, by extension, *The Project* were grounded in racial differences. While there are studies that suggest students’ relationships with same-race/ethnicity teachers are important, most offer results that were situation- or student-specific with some admitting that “there is actually little direct empirical evidence that they exist” (Dee, 2004, p. 1). To assume, though, that only teachers who share similar ethnicities or backgrounds with their students will be able to effectively reach and teach them is naïve and restrictive. But how could a white woman from the suburbs truly understand the economically disadvantage life of Hispanic students and teachers?! The answer was “imagination.”

Greene (1995) assured us that “imagination feeds one’s capacity to feel one’s way into another’s vantage point... imagination can cross many lines” (p. 36 – 37). Cynthia Ozick’s illustrative metaphors further elaborated upon this phenomenon:

Those [doctors] who have no pain can imagine those who suffer. Those at the center can imagine what it is to be outside. The strong can imagine the weak. Illuminated lives can imagine the dark. Poets in their twilight can imagine the borders of stellar fire. We strangers can imagine the familiar heart of strangers. (1989, p. 283 as cited in Greene, 1995, p. 37)

So while it would have been easy to assign the perceived enmity to “race wars,” I believed that Juliet’s possession of and eagerness to embrace this true imagination dispelled any presumed inability of hers to relate to and root for her students of a different race. Instead, I felt that the real motivation for the animosity towards her was actually in response to an external push to insert human “band-aids” in today’s crumbling, low SES classrooms.

During my unstructured interview with her, Juliet freely shared the lack of support that she often encountered from the traditional classroom teachers. While she felt that some of it could have been racially-driven, she also felt that the disapproval could possibly have stemmed from a lack of understanding of the subject matter, resentment over scheduling issues, and a general disregard for a “temporary teacher” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). Regardless of her uncertainty as to the reason for their coldness, Juliet certainly did not feel welcomed. She recounted to me instances where lack of communication and a general lack of scheduling consistency gave way to what she perceived as all-out disrespect for her and her class.

**All I’m asking for is for a little R-E-S-P-E-C-T!** When I pressed her, Juliet ventured that the majority of the teachers probably did not support her because they saw her as a “temporary teacher” who had inserted herself (without *their* invitation) into *their*

school to offer a “quick fix” to *their* ineffective curriculum instruction. Juliet seemed willing to excuse their reluctance to welcome her by speculating that most of the Verona teachers probably figured she would not be around long enough to even warrant their acknowledgment of her existence (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). Though hired as an official HISD employee, Juliet felt that most of the faculty perceived her role as merely a TA. Her feeling like a TA when she was in fact a legitimate, certified teacher on the payroll may have forced her to believe that she had to constantly vie for students’ and teachers’ recognition and trust. Her feelings may not have been unfounded, though, as Juliet shared examples of how the Verona teachers began to demonstrate the ways in which they did not consider her to be a “real” teacher or her class to be a “real” class either. A lack of communication and a lack of schedule consistency on the part of the Verona teachers soon became a source of annoyance for the “fake” teacher and her “fake” class.

Some days her class was treated as a “dumping grounds” for students displaced due to other teachers’ needs:

*The first class went well ... However, the second class was just chaos when they entered. Apparently, another teacher brought them to our classroom with their class since the outside program drama teacher<sup>13</sup> was holding auditions for that class, I then had about 6 extra students in class to add to my already full class of about 24. It was crazy trying to assign the new "circle spots" with the real class and add the "temporary" extra kids as well. (EBW3, 2010d)*

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<sup>13</sup> Verona Elementary resulted from the combination of two low-enrollment elementary schools. As a result, the Project GRAD drama classes that were being offered at one of those schools came to Verona. So while *The Fifth Ward Project* was being offered to all 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Verona, Project GRAD was offering their services to a select few students at Verona who had to audition to participate. See <http://www.projectgradhouston.org/> for more information about Project GRAD.

Also supporting the idea that Juliet's perceived coldness from the teachers was an issue about "interim instructors" and not "cultural differences" was the fact that even a fellow theatre teacher did not show much regard for Juliet's particular class. Based on her lengthier stay at Verona Elementary School, this fellow theatre teacher seemed to consider herself and her class a more legitimate fixture than Juliet and *The Project*. Juliet's supposition about the other theatre teacher's feelings of superiority was evidenced by the time Juliet's class was actually taken from her due to the other theatre teacher's needs:

*The other drama teacher informed us that she asked the principal if she could use our room for her auditions on Thursday this week, since she was auditioning our class anyway and we wouldn't have a class to teach and we could leave early or use her room to do paperwork in. I was a little taken aback by the casual nature of someone else just offering themselves to use my classroom. (EBW3, 2010d)*

The lack of respect for her space and schedule extended to a lack of respect for her students' schedule, too --- from the unfortunately simple "miscommunication on when the 5th grade teachers pick up the students" (EBW3, 2010f) and days when students arrived late so they could not finish a game before class time was up (EBW3, 2010c) to the almost unforgivably complex:

*I received an email last night from the science teacher who apologized for not remembering to let me know **last week**, that the fifth graders were going to be rearranged so they could all go to their science lab class. This makes perfect sense, all students need science, however, we have been in school for a month, the classes are in just the beginning stages of coming together and I get this email the*

*night before the change. What it means for our class, is that all the kids are not grouped by home teacher and we now have kids from all the different 5th grade classes mixed together. I still haven't received class rosters for all my classes, I don't even know student's last names so I had no clear idea who was coming to my class. At this point, all my students had their assigned spots in a circle and "audience seating". So, of course, when they came in today, we had to see who the students were and then create new circle spots and new audience seating spots and make sure their "reward" cards were there for each student. While this is not a huge amount of work, it does mean that the classroom structure we have set up, has to be rebuilt. In addition, since the students were not familiar with each other, all the work playing games to create an ensemble class now has to start all over again. (EBW3, 2010g)*

In her written interview, Hermia presumed that “the inconsistency and lack of communication at the school has an effect on the children” in that it made it just “a bit more difficult for students to focus and concentrate” when they entered the theatre classroom (personal communication, February 23, 2011) --- yet another obstacle that she and Juliet chose to meet head on when choosing class activities (a feat I discussed later when addressing student-related obstacles).

Once Juliet demonstrated that she and her class had every intention of continuing at Verona Elementary, the problem shifted from a lack of communication with her to an abundance of communication about her. In retrospect, Juliet probably enjoyed the isolated anonymity she received when she first came to Verona versus the intense

scrutiny she received when she and *The Project* stuck it out. But maybe that is what happens when you teach a subject that, by its very nature, takes center stage.

**That's not fair! I'm telling!** *The Fifth Ward Project* was offered one hour per week to only 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> graders at Verona Elementary. The fact that other grades at the school missed out on this hour of theatre instruction quickly became a sore spot for those teachers (but not for the reason one would think). As Juliet explained it to me at our January 05, 2012 interview: the Kindergarten – 3<sup>rd</sup> grade teachers soon complained about not being a part of *The Fifth Ward Project* ... but not because their students were missing out on a valuable experience, but because they (the teachers) were missing out on a valuable “extra hour” off. The teachers in the lower grades vocally resented the fact that their older grade counterparts were receiving a bonus hour to themselves while Juliet and Hermia were teaching their students. To resolve the situation the principal required the 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade teachers to sit in on the theatre class --- a solution that appeased the lower grade teachers but soon created enemies out of Juliet and Hermia for the older grade teachers.

Having the resentful teachers required to sit in on the theatre classes created unnecessary tensions for Juliet. First, she felt compelled to attempt to “include” the other teachers in the class. “Most [teachers] had no clue about what we were doing in theatre class” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). However, the more time Juliet spent trying to educate the teachers in order to sell them on the subject matter, the less time it left for her to actually educate the students. Second, with the students’ homeroom teachers watching her, she felt unable to structure her own class setup or

implement her own management plan since they might have possibly contradicted or differed from the other teachers' traditional classroom arrangements.

By its very nature, a theatre arts class encourages student movement, group interaction, freedom of expression, and improvisation of activities --- attributes not typically found in traditional low SES classrooms that must now strictly control and structure every precious minute of the school day for optimal "test success." These attributes were a welcome change for students that were normally restricted to their desks as they "participated" in rote memorization of dry facts (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012); however, this type of "chaos" required carefully planned classroom management. With the Verona teachers watching over her shoulder, Juliet felt hard pressed to create and control such an innovative classroom that could have eventually led to a school culture change and improvement in the conditions for learning overall (The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City, 2006, p. 1).

Fortunately, as the months went by, the homeroom teachers decided to treat the "requirement" to attend her class as more of a "suggestion" and Juliet eventually gained the autonomy to run her own classroom in her own way. While her position with the other teachers was never truly resolved, the absence of spectators in her classroom left her with the opportunity to turn her attention to matters that were actually in her control and to people that she believed actually mattered. She decided that in order to reach her students she would have to not only adopt a unique classroom management plan, though, but also adopt a unique teaching style.

**Respect my authority!** As “outsiders,” Juliet and Hermia were in a unique position to witness the existing teacher-student dynamic at Verona Elementary. Their observations did not bring them much comfort:

*There are some great teachers out there, and some wonderful parents who care about their child's education and some hard working principals.....*

*however..... I see the ugly side as well. I see the teachers who constantly yell at the students, I see teachers threatening students in an unprofessional manner, I see angry kids who nobody listens to and I see principals who resist change. ... I see many teachers that look tired, worn out and have very little patience. The students are yelled at most of the day, they are directed here and there, they do not listen anymore and the words have become meaningless. Districts do need to get rid of teachers who are ineffective and I do see those teachers at my schools.*

(EBW3, 2010i)

Juliet was not brought up in a culture of “yelling” --- in school or at home.

Therefore, while her imagination could allow her to acknowledge the commonplace of raised tones when communicating in certain cultures and settings, it was the negativity and verbal belittling that she took issue with in this particular low SES setting. The shouting, itself, was unfamiliar to her, but *what* was being shouted at the students is what was most disconcerting to her. It was the inappropriate thoughts and attitudes expressed through yelling that she chose not to condone in her own classroom. Rimm-Kaufman (n.d.) applauded Juliet’s attempts to foster positive, uplifting relationships with the students, claiming that

those students who have close, positive and supportive relationships with their teachers will attain higher levels of achievement than those students with more conflictual [sic] relationships. If a student feels a personal connection to a teacher, experiences frequent communication with a teacher, and receives more guidance and praise than criticism from the teacher, then the student is likely to become more trustful of that teacher, show more engagement in the academic content presented, display better classroom behavior, and achieve at higher levels. (p. 1)

Unfortunately, our best intentions are not always rewarded. Juliet used her online blog to recount a particularly difficult day in which she felt silenced by her commitment to build a soft-spoken classroom of respect:

*I hear the other teachers at both schools constantly yelling at the kids. So much so, that I make a conscious effort to not yell at all. I use a stern "mother" voice, but I don't scream and call them names or put them down. Then when I get into a situation like today, when the entire class is watching to see what I am going to do, it is hard. There is no way I am going to win in a power struggle with a 10/11 year old. I don't give grades, I only see the kids once a week and I never even see their teachers to tell them about any problems I have with a student. It is very isolating and sometimes I feel as if my hands are tied. I have very little recourse. I was so disappointed with the class today and told him so. I told him that this class is a gift to their school from the University (even though I know they don't care about this) and other elementary kids do not have this class at their schools. I said it disappointed me that they would disrespect such a gift. (EBW3, 2010k)*

According to Berk (2012) that student's act of "defiant rebellion" may have just been a normal milestone along his traditional social and emotional development path, since students that age have been known to test adults by belittling and defying their authority. Juliet, however, believed the disrespectful behavior was in direct correlation to the disrespectful setting in which the students lived out their school days; and she was not the only one who thought so.

Hermia, a self-admitted product of low SES school settings (personal communication, February 23, 2011), drew parallels between the verbally abusive teachers in her past and her current re-experience with inappropriate uses of tone and power to intimidate students into behaving well and doing right at Verona. In a personal conversation (November 2010) Hermia shared with me that she believed her very young looks disarmed many teachers at Verona; she believed that they assumed she was just another student wandering the halls. She believed that they were usually unaware of her position as a teacher and therefore felt free to "act themselves" in her presence (Hermia, personal communication, November 2010). It was this unique "invisibility" that prompted her to offer her own assessment of why students did not know how to initially accept Juliet's generous token of earned, mutual respect: "there are no models in the school to show the students how to [be respectful] and work together" (Hermia, personal communication, February 23, 2011). When respect is demanded of individuals through the abuse of an authoritative position (e.g., threatening) it becomes a hollow act of mere compliance. What Juliet was offering them was a relationship built on mutual respect. Both she and Hermia believed that the students were not equipped to handle such a foreign gesture, though, because they could not access the experience in their prior

knowledge. Juliet and Hermia realized the students would need ample practice in this novel concept in order to accept and internalize the experience. But, would Juliet and Hermia be able to share enough time with these students to reshape their definition of “respect?”

At this point Juliet probably felt frustratingly trapped in what she perceived as a vicious paradigm of a culture that demanded respect through intimidation and abuse of authoritative power --- she respected her students too much to yell at them and yet they did not seem to show respect to anyone who was not yelling at them. And then it happened, the moment that teachers who have unwaveringly stuck to their convictions hope for: “One girl, was so cute - she raised her hand [at the conclusion of the incident recounted above] and said ‘Mrs. Wallace, I love this class, it is my favorite class in school. I like it’” (EBW3, 2010k). With those few simple words, Juliet was eternally rewarded and forever resolved to continue her commitment to being the type of teacher she thought these students needed and deserved.

Juliet’s choice to teach differently --- to show her students respect and ask for it in return --- echoed Ruby Payne’s (2008) recommendation to include genuine respect in low SES classrooms, by “[insisting] on high-quality work and [offering] support” (p. 48) in the theatre classes. One of the many problems Juliet and Hermia bemoaned was the lack of teacher support for and/or lack of acknowledgement of students’ efforts. As Hermia saw it: “There is no one who rewards the students for the good hard work [they do]” (personal communication, February 23, 2011). In theatre, no one ever aspired to perform to an “*unpacked house.*” Likewise, what child was going to want to rise to their full

potential (in school or life) if no one was going to show them respect and pay attention to them along the way?! So Juliet made it a point to do so.

“`cause you got personality” ... **possibility!** As expressed before, I do not believe that you must share a common background, race, or ethnicity with those you are seeking to impact. Having *some* commonality, however, goes a long way in helping initiate and sustain the dialog between all parties involved. Juliet probably assumed that her bond with her Verona colleagues would have been the students, but unfortunately her and their expectations for these young individuals appeared to be far from in common.

“If someone were to visit my elementary classroom for the first time, they might instantly label my students as children who might not have much to offer or go very far in life” (EBW3, 2010a). Craig (2011, p. 4) claimed that it is an unfortunate and disheartening fact that some teachers hold “lower expectations of African American and Hispanic students than of White and some groups of Asian/Pacific Islander students (Anderson-Clark, Green, & Henley, 2008; Diamond et al., 2004; McKown & Weinstein, 2008)” and that some teachers “hold lower expectations for low-income students (Auwarter & Aruguete, 2008; Benner & Mistry, 2007).” The Verona students qualified in both cases. Those lowered expectations perpetuated students’ low performances and caused them to actually “become” the miscreants that the Verona teachers made them out to be. Juliet endeavored to offer a reprieve to this vicious cycle. She attempted to offer a theatre arts class that adhered to the principles of the professional theatre: “[Here] there is a place for everyone, no matter your skill level” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012).

In her online blog Juliet described how the students of Verona had been marginalized by their other teachers:

*...there is so much potential ... all I see are the possibilities. The possibility for a student to be creative, the possibility for a student to learn to work with others and most importantly, the possibility to succeed. (EBW3, 2010a)*

Juliet believed, whole-heartedly, in the positive that already existed in her students, referring to them fondly as “rough diamonds” full of “untapped potential” (personal communication, January 05, 2012). In her own classroom she was determined to release that potential in her students by encouraging the redefinition of those behaviors that were previously frowned upon by their other teachers:

*Teachers complain that the students cannot behave and do not listen and that the parents have given up and do not help the situation. There is some truth in that. However, I see smart kids who do want to learn and succeed and more than anything crave structure and consistency in the classroom. (EBW3, 2010i)*

Eliza Doolittle illustrated Juliet’s plan when she distinguished between the different ways one behaves based on how one is treated:

You see, really and truly, apart from the things anyone can pick up (the dressing and the proper way of speaking, and so on), the difference between a lady and a flower girl is not how she behaves, but how she’s treated. I shall always be a flower girl to Professor Higgins, because he always treats me as a flower girl, and always will; but I know I can be a lady to you, because you always treat me as a lady, and always will. (Shaw, 1916, 5.143)

Changing the definitions about student behaviors was just one of the many personnel obstacles Juliet and *The Fifth Ward Project* wished to overcome for its participants. Throughout *The Fifth Ward Project* Juliet focused her efforts on helping both students and teachers transform perspectives on behavioral issues in light of their changing reality of what creativity looks like. By shifting teacher perspectives on students' behavior, Juliet hoped to also shift their perspectives on student expectations. And while Juliet did not believe that she made much headway with the teachers, Hermia happily bragged about the success of Juliet's efforts with the students: "Many students who in school are considered 'trouble makers' and have been suspended have become some of the best students in our Theatre class because they now have an outlet to express themselves and use their imaginations (personal communication, February 05, 2011)." This phenomenon echoed *Champions for Change's* (1999) findings that "young people considered classroom failures often became the high achievers in arts-learning settings" (as cited in The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City, 2006, p. 1). "Some of the boys are aware of how much they have improved in behavior and therefore are excited to come to class" (Hermia, personal communication, February 23, 2011). And while Juliet and Hermia rightly sang the praise of "change and growth" within some students, the next section recounts the many other obstacles presented by the majority of the participants, how they were resolved, and why Juliet felt compelled to do so.

### **When Your Actors Go Off Script --- Participant Obstacles Encountered and Resolved**

**Easy as A-B-C?** When attempting to teach her students how to imagine and participate in a new world of possibility and promise during theatre class, Juliet's initial

obstacles revolved around the regrettably miserable truth that there is a real “academic gap” for America’s low SES and minority learners (i.e., the student population at Verona) (National Institute of Child Health and Human Development, 2000). These lower academic skills forced Juliet and Hermia to re-envision their curriculum plans and shift the focus of much of their energies and class time to helping students form the foundational knowledge about and understanding of common theatre concepts necessary to enjoy the benefits and usefulness of the class.

Participation in theatre and its educational components is essentially at odds with today’s school’s classrooms which emphasize what is known as “drill-and-kill” activities that merely prepare students to take tests. Theatre demands a classroom filled with physical movement, an open mind, and the taking of creative chances. Juliet and Hermia believed that these activities conflicted with Verona students’ traditional understandings of how a classroom works and what behaviors were to be expected of them. As Juliet and Hermia summarized it: In the case of the Verona students, they had been inundated for years with lower-order vocabularies and limited experiences that catered only to improving their test scores instead of enhancing their lives. Juliet and Hermia felt that students were not often called upon to activate their higher-order thinking skills; therefore, it was understandable when they experienced a steep learning curve in *The Fifth Ward Project*. For example, Hermia believed that:

*the students find the word creative a bit more difficult to understand. Imagination for these students is tied to the term creative, but it seems as though “creative” the word is a larger concept for them to understand and it scares them. (personal communication, February 23, 2011)*

American tourists often find it difficult to navigate foreign lands due to the “language barrier” and unfamiliarity with cultural norms. Likewise, the Verona students’ limited experiences with critical thinking activities may have initially hindered their ability to recognize and desire to participate in common theatre concepts like “creativity.” However, since the language associated with creativity is complex and ever-changing, the concern over the validity of students including “imagination” as a vital part of creativity was not the main concern. Rather their willingness and/or ability to actively participate in the concept of creativity became the teachers’ primary focus as they hoped to immerse the students in the culture of theatre’s land.

In addition to the apparent limited practice with higher-order thinking activities, the students also demonstrated limitations in very basic academic skills. For example, Verona students’ reading skills were so poor that it actually hindered their ability to participate in the Readers Theatres<sup>14</sup>, which are designed with the expressed purpose of allowing low-performing students the chance to work on reading skills. While it was not in their immediate job descriptions, Juliet and Hermia made attempts to counteract this “academic gap,” by spending the majority of their class times creating scenarios, activities, and lessons aimed at recreating those academic skills that the students desperately needed to practice. After all, how could students be asked to exhibit and effectively utilize skills which were truly unfamiliar to them?

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<sup>14</sup> Readers Theatres are pre-published scripts that provide an opportunity for students to develop fluency through multiple readings of the text by using expressiveness, intonation, and inflection when rehearsing the text. They are typically utilized in Elementary Language Arts classes or other subjects in which a teacher wishes to deliver instruction through narratives.

**The games of life; learning through play.** In addition to a lack of basic academic skills, Juliet found the students' social skills to be lacking, as well. She traced one of the possible roots of the students' deficient social skills to the surprising fact that the schools she was teaching in did not have recess or a P.E. teacher (EBW3, 2010i). Juliet was convinced that without structured and unstructured physical play time during their school day, students were unable to learn the "game skills, sportsmanship, and teamwork" that "naturally goes on when playing with one another" (personal communication, January 05, 2012). Dr. Stuart Brown, founder of the National Institute for Play, took Juliet's assertion that children need play a step further by claiming that his study on murderers indicated that "the absence of play in their childhood was as important as any other single factor' that distinguished the murderers from normal people" (as cited in Heinrichs, 2012, p. 66). Heinrichs (2012) continued that other research suggests that when you combine physical exertion with a sense of joyfulness, or, in other words, play, neurohormones are reinforced. Freeing yourself from the sense that what you're doing must have an outcome has a lot of benefits in terms of mood, perceptions about time—things that are just good for the human spirit. Play nature is so powerful, and we never lose it. We don't have the same level of drive in adulthood, but we can always tap into it. (Brown, n.d., as cited in p. 73)

Since the literature supported the need for childhood play in order to sustain normalcy and satisfaction in adult life, Juliet wondered:

*How can these kids learn how to get along with others in the work place, when they don't have much opportunity to learn it now while they are kids? Theatre*

*becomes not just a frivolous art form for these students - but lessons on how to behave in life as well. (EBW3, 2010h)*

Juliet's chose to extend her theatre curriculum past the walls of the classroom in order to use the games to teach students the life skills they would need in order to play well in the real world. In her blog, Juliet advocated for the inclusion of the arts in school settings because the

*arts teach much more than the subject itself. Arts can bring meaning to life, teach self-control, creative problem solving and learning to work well with others. All of these attributes are needed to be successful in life. (EBW3, 2010i)*

So Juliet set out to "allow a kid to be a kid" while playing "games with a purpose" (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). The games she chose were originally meant to work on students' academic skills (like a ball toss game that worked on "focus" and improvisations that worked on "problem solving"), but as she watched the play unfold she "saw the dynamics of the classroom" (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012) and realized there was a more pressing priority for playing games in theatre:

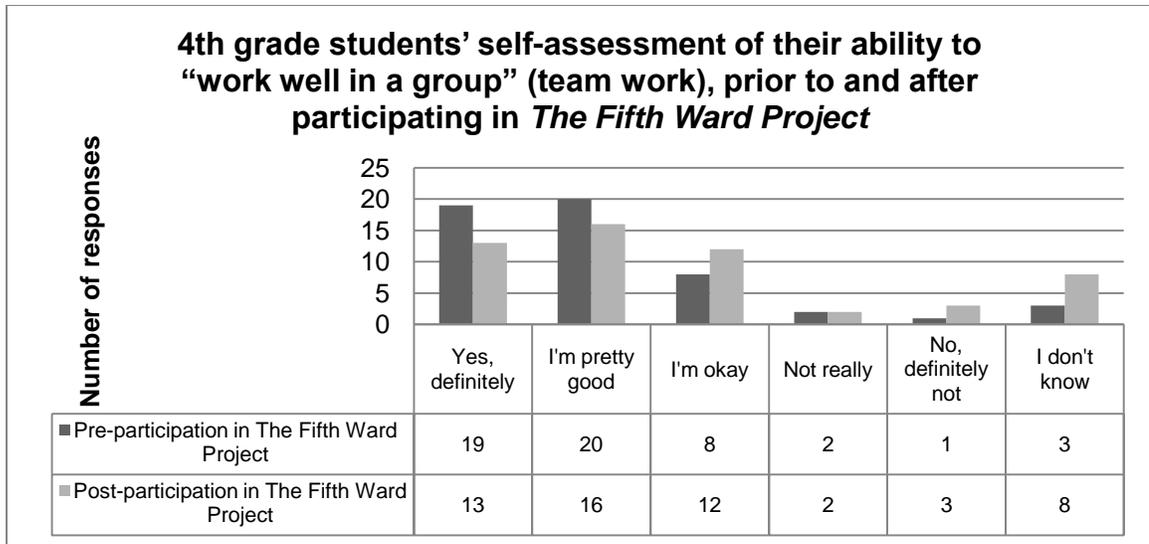
*...you can observe the class social structure and really see who are the leaders and who gets picked on. In the beginning, if a student is too slow, I notice that some of the other kids chastise them for being slow, which of course, makes them slower, or even give up and drop out. Then we talk to the kids and remind them that this is a team and we need to encourage our team members. We then point out that it doesn't help our team mates when we openly criticize them, but when they are encouraged to keep up or keep trying, only then they will try harder. It*

*is great to see the look on their faces when they see the point we are trying to make. All this.... to create an Ensemble. The goal is for each class to become a true Ensemble and playing these games helps us towards that goal. (EBW3, 2010h)*

**“Priority #1: Ensemble work” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012).** When asked on the pre-survey to rate their ability to work well in a group setting, the students’ initial responses differed drastically from Juliet’s pre-assessment of the same ability. *Figure 1* illustrates that 39 out of the 53 (then) 4<sup>th</sup> grade students at Verona believed they were “definitely” or at least “pretty good” at teamwork, while Juliet believed that this was actually a social skill that was lacking at Verona. *Figure 2* illustrates that of those same students, 41 of the 48<sup>15</sup> that Juliet initially observed actually “needed improvement” in collaboration (i.e., teamwork).

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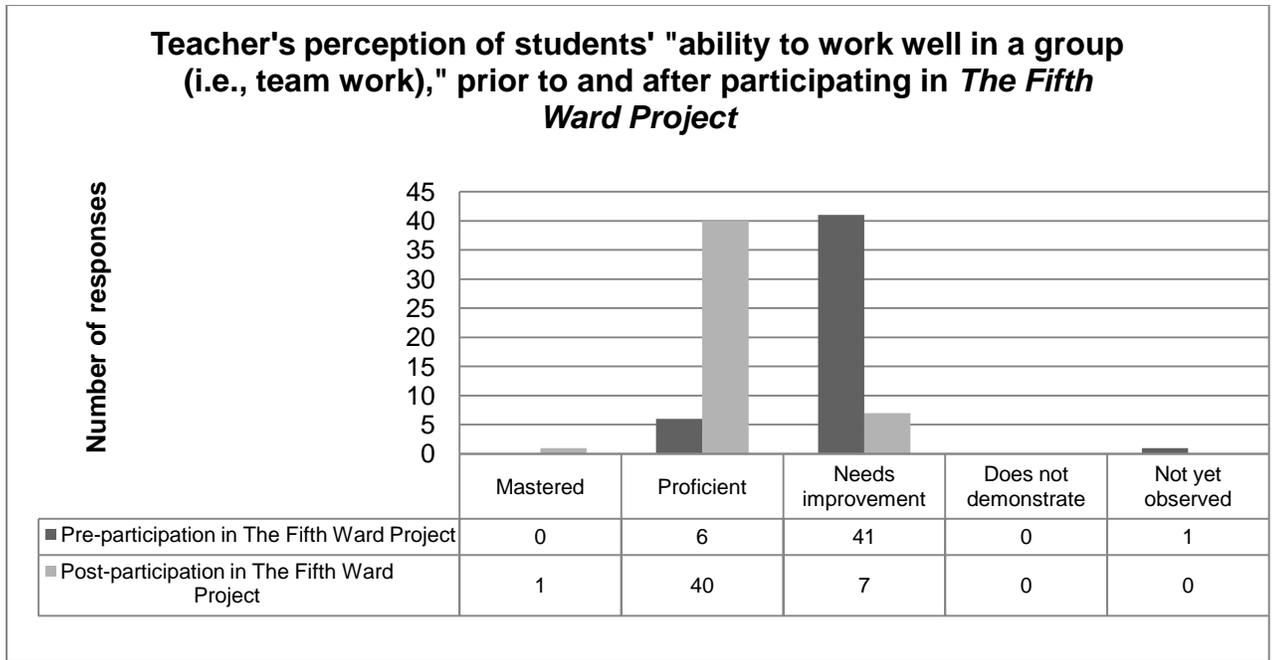
<sup>15</sup>The sample sizes for the survey and rubric results differ due to the transient nature of low SES students which resulted in mortality of subjects over time.



N = 53 for pre-participation (one student did not respond)

N = 54 for post-participation

*Figure 1.* Student responses to pre- and post-survey question: “Do you think you work well in a group?”



N = 48

Figure 2. Teacher’s scores on a rubric measuring her perception of students’ growth in the area of “teamwork.”

The discrepancies between student-teacher ratings about collaboration/teamwork may have again boiled down to how different populations define terms based on their personal perspectives, backgrounds, and experiences. Depending upon whose perspective you prescribe to, there were a variety of explanations as to why these students indicated a propensity for teamwork. Pajewski and Enriquez (1996), Juliet (2012), and Becker (2012) offered cultural, societal, developmental reasons, respectively.

The students’ indicated preference for group work seemed to be at odds with Erikson's fourth stage of psychosocial development (industry vs. inferiority) which indicated that children that age should have been seeking out opportunities to display their individuality and build their self-confidence (Becker, 2012). The justification for the discrepancy within these particular students may have been specific to their culture,

though. Due to limited English language proficiency, Hispanic students often employ group work as a “defense mechanism” behind which to hide their inadequate communication skills. According to Pajewski and Enriquez (1996), based on their cultural tendencies, collaboration in the classroom is especially essential to Hispanic students who desire the “safety net” that working together can provide for them (n.p.). The students’ reluctance to individually step into the spotlight in class may also have been due in large part to the fact that “it is not common in a Hispanic family to encourage children to excel over siblings or peers, rather, it is considered bad manners” (Pajewski & Enriquez, 1996, n.p.). While cultural tendencies may have influenced the students’ responses in *Figure 1*, Juliet believed it was actually more of an indication of growing societal influences.

During our conversation on January 05, 2012, Juliet offered a more society-driven explanation for the students’ preference to work in groups. She claimed that her students lived in neighborhoods populated by gangs and that what she was already witnessing in her young students was the tendency to gravitate towards this mentality. For example, she recounted that when students were asked to complete tasks or participate in games that they often first looked towards a “leader” to determine whether it was “cool or not” to do so (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). However, what Juliet perceived as “gang mentality” might have been what Becker (2012) claimed is a normal part of the social and emotional development of this age group. According to Becker (2012) children that age typically begin to “enjoy being a member of a club.” Since clubs, like gangs, have a tendency to follow a hierarchical format, it was logical to conclude that the students’ seeking of a leader’s approval might have just

been their immature way of forming their own, harmless hierarchy. Regardless of the students' motivation for wanting to work in a group, though, their ability to do so successfully was the crux of Juliet's conflicting assessment. In fact Juliet welcomed their willingness to participate in team work; she just did not think they did so effectively.

Whether her students felt compelled to participate in teamwork based on self-confidence issues related to their language barriers or out of blind allegiance and fear predicated upon the need to simply belong to something/anything or their cultural preference to not individually "outshine" their peers, Juliet sought to design and teach lessons that would make their group work more effective and productive. Her ultimate goal was to illustrate to those students the benefits of creating a different kind of teamwork --- what theatre people call an "ensemble" --- in order to accomplish higher purposes through mutual admiration and support of the group members.

*We're all in this together.* "When we come in here, we are all an ensemble" (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). Juliet chose to specifically use that theatre-associated term to emphasize to the students that the games they were playing would help them to move beyond merely working with others on an assigned project (whatever the motivation) to purposefully and productively choosing to work on a common goal as a cohesive and collective entity made up of hard-working and collaborative individuals that supported everyone and applaud all of their choices (i.e., the definition of "ensemble").

Despite Juliet's early assessment that the students were not working as an effective ensemble (remember, students were initially teasing and criticizing those students who were not very successful at the games), her consistent emphasis of that

necessary social skill eventually netted several examples of successful teamwork.

Hermia shared the success of “The Line Game,” which had students sit in one line and copy the hand movement of the person sitting directly in front of them. The copying of the hand gesture moved down the line until everyone had copied the hand gesture of the first person and another gesture was then chosen. “This creates extreme teamwork and patience. It is a great teamwork game!!! ... It takes a lot of coaching for the teamwork to take place, but when it does the students know to how it feels when they work together” (Hermia, personal communication, February 23, 2011). Hermia then went on to describe another successful instance of student collaboration:

*I told the students to use their imaginations and create different possibilities the rods can represent. They argued and did not know what to do. I had two teams and all of a sudden one team stood up and created the letter A, then the second team created and H, and from there they began the amazing process of using their imagination. Quickly they created monkey bars, swings, boats, brooms, doors, and so much more. Over 67 ideas were created within a 35 min period. It was amazing to see, and at the same time they enjoyed themselves and recognized how well they worked together in a team. (personal communication, February 23, 2011)*

Juliet also recounted the success of the “Relay Stage Directions Game” (a game meant to reinforce the previous knowledge of the basic stage directions):

*I start by teaching the students the basic stage directions by teaching, showing, repeating, playing "Simon Says" and then finally, the Relay game, which is a fast thinking and fast moving game to really solidify the information. We start out with*

*two teams on either side of the room. We have duplicate cards for each team that have the basic stage directions written out. We have two leaders who give the cards to the student. The student must run to the spot hold up the card and the leader must say "Yes" or "No" if they are in the correct spot on stage. If the student is correct, they run back, place the card down and the next card is given to the next student. They cannot return to the line until they are in the correct spot and hear "Yes" from their leader. It is a very loud game and one with high energy. ... What makes it interesting.... is to see how well the class works together. (EBW3, 2010h)*

Referring back to *Figure 1*, it appeared that the teachers' hard work paid off as students offered what may have been a more realistic assessment of their growth in ensemble work --- on the post-survey only 29 out of 54 students considered themselves to be "definitely" or "pretty good" at teamwork. Those more honest responses may have reflected the students' growing understanding of what teamwork really entailed and their acknowledgement that they could continue to improve in that social skill. "It takes a lot of coaching for the team work to take place, but when it does the students know too how it feels when they work together" (Hermia, personal communication, February 23, 2011). The students themselves confirmed that they recognized and appreciated their growth in this life skill with their responses to a question during the group interview (May 11, 2011): "Is teamwork better than working by yourself?"

*"Yes, because you get help."*

*"Yes, because everyone gets to participate."*

*"...when you don't know what to do your teammates can help you out."*

*“...they [the teammate] encourage you.”*

*“More is better than one.”*

The same sentiments were expressed nearly a year later during the paired interviews as one boy’s explanation of why he preferred working in a group in theatre mimicked the MKO of Vygotsky’s (1978) social development theory: “because you learn more stuff that you don’t know. If they [the teammate] know something that the other person [you] doesn’t know, they can teach you about it” (paired interview, personal communication, February 17, 2012).

In *Figure 2*, Juliet indicated that she recognized students’ end-of-year development into more effective ensembles by rating 40 of them at “proficient” and even 1 at “mastered.” One reason for this end-of-the-year growth in ensemble work may have been due to the fact that students in low SES settings crave the safety and empowerment of respectful relationships (Payne, 2008). Hermia did not observe this important “life skill” occurring between students or teachers outside of *The Fifth Ward Project* (personal communication, February 23, 2011); as a result, Juliet felt it took the students some time to figure out how to react to the respect they were shown inside of *The Fifth Ward Project*. Juliet shared that

*the reason I spend so much time in the first half of the year playing games and creating an ensemble, is so that the students will feel safe enough to perform in front of each other without being laughed at or made fun of.* (personal communication, 2011a)

***You promise not to laugh? (How the students overcame shyness.)*** Maslow’s Hierarchy of Needs dictated that before creativity can be unlocked, a sense of belonging

(or “respect of/by others”) must first be achieved (Maslow, 1943). Juliet took great pains to offer specifically chosen and carefully planned games in order to build a genuine and supportive ensemble out of a group of naturally egocentric and apparently shy children. As a theater arts teacher she knew that the theatre space, like life, must first be safe so that they could then “try new things in front of others” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). So she set out to “create an environment that felt comfortable for students to explore theatre in” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). That creation of a safe, encouraging space was especially important for the female participants who tended to be much more introverted than their male counterparts (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012).

Juliet observed that her female students were inclined to be shy and hesitant to try even the simpler, less-ridiculous activities in theatre class. As the researcher, I, too, saw evidence of their extreme shyness during the paired interviews. Many of my interview questions were met with only nervous giggles, polite smiles, drawn out “Hmmsss...” that did not lead to a final response, or desperate looks to one another for help to verbally formulate their responses. The one female student who I interviewed without a partner even looked physically uncomfortable when I asked her direct questions. All these tendencies reflected Pajewski and Enriquez’s (1996) warning to non-Hispanic teachers to expect such behavior from their Hispanic students: “When they are called upon, they will often freeze, get confused and embarrassed as they try to answer” (n.p.).

To combat this initial shyness and reticence Juliet used *pantomime*, which is a form of play in which the actors convey emotions and actions with gestures and without

speech. For Juliet's students the obvious draw to and benefit of pantomime practice was that it did not require the students to talk. In her blog Juliet acknowledged that the majority of her students were English as a Second Language (ESL) students and that some did not even speak any English at all, but that it would not matter because "once we start playing games, we really won't be using a lot of language anyway" (personal communication, 2010d). Juliet used pantomime to encourage the students' initial participation in theatre. If students did not have to talk they would not have to worry about their voice or their pronunciations, so their confidence and comfort levels could build (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012) --- a need for many of her introverted students who were new to theatre.

Next, Juliet used "tongue twisters" (a word or group of words difficult to articulate rapidly, usually because of a succession of similar consonantal sounds) to encourage total student participation in performance activities within the ensemble:

*One of the first things we do, is learn a tongue twister warm up. I start with the easiest one, which is very short. However, when I tell them that we are going to do tongue twister poems and I actually say the poem, all the students look so puzzled and don't even understand what I just said. Then I break it down for them. I make up a little story about the poem, I add movement and hand actions to the poem and soon it is actually manageable for them. Then we learn the poem in sections and by verses and finally we repeat the poem from beginning to end ... Then the magic happens. I ask for volunteers to go one at a time around our circle if they want to try it all by themselves. Always, always, the class does not want to, but then there will be that one or two brave soul that agree. I let them*

*say the poem by themselves, encourage them a little with the motions if they need it. Then at the end, give them praise and a big "high five". I go in order once around the circle, but before I get to the end, other students now want to try it themselves. I usually have to go around the circle a couple of times, because by the end, the majority of the students are excited to recite the poem all by themselves ... even the very shy ones.* (EBW3, 2010e)

During a group interview (May 11, 2011), one student explained the phenomenon: “If you’re shy to do something, once you do it and you see someone else do it you want to try again so you can do even better” (personal communication). The games that Juliet used to originally develop ensembles in the classrooms eventually evolved into a means by which to develop students’ desire to individually improve and impress within that same ensemble.

***Move over. It’s my time to shine!*** Over a year later, Juliet was still proud of her students’ progress: “By the end, they ALL wanted to be on stage and that is an accomplishment” (personal communication, January 05, 2012). The students also acknowledged that they recognized the improvement the “tongue twisters” helped them to make with regards to their ability to and willingness to perform in front of an audience (a fear that is reported to be even scarier than rattlesnakes (DeNoon, p. 1)). Several of them recounted to me, in group and paired interviews, their initial fears about and eventual confidence in performing their final poems in front of an audience (paired interview, personal communication, February 17, 2012):

Interviewer: “What was the hardest part about theatre class?”

Interviewee: “*Um... .. The hardest part was when you had to say your poem.*”

Interviewer: “Did you have to practice a lot?”

Interviewee: “*Yes.*”

Interviewer: “Would you want to do it again?”

Interviewee: “*Yes!*”

During another paired interview another student admitted that despite nerves she would still want another opportunity to perform in front of an audience (paired interview, personal communication, February 17, 2012):

Interviewer: “You did a play? Did you get to perform on the stage?”

Interviewee: (*Nods head*)

Interviewer: “What did you think about that?”

Interviewee: “*Um.... ....*” (*long pause*)

Interviewer: “Did it make you nervous? Were you excited to do it?”

Interviewee: “*I was nervous.*”

Interviewer: “You were nervous? Would you want to do it again, though?”

Interviewee: (*Nods head*)

*The Fifth Ward Project* gave students who were shy to use their voice a “way to express themselves that they never had before” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). That was the great part about *The Project*: “you have kids who can’t draw, sing, catch, but in theatre you can be or do anything! There’s a place for everyone in theatre, no matter your skill” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012) or shyness level. Hermia added to the conversation with her own satisfying illustration of successful student improvement due to participation in the theatre classes:

*There is a young girl XXXX who I have worked with for two years, I have never heard her say a word until she decided to audition for a narrative part in a Christmas production. It was amazing to see her grow enough confidence to finally step forward. (personal communication, February 23, 2011)*

Juliet summed up the end result of recognizing and addressing the obstacle of fostering effective teamwork in order to promote a safe and encouraging space for student expression:

*...To see a child who is very shy (for most of my students at [Verona] - English is their second language) put themselves out there in front of their entire class and recite a silly tongue twister by themselves, what else can I call it..... but magic?*

*Now, I remember why I love doing this. (EBW3, personal communication, 2010f)*

By making ensemble work “priority #1” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2011), Juliet was able to create the foundational experience and understanding that the Verona students previously lacked but needed in order to participate in “priority #2” of her theatre classes.

**“Priority #2: Theatre curriculum --- it’s not all about acting” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012).** While Juliet recognized and supported both the need for and benefits of including games as a primary focus of the theatre class time, she expressed her concern about other theatre programs which simply have students play meaningless games as a filler while they focus all of their class time on preparing for the final play (performance) (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). Juliet stressed that theater is “not all about acting” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012) and Hermia repeated this idea by confirming that

*the benefits of theatre education is not to create the next best actor. It is clear that the benefits of Theatre Education [are to create] ... the best in quick problem solving, collaboration and team work, body and special awareness, confidence, and respect. (personal communication, February 23, 2011).*

Performance of a play for an audience is obviously and unquestionably a key component of participation in theatre, but Juliet believed that for young theatre students it is often more beneficial and appropriate to focus more on the “process” in preparation for that play.

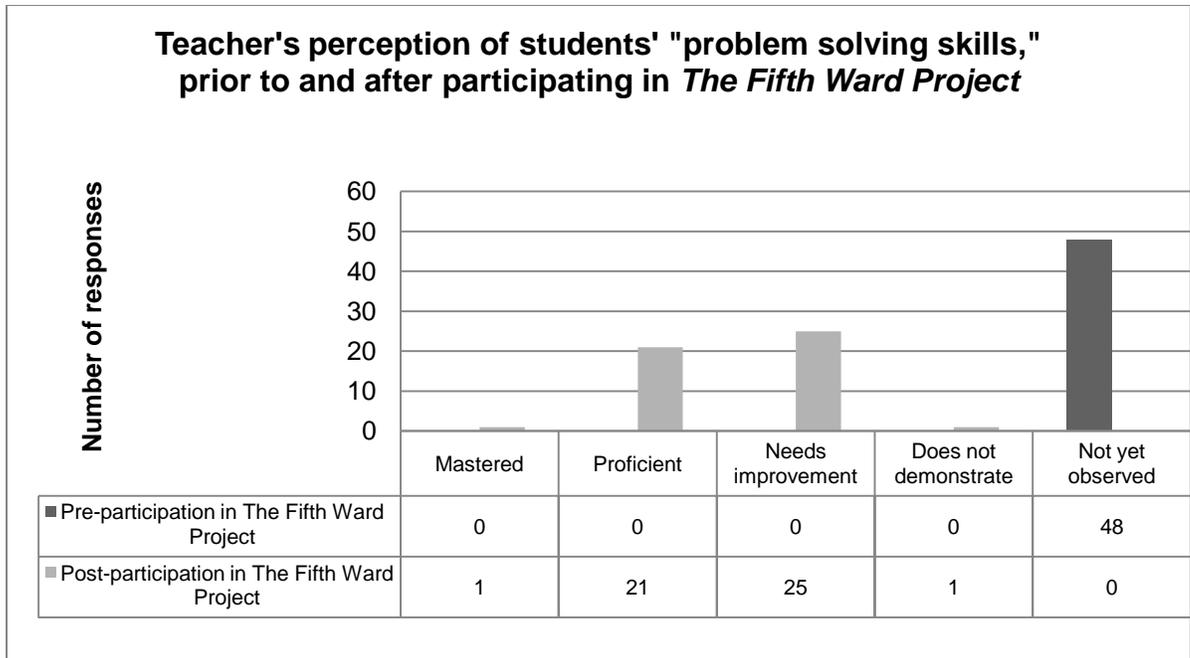
***Choosing to prepare for the play --- the play of life.*** Most of the Verona students probably thought (as most others probably do when they hear the term “theatre”) that they were about to participate in an acting class to “put on a play.” However, they actually ended up participating in a class filled with activities (that just happened to be theatre-focused) designed to strengthen the academic, social, and life skills needed for their “life’s play.” Juliet tried to “change their idea of what theatre is all about” (personal communication, January 05, 2012) by making them aware of what theatre could do for them not only when they were in the four walls of their classrooms, but also when they one day broke the “Fourth Wall”<sup>16</sup> into real, adult life. At the heart of all of Juliet’s activities was a focus on “choice” --- a common theatre component which prompts student learning and development in a variety of areas.

A key component of theatre is “creativity;” a key component of “creativity” is “choice;” and a student’s willingness to make a “choice” is a key component of

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<sup>16</sup> “Fourth Wall” is a theatre term that refers to the space separating the audience from the action of a theatrical performance. It is traditionally conceived of as an imaginary wall completing the enclosure of the stage.

successful “problem solving.” As defined by Juliet, “problem solving” is when a “student demonstrates a willingness to solve problems on their own accord by using appropriate inter-relationship skills” (refer to the teacher’s rubric in **Appendix A**). While the literature suggested that theatre arts can improve traditional problem solving skills (Burton, et al, 1999, p. 38 - 39), the student pre-class surveys could corroborate that phenomenon in this instance because they did not include items pertaining specifically to “problem solving.” However, Juliet did pre-assess students’ demonstrated abilities in the area and her pre-assessment (as shown in *Figure 3*) indicated that she had not initially observed this ability in any of the 48 students included in this study.



N = 48

Figure 3. Teacher’s scores on a rubric measuring her perception of students’ growth in the area of “problem solving.”

*The Fifth Ward Project*, in parallel with the tenets of social constructivism, emphasized that there are no right or wrong answers --- just *choices* (personal communication, April 3, 2011). Wells (2002) encouraged classroom teachers to remember that while no one student has the “right” answer, a collaborative learning environment could generate a wealth of possible and potential responses to the problem (p. 4). That emphasis on “just *trying*” has always been a common theme among arts instructors, as Merriam (1999) also reiterated, “The creative experience [of theatre arts] is one way to provide students with a taste of success. There is no pass or fail, no right or wrong...” (p. 31). Juliet suspected that the students initially failed to demonstrate the ability to understand and embrace that concept because of their incomplete definition of what “problem solving” entailed. As Juliet and Hermia watched the students struggle

with the concept of “choice” in class, they deduced that the students’ inadequate definition of “problem solving” was a direct result of the limitations of their traditional classrooms’ lesson approaches.

Our nation’s officials are insisting that we are training our teachers to teach students how to operate at the higher levels of Bloom’s Taxonomy (1956), but the proof does not appear to be in the pudding. We say that we want our children to be able to imagine beyond the simple, routine “right and wrong,” but yet we fill their school days training them to take a test that measures their ability to do just that. Without practice, guidance, and support it is impossible for students to take risks and move beyond the base levels of the Taxonomy. How can we expect our young students to grow into their roles as future choice-makers if we do not trust them or give them the time to experiment with their choices now?! Juliet and Hermia were convinced that those students could benefit from the opportunity to simply “try” (regardless of the result). Risk-taking can be a difficult and terrifying undertaking; however, it was an undertaking that Juliet and Hermia were willing to push their students to attempt. It was their hope that by offering them a fresh perspective on what “problem solving” really looks like that they could then foster the self-confidence necessary to take risks --- a skill that could someday help them succeed in the real world.

Apparently, it did not take long for the students to catch up/redefine/buy into that terrifyingly satisfying undertaking. “Since they are now exposed to theatre one of the best benefits are that students know there is no wrong or right decision in making choices in theatre which clearly shows throughout their current work in class” (Hermia, personal communication, February 23, 2011). Referring back to *Figure 3*, it was clear that Juliet

felt that in the end the students had improved in their ability to make choices (as associated with “problem solving”). Her final ratings were high for almost all of the students: 1 student out of the 48 scored at a “mastered” level, 21 out of the 48 students demonstrated a “proficient” level, 25 out of the 48 students needed improvement (but, remember, this was their first attempt at demonstrating a skill that may have gone against some 9 years of instruction from their traditional classrooms), and only 1 student did not demonstrate the ability to problem solve. Overall, Juliet considered those scores to reflect an admirable accomplishment on the part of the students. To Juliet, 47 out of 48 students demonstrated that they had begun to learn how to make choices, have those choices critiqued, and were attempting to properly critique others’ choices --- all examples of the “untapped potential” that Juliet always believed her students had within themselves.

*End-of-year showcase.* Even though Juliet emphasized skill building activities and meaningful games during *The Fifth Ward Project*, she recognized that it was still a theatre class and was happy to have the students participate in one, final, traditional theatre component --- the end-of-year showcase --- as an opportunity to show off “the class’ talents” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012) (and her accomplishments). It was at this final moment that some parents took the opportunity to express how appreciative they were for the impact of the theatre classes on their children:

*I do believe that some students are aware of these benefits, however, it is mostly some parents who see a positive change in their child’s behavior. One mother came to me an (sic) told me that her daughter is more talkative now than she ever*

*has been. She said she sees how much her daughter is beginning to open up.*

(Hermia, personal communication, February 23, 2011)

Another parent shared how excited she was for her son to have even one line in the show, since he had a lisp (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012).

Despite Hermia's beliefs, it appeared that the parents were not the only ones to notice student improvements due to participation in *The Fifth Ward Project*. The students also expressed their recognition of and appreciation for the impact of the theatre classes on their lives. One parent shared that their child was known to "hold back in other classes, but told her that they *loved* theatre" (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). An uncle of another child shared that the boy liked theatre because he knew "he was good at it" (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). And *Figure 4* confirms the idea that the students were, indeed, aware of the one-of-a-kind opportunity they had received during the 2010 – 2011 school year. The figure shows that students' self-assessment of their abilities as "good theatre students" increased from 36 out of 54 of the (then) 4<sup>th</sup> graders "not knowing" to 38 of the same students believing that they were "definitely" or "pretty good" at the end of the year.

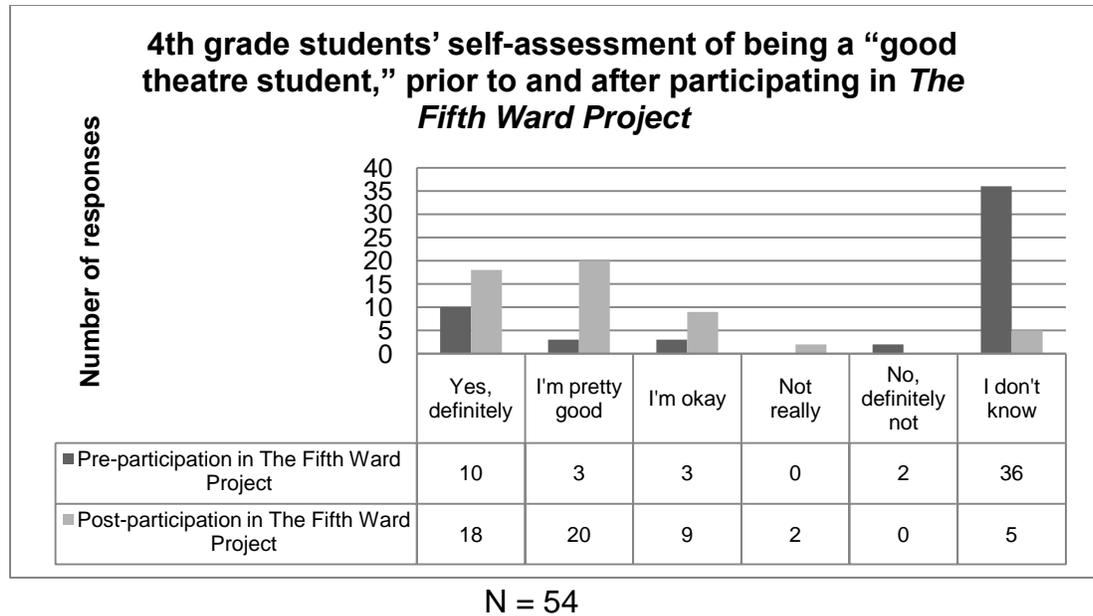


Figure 4. Student responses to pre- and post-survey question: “Are you a good theatre student?”

Juliet (2010a) captured the overall feeling of pride and ability indicated in *Figure 4* by writing that “the smiles are wide and their eyes twinkle when they have accomplished something that they are proud of. They are extremely appreciative of me and what I try to teach them” (personal communication).

**Curtain Call: Why the Obstacles had to be Overcome**

**“If nothing else...” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012).**

Juliet had to spend the majority of *The Fifth Ward Project* focusing her efforts on overcoming physical, personnel, and participant obstacles. She rose to the challenge because she sincerely and unwaveringly believed that if she could surmount the continuous obstacles then the theatre classes could make an impactful difference in the lives of those often underserved and misjudged students. Throughout *The Project* she was realistic in her goals for the class --- she merely wanted to expose the students to new ideas, activities, and attitudes rather than insist on the quantifiable mastery of entirely

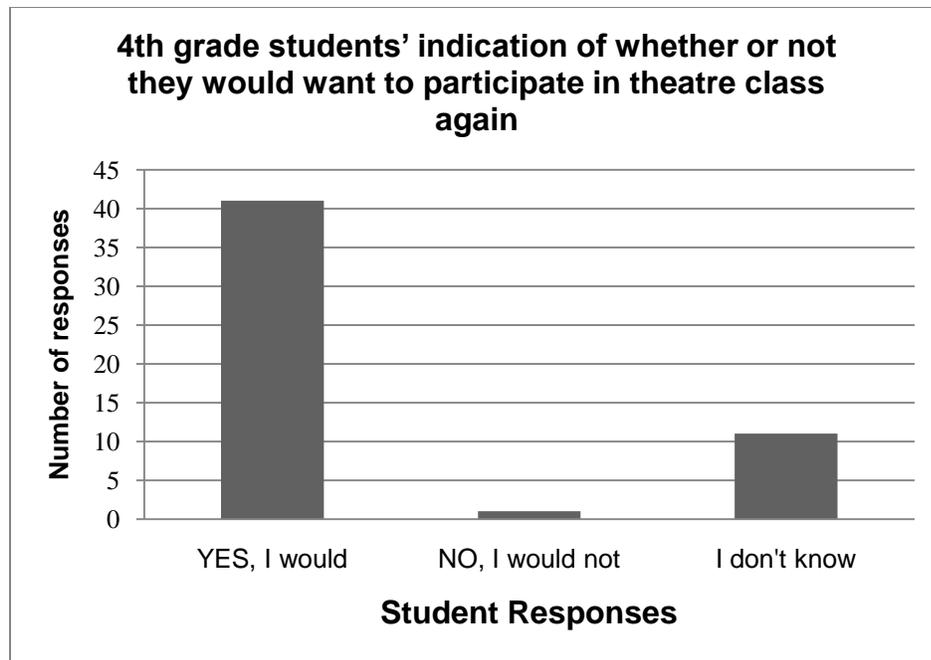
new skills. As a result, she was extremely (and justifiably) satisfied with even the slightest exhibition of growth and development within her students. Juliet was also realistic when it came to what she assumed was the *students'* goal in the class --- to have fun. She was no fool; she knew that students would probably only remember the fun they had in the class, rather than all the carefully chosen and skillfully delivered lessons and activities meant to build their academic, social, and life skills (and she was okay with that).

Greene (1995) explained the profound meaning of including the arts in a child's education:

At the very least, participatory involvement with the many forms of art can enable us to *see* more in our experience, to *hear* more on normally unheard frequencies, to *become conscious* of what daily routines have obscured, what habit and convention have suppressed. (p. 123)

Juliet, more succinctly (but no less profoundly) summed it up as: "If nothing else, at least for *this* hour..." they got to enter a safe space free of ridicule, got to play, got to be a kid, got to try something new, got to work together as a team, got to be heard, and got to experience theatre arts (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012).

When I asked select students, nearly a year later, what they remembered about the theatre classes they overwhelmingly responded with memories of games (e.g., "GaGa Ball"), tongue twisters, and fun. When asked whether or not they would want to participate in theatre class again the students overwhelmingly responded in the positive. *Figure 5* shows that 41 of the 53 students would participate again (if given the chance).



N = 53

*Figure 5.* Student responses to post-survey question: “Would you want to do theatre again?”

When I asked students to offer explanations for their desire to participate in theatre class again, their answers again revolved around the fun they had: “*It’s fun.*” “*It’s cool.*” “*You get to play games.*” “*It’s awesome!*” (Group interview, personal communication, May 11, 2011) And while Juliet and I were overwhelmed with satisfaction with the positive results and excited responses from the students, the question that we could not ignore was: Was that *enough*?

## Chapter V

### Conclusions and Recommendations

#### Was it Enough?

Juliet shared (succinctly, but profoundly) what she thought to be the ultimate meaning of the theatre classes for the Verona students that participated in them --- it was an hour of their lives each week that was different. For one hour a week, for 33 weeks, the students at Verona Elementary School got to participate in a class that was all about them --- their needs, their interests --- with a teacher who was all about them --- their potential, their abilities. For the first time in their lives they got to experience the power of theatre. But, was that enough? Were the lessons learned, games played, and worlds created that I captured in this study enough for the “outsiders” (i.e., The Houston Endowment)? Was it enough for the students? Was it enough for Juliet? Was it enough for the audience (i.e., my doctoral committee)?

**Was it enough for the *outsiders*?** As Juliet shared, many of the other Verona teachers did not understand her class or what she was trying to do for her students (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012). In April 2011 it turned out that The Houston Endowment (the original funding organization for *The Fifth Ward Project*) did not understand what she was trying to do either, since they decided to not to renew the grant for continuation of the theatre classes. Officially they felt that *The Project* had not adequately met the needs of the community (the original goal for allocating the funds). They felt that offering the classes to students during the *school* day did not impact the community enough. However, just like in order for a test to be valid it must be designed

to assess the learning that actually happened, so must the measured success or impact of an experience be dependent upon true understanding of its abilities and goals.

Greene previously illuminated the impossibilities of accurately finding and reporting the impact of the arts when it is subjected to assessments designed by those with contradicting objectives and/or limited understandings (Greene, 1995, p. 124) of what the arts are and what they can feasibly accomplish. Obviously the Endowment was not familiar with the “other” benefits of theatre arts education. As a theatre expert, I argue, how better to reach the community than to reach its children?! In a school day often filled with strict rules, rote memory, disparaging teachers, and uninspiring lessons why not offer a glimmer of hope, an hour of something different, a moment of fun to take back to their communities? Greene (1995) joined my argument with her wisdom:

Acknowledging the difficulty of moving the young to bestir themselves to create their own projects or find their own voices, I nevertheless believe, ... that we must make the arts central in school curricula because encounters with the arts have a unique power to release imagination. (p. 27)

Who knows? Maybe that hour could have been the motivation these children needed to imagine a changed community, a better community. Who knows? Unfortunately, not the Verona students ... and not the Verona community.

### **Was it enough for the *students*?**

*The impact of the class.* Juliet, freely and without disappointment, admitted to me during our January 05, 2012, interview: “[the theatre class] may not do anything extra, but they sure did enjoy it!” And, let us be honest, for a kid that is everything! “Researchers found that the arts provided a reason, and sometimes the only reason, for

disengaged youth to become engaged with school...” (The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City, 2006, p. 1). The following dialog from a paired interview (personal communication, February 16, 2012) represented the majority of student responses to “What did you think of theatre class?”:

Interviewee: *“It was fun.”*

Interviewer: “What was so fun about it?”

Interviewee: *“That we got to do lots of ... that we like did lots of games with them.”*

Interviewer: “Why would you want to do it again?”

Interviewee: *“Because it was fun.”*

Other students during the paired interviews expanded upon their enjoyment of the theatre classes, claiming: “It [kept] my spirits up” (personal communication, February 17, 2012) and “That [it] was the best ancillary class that we had last year” (personal communication, February 16, 2012).

To their credit, it was not all just fun and games for these students. During the interviews several students offered examples that demonstrated that they actually recognized the true meaning/purpose behind all the game-playing. When directly asked about what they learned in theatre (Group interview, personal communication, May 11, 2011; paired interview, personal communication, February 17, 2012), the students astutely listed off several social skill areas:

*“How not to be nervous.”*

*“Don’t be shy so you can perform on stage.”*

*“To cooperate.”*

*“To listen when teachers talk to you.”*

*“[Be] focused every time.”*

*“If a person is talking, you have to wait your turn.”*

These student-provided examples of learning coincide with The Arts Council of Metropolitan Kansas City’s (2006) finding that “when the arts become integrated into the learning environment, schools and other settings become places of discovery. The school culture is changed and the conditions for learning are improved” (p. 1).

To be fair, though, not *every* student was completely infatuated with the classes. One boy during the paired interviews admitted that he did not miss drama “that much” (personal communication, February 17, 2012) because he prefers art. His comment reminds us that “no single art form is interesting to all people, and some people may never warm up to any type of art” (The Dana Foundation, 2009). However, for the majority of the Verona students the overall sentiment still seemed to echo the following responses from two boys during the paired interviews (February 16, 2012):

Interviewer: What did you like doing in theatre?

Interviewee 1: *“I liked...”*

Interviewee 2: (“whispered” interruption) *“Everything.”* (OC: *with a twinkle of magic in his voice*)

***The impact of the teacher.*** While the games and fun may have been the primary reasons for the students’ overall love for the classes, they were also quick to give credit to the “game master” and “fun maker:” Juliet. Without hesitation, every student that I interviewed was excited at the mere mention of Juliet’s name. I began each set of interviews by introducing my connection to Juliet and was immediately overwhelmed by

the remembrance of a joyful time resounding in their voices and the memories of hope twinkling in their eyes. The students were unanimous in their simple and honest rationale for their admiration of her during their paired interviews (personal communication, February 16, 2012; personal communication, February 17, 2012): “*She was cool.*” “*She was awesome.*” “*Ms. [Juliet] was great and I miss her a lot.*” “*She was nice to me.*” “*She listened to me.*” “[*She*] *would always play games with us.*” “*They [Juliet and Hermia] would always tell us stuff [about] when they were younger.*” Their comments and physicalities (e.g., smiles, clasped hands as if clapping) indicate that a true and lasting connection had been made between them and Juliet --- a feat that Rabkin (2012) insisted was imperative for classroom engagement, but acknowledged can be difficult to achieve in the limited amount of time TAs (like Juliet) are with their students (n. p.).

Rabkin (2012) explained this student-teacher connection: “They [teaching artists (TA)] must win students' commitment quickly, and they've found the best way to do that is to take students' interests and ideas seriously” (n.p.). I would take Rabkin's suggestions one step further and add that it also helps if you take the *students* seriously, too. Once, when I was teaching creative writing as a TA in a low SES elementary school, I saw one of the 184 students from one of my 8 classes walking down the hall with a friend. She smiled broadly and excitedly called out, “Hi, Mrs. Burrow!” as I passed. “Hi, Jane,” I called back. In shocked delight she whispered to her friend, “She remembered my name!” I simply took less than 2 seconds to acknowledge a student by name and the connection was immediately evident ... Juliet did so much more than that for her students! By always listening to her students and continuously giving of herself to them, Juliet created a truly meaningful connection that had been missing for students

who were yearning to be heard and seen. When asked, “What do you miss most [about theatre class]?” One student responded, “*Ms. [Juliet] and Ms. [Hermia], definitely*” (paired interview, personal communication, February 16, 2012).

I truly believe children are always going to love participating in what is fun; and theatre is fun! And they are always going to be drawn to those people who truly care about and listen to them; and Juliet did that! So the overall positive impact and meaningful experience of the theatre classes on the students is almost a foregone conclusion. What this narrative opened my eyes to was a participant who I (as an Early Childhood advocate) would not have previously devoted much time to understanding --- the theatre arts *teacher*. So in keeping with the exploratory spirit of my story, I now consider the impact of *The Fifth Ward Project* on the teacher. Did this experience mean enough to her?

**Was it enough for the *teacher*?** Juliet, like most teachers, committed her own energy, spent her own resources, and invested her own time each week in the hopes of teaching and reaching her students. By her own account she spent countless hours preparing, reflecting on, and revising lessons so that she could offer the most effective and enjoyable class time to her students: “I really need to post more since so much did happen this past month and I want to keep track of different events so I can learn from them and try and hone in on what works and what doesn't” (EBW3, 2010j). And after all of the numerous hours she dedicated to creating the “perfect” academic lesson plan, she was always willing to throw it all out in order to better fit the more pressing social needs of her students. Schön (1983) and Green (1995) characterized Juliet’s reflective efforts as ones that transcend the lesson plans as the result of really listening to her students (p.

332; p. 13). Did Juliet really want to spend so much class time playing “GaGa Ball,” in order to teach teamwork and focus? Of course not, but her students loved it (this was almost a unanimous student response to “What was your favorite part of theatre class?”) ... and that was enough for her.

**Was it enough for the audience?** When I first embarked on this research journey I did so to satisfy the needs of others. I performed the formative program evaluation to suit the needs of *The Fifth Ward Project’s* executives. I completed my preliminary research to comply with the needs of my doctoral committee to meet University graduation guidelines. But, the conclusion of the study has been completed for selfish reasons. I have always and will always gravitate towards those studies, themes, and ideas that are connected to the theatre arts. And (as a result of my doctoral course studies) I will probably now always gravitate towards exploring theatre arts with mostly qualitative methods. This study allowed me to satisfy my own selfish needs as a student, researcher, and arts advocate. With this narrative inquiry I got to study a topic that *I* wanted to in a way that *I* wanted to study it. The experience was intensely satisfying for me. It helped me rediscover my love for theatre arts, allowed me to reconnect with my passion for narrative writing, and made me reconsider and redefine my definition of meaningful experiences. I must now return to the needs of others, though, and ask: did my qualitative narrative filled with the voices of *The Fifth Ward Project* have you encouraging your friends to catch the next showing or clamoring for the refund of your ticket price? This study was enough for me, but did it mean enough to you? That is for you to decide, dear audience. For now, the ultimate judgment of the

worth of this narrative performance is up to you. You decide...wait a minute! Is that encore applause I hear? Well then, may I recommend...

### **Recommendations**

I attribute the cancelation of *The Fifth Ward Project* primarily to a lack of understanding on the part of the adults. Most of the adults peripherally connected to *The Project* failed to understand the significant impact it had on its participants and the meaningful influence it could have had on the rest of Verona Elementary School and later even the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward community. They failed to understand what was really going on in those classes for an hour each week. “Grown-ups never understand anything by themselves, and it is tiresome for children to be always and forever explaining things to them” (de Saint Exupéry, 2000). It is my hope that this narrative, with its inclusion of children’s voices, can assist the adults in their understanding of *The Fifth Ward Project*. Below are my recommendations to other teachers, other theatre programs, and other arts researchers.

Smith (March 21, 2012) believed that

[My] narrative uses theories and philosophy in order to bring it [the study] into the practical realm which is directly applicable to the everyday situation and teacher. Theory is great and all...it's definitely necessary for us to better understand the significance of things...but nothing is more important than the practical application of everyday teaching, particularly for those in low SES situations where they [should] not only [be] teaching content but they [should] also [be] teaching life skills, such as respect and passion. (personal communication)

First, my recommendations generalize how other teachers can apply lessons from *The Fifth Ward Project* to their own classroom teaching. Next, my recommendations generalize how other theatre programs can apply the lessons of *The Fifth Ward Project* for their own success in low SES settings. Finally, I offer possible directions for additional qualitative research in order to ensure the existence of future theatre programs.

**Recommendations for generalizability --- What other teachers can learn.**

“Nothing is ever easy in the inner city” (EBW3, 2010c). Juliet readily acknowledged that teaching in low SES settings is hard work. She empathized with the fact that teachers of low SES students often do not get the support, professional development, or resources they need in order to be effective at their jobs (personal communication, January 05, 2012). However, despite being faced with the same set-backs, Juliet still found a way to make her class work. Admittedly, as a theatre arts teacher she had an advantage in that she could “connect to the students in a different way than (sic) their home room teachers do” (EBW3, 2010i). Regardless, there is still a general lesson that teachers of traditional school subjects can glean from her classroom: learn to imagine so that they can provide a student learning space of exploration and collaboration that goes beyond the convenient in order to meet all the needs of their students.

Social learning theories claim that successful student learning depends on providing social settings that encourage group interactions and supply real experiences in order for learners to discover their own meanings and create their own knowledge. *The Fifth Ward Project* demonstrated that purposefully-chosen games could easily achieve this successful learning setting. Even the students themselves recognized the benefits and

future possibilities of presenting lessons based on this idea (paired interview, personal communication, February 16, 2012):

Interviewer: “Could this [referring to the use of games for learning] work in your other classes?”

Interviewee: “Yes.”

Interviewer: “How could you play games [to learn] in your other classes?”

Interviewee: “*In math, you could hit the ball [reference to “GaGa Ball] if you knew the answer.*”

“*[Use] a pantomime in reading.*”

“*[Use] Tongue Twisters in English.*”

Convinced that games, like the ones Juliet used, could aid learning in other classes, another student offered a game idea for practicing multiplication in which students could offer answers via written races on the board (paired interview, personal communication, February 17, 2012). From the mouth of babes, *The Fifth Ward Project* encourages teachers to “make it [lesson instruction] more fun and we [the students] still learn” (paired interview, personal communication, February 16, 2012). When thinking “outside the box” during lesson planning, the first step for teachers begins with rediscovering their own imaginations

In my experience, children instinctively know how to turn a stick into a rocket ship, how to create a castle out of a refrigerator box, and how to see their chaotic scribbles of color as museum-quality masterpieces. Somewhere along the way to adulthood, though, they seem to lose their ability to imagine. This inability to imagine deprives us of complete satisfaction in our own adult lives, but as teachers our inability to

imagine is also detrimental to the lives of our students, “in part because teachers incapable of thinking imaginatively or of releasing students to encounter works of literature and other forms of art are probably also unable to communicate to the young what the use of imagination signifies” (Greene, 1995, p. 36 – 37). By rebooting their own child-like sense of play, teachers will be able to imagine themselves out of classrooms filled with rote memory, limited higher-order thinking, and the absence of fun and into classrooms full of engaging, motivating, applicable learning experiences. Beyond the return to play that children so desperately need in order to remain children, though, Greene (1995) expands the definition of “imagination” to also include a transformative power that could especially benefit low SES students’ lives (p. 36).

“Too rarely do we have poor children in mind when we think of the way imagination enlarges experience” (Greene, 1995, p. 36). However, once teachers embrace their imaginations, it could then extend beyond fixing the low SES classroom and lead into the possibility of a better, more complete community for these young, low SES children. G. B. Madison (1998, p. 191) believed that “it is through imagination, the realm of pure possibility that we freely make ourselves to be who or what we are, that we creatively and imaginatively become who we are, while in the process preserving the freedom and possibility to be yet otherwise than what we have become and merely are” (as cited in Greene, 1995, p. 38).

Recapturing the creativity of their own childhoods may be a daunting endeavor for adult teachers, but it is this type of self-confidence in their abilities that they must possess in order to be effective instructors for their students. After all, if teachers cannot believe in their own abilities how can they begin to empathize with and educate the

students in their care (Green, 1995, p. 37)? *The Fifth Ward Project* encourages other teachers to discover and practice the high efficacy that will allow them to reach all students, regardless of any barriers (Rubie-Davies, 2007 as cited in Craig, 2011, p. 18). By unlocking their own dormant childhood imaginations teachers can make steps towards creating a classroom that actually meets the needs of their students and does not merely meet the demands of our nation's tests. By imagining with these students, teachers can also begin to imagine a better life for them.

**Recommendations for generalizability --- What other theatre programs can learn.** I believe that this narrative told the real story of a real teacher in a really challenging school setting. The national call (PCAH, 2011) for the inclusion of the theatre arts in schools is going to continue to focus on these challenging school settings which are filled with low SES and minority students. In order for other theatre programs to successfully teach and reach these students they will need to provide the right teacher who has the right mindset to survive the obstacles of low SES settings.

***The right teacher.*** As Juliet shared throughout her blog and interviews, "You need patience and tolerance for this; it's not for everyone" (personal communication, January 05, 2012). Even those teachers who are currently teaching traditional subjects at low SES schools are not always equipped to offer an environment that takes into consideration the communicative needs and learning-style preferences of minority students (Pajewski & Enriquez, 1996). During a paired interview (February 16, 2012), one student shared an example of the way in which a teacher at Verona merely made a half-hearted attempt to provide a productive collaborative learning experience and then, at the first hint of complications, quickly gave up on the endeavor: "Like, for

example, some people stand up and move to a friend's desk and were like talking. Miss hates that. She had put us in teams. So when that didn't work out she put us in boy-girl-boy-girl" (personal communication). This young boy's account of a group project gone wrong illustrates that even the homeroom teachers are sometimes ignorant of minorities' learning preferences and/or insufficiently prepared on how to create an effective collaborative classroom. Pajewski and Enriquez (1996) remind non-Hispanic teachers that Hispanic students have a tendency to talk to each other a lot during class in order to help each other out with explanations and/or translations (n. p.). Teachers, therefore, need to know how to accept and adapt to students' cultural norms. Additionally, this example also illustrates that most teachers do not have enough self-efficacy to effectively implement appropriate learning practices in the classroom; this teacher was very quick to give up on the group project when it did not proceed quietly and orderly. So when other theatre programs choose a teacher for their classes, they must make sure that he or she is truly prepared for and sensitive to the actual needs and preferences of the populations they are serving.

Since most theatre teachers will, for now, most likely continue to assume their teaching roles in the schools as TAs, theatre programs should be mindful that they will only get a small window of opportunity in which to implement classroom management, create a connection, and make a lasting impression on their students (Rabkin, 2012). Therefore, theatre programs should select those individuals who are truly ready to combat the obstacles of low SES settings. Their selected teachers should be professionally prepared and genuinely confident in their own abilities as educators while also being sensitive to the specific needs of the populations they are teaching. As Juliet

demonstrated, it is not always the lessons you set out to teach that end up meaning the most to your students.

***The right mindset.*** According to *The Fifth Ward Project*, there is no doubt that “theatre education is a powerful tool and class in these children’s lives!!! It is amazing” (Hermia, personal communication, February 23, 2011)! However, in order to achieve positive outcomes similar to this one, other theatre programs may need to review, rethink, and redefine what they plan to do in their theatre classes. As Juliet demonstrated throughout the 2010 – 2011 school year, at this young age the classes should probably focus more on the weekly “process” rather than the final “performance.” Those theatre programs that wish to create great actors out of the students should take the time to realize that the more important priority is to create great individuals out of the children. Rabkin (2012) encouraged that the most effective way to engage students is to take their interests and ideas seriously (n. p.). In other words, theatre programs should encourage their teachers to embrace the naturally improvisational nature of their craft so as to develop the type of beneficial learning that is unintentional and situated within authentic activity (Lave, 1990); it may not be what they planned to do, but it is what they should do.

***The right teacher ... the right mindset ... right now!*** It is imperative that theatre programs make finding these right teachers with their right mindsets a priority. Juliet’s ability to unlock the “hidden” potential in low SES students with the magic of theatre arts education was undeniable, but “imagine what I could have accomplished if I had started with these kids in Kindergarten” (personal communication, January 05, 2012). There is a ever-shrinking timeframe in today’s childhood where students are still willing to engage

in imaginative play. “In Kindergarten [they are] not afraid to have imagination” (Juliet, personal communication, January 05, 2012), but as they grow up children tend to leave their imagination behind them. And today’s children are growing up faster every day, especially those in low SES neighborhoods where bleak realities make it hard for the roots of imagination to sprout up. As one student shared (to my utter dismay) these student consider the loss of imagination to be simply part of growing up:

Interviewee: *“He [student’s 6<sup>th</sup> grade brother] did acting like last year, but I don’t know why he doesn’t want to do it again.”*

Interviewer: “Yeah, why do you think some people get really excited about doing acting and drama and theatre and then they decide they don’t want to do it anymore?”

Interviewee: *“Because it’s like part of growing up.”*

Interviewer: “Part of growing up? What do you mean?”

Interviewee: *“Some people don’t want to do drama because, you know, sometimes, sometimes when you’re like in 6<sup>th</sup> grade, some people talk to you that it is not good and you start believing that. They start telling you that it’s not ‘cool’ to do drama.”*

So now is the time to make sure that theatre arts education is included, from the *beginning*, for EVERY student in EVERY school. I cannot imagine my life without theatre arts, but if we do not take immediate action these kids will not be able to imagine their life with it.

**Recommendations for future research.** So what is next for the study of theatre arts education? Using my initial exploration as a starting point, I suggest that

improvements to and/or variations on my methodological design could continue the qualitative dialog needed to educate the nation about the realities, shortcomings, benefits, and needs of theatre arts education in our schools. Changes to the techniques used for data collection, diversification of the populations included, and/or the allowance for different perspectives could all add significant layers to the national discussion that should be taking place about theatre arts education.

When done correctly, the mixing of qualitative and quantitative methods can be uniquely advantageous to a study. Chomsky (2012) warns, though, that “you can’t [and shouldn’t] pursue any kind of inquiry without a relatively clear framework that’s directing your search and helping you choose what’s significant and what isn’t...” (n.p.). The mixed methods tool belt is most effective when you know which tools to use, how to use them, and when to use them. Therefore, approaching future studies with the foreknowledge that a mixed methodology will be undertaken will allow the research design to be more precise and more widely appreciated.

If future studies consciously decide to undertake a mixed methods approach then they can factor in the time necessary to more exhaustively conduct it. For instance, due to my own time constraints I was unable to observe the students in the theatre classes, the student-teacher dynamics in the general classrooms, or the other Verona teachers. As a result I had to rely on the honesty and accuracy of Juliet’s statements, my commonalities with her personal belief system (with regards to theatre arts), and my professional expertise in theatre arts education to offer judgment and interpretation for the readers. Future research could improve upon my study by allowing additional time to gather a context for the responses of the participants by utilizing first-hand observations,

interviews of outside parties (e. g., parents, administrators, and/or other teachers), and/or debriefings with peers with more varied expertise and knowledge. Finally, the addition of time could make possible longitudinal studies that follow up with young theatre participants as they navigate their new schools, communities, and adult lives.

After improving the methodological design of my initial study, future research could turn its attention to altering the study's objectives based on the specific settings it explores. My approach and objectives could be the jumping off point for comparing the meanings made by other student populations (e.g., special needs, high SES) and other stakeholders (e.g., parents, homeroom teachers). Whatever new research avenue arts advocates choose to explore next, though, the research should always seek to capture the voices of those it immediately impacts and then be content to let that be enough.

**A final word of encouragement.** While it may be tempting to use flashy props and expensive sets (i.e., quantitative research) as the main draw of your performance (i.e., presentation of your study), they really should do nothing more than what they are meant to do --- enhance the star of the show (i.e., the personal stories of the study's participants). I encourage fellow arts advocates to come to the realization that I recently did: Qualitative research of the theatre arts really needs nothing more than the subject, standing alone on the stage for all eyes to focus on and learn from. It will be enough. It will be enough to at least get the research community dialoguing, the funding agencies considering, and the nation thinking. We just have to stay strong in our commitment to present qualitative work for a qualitative experience, because if we keep trying to justify our existence by the rules of a quantitative world, then we will eventually lose the quality that makes our existence so meaningful and worthwhile in the first place. We must

believe that the hART of our research does matter and that it is the best means by which to capture our subjects' experiences. If we can stay strong in our qualitative convictions, then someday we will be able to confidently say that for our nation's children, theatre arts "is enough!"

## A NARRATIVE OF THEATRE ARTS TO LOW SES STUDENTS

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A NARRATIVE OF THEATRE ARTS TO LOW SES STUDENTS

**Appendix A**

**2010 - 2011 School Year Theatre Class Pre-Survey for Students**

**2010 –2011 School Year Theatre Class Teacher’s Rubric**

**\*\*NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_ **\*\*GRADE LEVEL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*SCHOOL:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*WHAT DO YOU WANT TO BE WHEN YOU GROW UP?**

**\*\*WHAT DO YOU LIKE BEST ABOUT THEATRE?**

FOR EACH QUESTION BELOW, CIRCLE ONLY ONE EMOTION FACE:

**1. How do you feel about MATH?**



LOVE IT!



LIKE IT



DON'T CARE



DON'T KNOW



DISLIKE IT



HATE IT!

**2. How do you feel about WRITING?**



LOVE IT!



LIKE IT



DON'T CARE



DON'T KNOW



DISLIKE IT



HATE IT!

**3. How do you feel about READING?**



LOVE IT!



LIKE IT



DON'T CARE



DON'T KNOW



DISLIKE IT



HATE IT!

**4. How do you feel about SOCIAL STUDIES?**



LOVE IT!



LIKE IT



DON'T CARE



DON'T KNOW



DISLIKE IT



HATE IT!

**5. How do you feel about SCIENCE?**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LOVE IT!  | LIKE IT   | DON'T CARE  | DON'T KNOW  | DISLIKE IT  | HATE IT!  |

**6. How do you feel about SPORTS?**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LOVE IT!  | LIKE IT   | DON'T CARE  | DON'T KNOW  | DISLIKE IT  | HATE IT!  |

**7. How do you feel about THEATRE?**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LOVE IT!  | LIKE IT   | DON'T CARE  | DON'T KNOW  | DISLIKE IT  | HATE IT!  |

**8. How do you feel about MUSIC?**

|  |  |  |  |  |  |
|--|--|--|--|--|--|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LOVE IT!   | LIKE IT  | DON'T CARE   | DON'T KNOW   | DISLIKE IT   | HATE IT!   |

**9. How do you feel about BAND?**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LOVE IT!  | LIKE IT   | DON'T CARE  | DON'T KNOW  | DISLIKE IT  | HATE IT!  |

**10. How do you feel about DANCE?**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LOVE IT!  | LIKE IT   | DON'T CARE  | DON'T KNOW  | DISLIKE IT  | HATE IT!  |

**\*\*WHICH SUBJECT DO YOU MAKE THE BEST GRADES IN?**

**\*\*WHAT IS YOUR FAVORITE SUBJECT AND WHY?**

FOR EACH QUESTION BELOW, RATE YOURSELF BY CIRCLING ONLY ONE OF THE EMOTION FACES:

**11. I make good grades.**



Yes, definitely    I'm pretty good    I'm okay    I don't know    Not really    No, definitely not

**12. I am well-behaved in class.**



Yes, definitely    I'm pretty good    I'm okay    I don't know    Not really    No, definitely not

**13. I am a good theatre student.**



Yes, definitely    I'm pretty good    I'm okay    I don't know    Not really    No, definitely not

**\*\*WHAT MAKES SOMEONE A GOOD THEATRE STUDENT?**

**14. I am creative.**



Yes, definitely    I'm pretty good    I'm okay    I don't know    Not really    No, definitely not

**\*\*WHAT MAKES SOMEONE CREATIVE?**

**15. I am a good friend.**



Yes, definitely    I'm pretty good    I'm okay    I don't know    Not really    No, definitely not

**\*\*WHAT MAKES SOMEONE A GOOD FRIEND?**

**16. I work well in a group.**

|   |   |   |   |  |   |
|---|---|---|---|--|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| Yes, definitely   | I'm pretty good   | I'm okay  | I don't know  | Not really   | No, definitely not  |

FOR EACH QUESTION BELOW, CIRCLE ALL THE EMOTION FACES THAT APPLY:

**17. How do you feel about public speaking?**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| EXCITED   | CONFIDENT   | HAPPY   | DON'T CARE  | DON'T KNOW  | DISLIKE IT  | WORRIED   | TERRIFIED   |

**18. How do you feel about performing on stage?**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| EXCITED   | CONFIDENT   | HAPPY   | DON'T CARE  | DON'T KNOW  | DISLIKE IT  | WORRIED   | TERRIFIED   |

**19. How do you feel about making a class presentation?**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| EXCITED   | CONFIDENT   | HAPPY   | DON'T CARE  | DON'T KNOW  | DISLIKE IT  | WORRIED   | TERRIFIED   |

**21. How do you feel about working in a group?**

|   |   |   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|
|  |  |  |  |  |  |  |  |
| EXCITED   | CONFIDENT   | HAPPY   | DON'T CARE  | DON'T KNOW  | DISLIKE IT  | WORRIED   | TERRIFIED   |

For the following categories please indicate which label best describes the student's overall performance in theatre class (include comments where appropriate).

Student Name:  
School:      Grade  
level:

|   | mastered | proficient | needs improvement | does not demonstrate | not yet observed |
|---|----------|------------|-------------------|----------------------|------------------|
| <p><b>appreciation for theatre arts</b></p> <p><i>student demonstrates an overall enjoyment of theatre arts activities by participating in both the role of observer (audience) and participant (actor) and actively seeks to improve their craft through practice (rehearsal) and training (theatre exercises)</i></p> |          |            |                   |                      |                  |
| <p><b>creativity skills</b></p> <p><i>student demonstrates a willingness to experiment with and display their creativity by making interesting character choices, trying new activities, and seeking a response that is not the typical one to any given situation</i></p>  |          |            |                   |                      |                  |
| <p><b>problem solving skills</b></p> <p><i>student demonstrates a willingness to solve problems on their own accord by using appropriate inter-relationship skills</i></p>  |          |            |                   |                      |                  |
| <p><b>working with others</b></p> <p><i>student demonstrates a willingness to work respectfully and successfully with others to achieve a common goal</i></p>   |          |            |                   |                      |                  |
| <p><b>focus and concentration</b></p> <p><i>student demonstrates an ability to focus and concentrate on tasks presented to them or activities they are involved in during work, play, and instruction times</i></p>   |          |            |                   |                      |                  |

A NARRATIVE OF THEATRE ARTS TO LOW SES STUDENTS

**Appendix B**

**Report to Houston Endowment**

**Report to Houston Endowment : Arts Education in Houston's Fifth Ward**

University of Houston  
School of Theatre & Dance  
Director, Steve Wallace

Report Completed by: Jackie deMontmollin  
Associate Director of Theatre Education  
jdemontmollin@uh.edu

10/12/09

Please find attached a checklist of development to date of The School of Theatre & Dance/Fifth Ward Project and a biography of the recently hired Program Coordinator.

The impact to date has been excellent. The School of Theatre & Dance has succeeded in establishing a formal partnership with Houston Independent School District for this project. HISD are providing faculty, assisting with transportation costs and are housing the program in their facilities.

Our initial project associated with this grant involved developing a three week Summer Theatre Camp serving 80 Fifth Ward Children from four different elementary schools (E.O. Smith, Crawford, Atherton and Henderson). The camp (Deluxe Entertainment Camp for Kids or DECK) culminated in a production based on the work of Shel Silverstein presented for the parents and community. HISD matched Houston Endowment Grant monies dollar for dollar in the development and implementation of the DECK Camp.

The impact of this camp was documented in a video which was submitted to you this summer. The video was developed to be used as an advocacy tool for the program. It has been distributed to HISD Board Members to advocate for the official partnership and also to community members. The DECK Video was also played at Open Houses for parents and community members in each school involved.

Following the camp in June we began the search for the program coordinator. The position had unexplained delays in posting and there were many obstacles to overcome in ensuring this program could start in the fall. I am happy to report we overcame all obstacles and have a program in place!

Once the position was finally posted we left the posting in place for three weeks. The result was thirty-nine applicants! Our committee narrowed the pool to six qualified, stellar applicants. Those six candidates were interviewed by a committee consisting of four UH teaching artists and one HISD arts administrator. That team narrowed the pool to three final candidates. The three finalists were interviewed by a committee consisting of one UH teaching artist and four HISD administrators. Beth Berkley Wallace emerged as the top candidate. (Bio Attached).

Due to delays in the system, the program coordinator contract was not offered officially until October, 2009. In an effort to ensure the program's success, an

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interim position was created to assist the Associate Director of Theatre Education in developing curriculum and to begin teaching the children during the school day. Third- fifth grade students at each school have one hour per week of instruction in theatre arts during the school day. Two hundred students are currently receiving arts instruction who had not received it before!

During the process of hiring and contracting the program coordinator, UH student teaching artists applied and were interviewed as teaching artists for the after school program. Two UH student teaching artists and one recent UH Theatre Graduate were contracted to teach theatre two days per week after school.

Fourth and Fifth Grade students from Atherton and Crawford Middle School are currently applying for placement in the afterschool program which will serve a maximum of twenty students per school in it's initial year. The goal is to add a grade level (6<sup>th</sup> grade) and an additional ten students next year.

The children in the after school program, working with UH teaching artists and the program coordinator, in collaboration with an HISD teacher will develop a play for the Houston Independent school District Mini-UIL One Act Play Festival. HISD will contribute busses, facilities and faculty and the grant will pay the wages for the teaching artists and the entry fee to the UIL academic office. This will be the first time Fifth Ward Schools will participate in this HISD Festival!

To date the grant has made tremendous impact on the children of the Fifth Ward. We are grateful to the Endowment for seeing the value in arts education opportunities for children of Houston's Fifth Ward.

Respectfully Submitted,

*Jackie deMontmollin*

Jackie deMontmollin  
 Associate Director of Theatre Education  
 The University of Houston  
 School of Theatre & Dance

**Report to Houston Endowment : Arts Education in Houston's Fifth Ward**

University of Houston  
School of Theatre & Dance  
Director, Steve Wallace

Report Completed by: Jackie deMontmollin  
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Progress to date: 10/02/09

**Phase 1 – Planning and Communication, April – June 2009**

- Form Planning Committee
  - ✓ April 1, 2009-Steve Wallace, Director of The School of Theatre & Dance and Jackie deMontmollin, Associate Director of Theatre Education met with Walter Smith, Elementary Fine Arts Manager for Houston Independent School District. Purpose of meeting: To form partnership with HISD as an entry point into Fifth Ward.
  - ✓ April 15, 2009- Wallace and deMontmollin met with Tracy Weeden, Associate Superintendent of HISD and Lupita Hinojosa, Executive Principal of The Wheatley Feeder Pattern in HISD (Fifth Ward Schools) and submitted proposal for partnership (addendum attached)
  - ✓ April 23, 2009-Wallace and deMontmollin tour five Fifth Ward Campuses and met with administration from each (demographic data on each attached).
  - ✓ April 30, 2009 deMontmollin met with HISD Office of Strategic Planning regarding partnership.
  - ✓ May 2, 2009 deMontmollin formed committee to develop Summer Theatre Camp at EO Smith Elementary School.
  - ✓ Throughout May-deMontmollin held several meetings with HISD administration and camp development team. Camp came to be called Deluxe Entertainment Camp for Kids or DECK.
  - ✓ May 28, 2009 Staff Development workshop with The Alley Theatre for DECK Camp Counselors and HISD faculty working in DECK Camp.
  - ✓ June 2, 2009 Staff development workshop with Professor Becky Valls (also with Theatre for Young Audiences) for DECK Camp Counselors and HISD Faculty.
  - ✓ June 4-June 26, 2009- DECK Camp served 81 5<sup>th</sup> Ward Elementary School Students (rising 3<sup>rd</sup>-5<sup>th</sup> graders). (DVD documenting experience available)
  - ✓ June 26-Public performance of 81 DECK Student participants at EO Smith Elementary for community
- Hire Educational Outreach Manager
  - ✓ Interim Program Coordinator was hired in August and placed in Atherton and Crawford Elementary to teach one hour of theatre per day to fourth and fifth grade students.
  - ✓ Thirty nine applications were reviewed by committee
  - ✓ August 28- Six qualified individuals selected interviewed with a committee of four UH teaching artists and Walter Smith of HISD.
  - ✓ September 11- Three finalists interviewed with a committee of four HISD administrators and Jackie deMontmollin of UH.
  - ✓ September 18, 2009- Position offered to finalist
  - ✓ October 1, 2009 Full time contract begins for Program Coordinator
  - ✓ Placement begins in EO Smith as additional campus receiving one hour of theatre instruction per day for fourth and fifth grade students.
- Outline Scope and Sequence of Curriculum
  - ✓ August 2009 Creative Dramatics Curriculum developed by Associate Director of Theatre Education and Interim Program Coordinator

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Progress to date: 10/02/09

- Develop admission criteria for students and teaching artists
  - ✓ September 2009- Admission criteria draft developed by Associate Director of Theatre Education and Interim Program Coordinator and reviewed for approval by HISD administration.
- Visit Mosaic Youth Theatre in Detroit to research model
  - Pending
- Attend Center for Development of Fine Arts Summit in Austin
  - ✓ Associate Director of Theatre Education attended Summit representing UH and HISD.

**Phase 2 – Training and Report Development, July – Sept. 2009**

- Develop detailed lesson and curriculum plans
  - ✓ In constant progress
- Develop programming plan and guidelines
  - ✓ In progress
- Develop evaluation survey
  - ✓ In progress
- Hire and train Teaching Artists
  - ✓ Three teaching artists have been contracted and begin work in after school program October 12, 2009.
- Finalize curriculum
  - ✓ Completed in August
- Advertise and promote program in HISD Fifth Ward schools
  - ✓ Ongoing-
  - ✓ Program coordinator has attended Open Houses at Crawford and Atherton Elementary schools representing the program.
  - ✓ Video presented to parents and faculty of each school representing work over the summer.
  - ✓ HISD Board proposal for partnership with HISD completed to be presented at September Board meeting.
- Conduct after-school workshop for prospective students
  - ✓ After School program is slated to begin October 12, 2009.
  - ✓ After School program students from two schools (Atherton and Crawford) will develop a One Act Play to be entered in the HISD mini-one act play Festival at The High School for Performing and Visual Arts in November. This will be the first time Fifth Ward Elementary Schools have participated.

*Note: Addendums, Documentary of DECK Camp and budget report available upon request.*

A NARRATIVE OF THEATRE ARTS TO LOW SES STUDENTS

**Appendix C**

**Demographics for Verona Elementary School**

Telephone: 713-226-2627  
 Address: 1510 Jensen 77020-2124  
 Principal: Amelia Cárdenas-Aguilar  
 School Office: Elementary  
 Board Member: Anna Eastman  
 Chief School Officer: Samuel Sarabia  
 Campus Number: 240  
 Grades Served: EE-5

|                                       |  | Student Profile |           |           |           |                 | Teacher & Staff Profile |            |           |           |                 |
|---------------------------------------|--|-----------------|-----------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|-------------------------|------------|-----------|-----------|-----------------|
|                                       |  | 06-07           | 07-08     | 08-09     | 09-10     | 10-11           | 06-07                   | 07-08      | 08-09     | 09-10     | 10-11           |
| <b>Enrollment</b>                     |  |                 |           |           |           |                 |                         |            |           |           |                 |
| Total                                 |  | 507             | 542       | 486       | 464       | 389             | 34                      | 31         | 30        | 32        | 34              |
| Kindergarten and Below                |  | 126             | 131       | 125       | 132       | 87              |                         |            |           |           |                 |
| <b>Gender</b>                         |  |                 |           |           |           |                 |                         |            |           |           |                 |
| Female                                |  | 48 %            | 47 %      | 49 %      | 49 %      | 48 %            | 74 %                    | 77 %       | 80 %      | 81 %      | 82 %            |
| Male                                  |  | 52 %            | 53 %      | 51 %      | 51 %      | 52 %            | 26 %                    | 23 %       | 20 %      | 19 %      | 18 %            |
| <b>Race/Ethnicity</b>                 |  |                 |           |           |           |                 |                         |            |           |           |                 |
| African American                      |  | 1 %             | 1 %       | 0 %       | 0 %       | 1 %             | 6 %                     | 10 %       | 10 %      | 6 %       | 6 %             |
| American Indian                       |  | 0 %             | 0 %       | 0 %       | 0 %       | <1 %            | 0 %                     | 0 %        | 0 %       | 0 %       | 0 %             |
| Asian/Pac. Islande                    |  | 0 %             | 0 %       | 0 %       | 0 %       | <1 %            | 0 %                     | 3 %        | 3 %       | 3 %       | 3 %             |
| Hispanic                              |  | 98 %            | 98 %      | 99 %      | 99 %      | 98 %            | 65 %                    | 58 %       | 63 %      | 69 %      | 65 %            |
| White                                 |  | <1 %            | 1 %       | 1 %       | 1 %       | 1 %             | 24 %                    | 29 %       | 23 %      | 22 %      | 25 %            |
| Two or More                           |  | N/A %           | N/A %     | N/A %     | 0 %       | 0 %             | N/A %                   | N/A %      | N/A %     | 0 %       | 0 %             |
| <b>Students by Program</b>            |  |                 |           |           |           |                 |                         |            |           |           |                 |
| Bilingual                             |  | 56 %            | 59 %      | 59 %      | 52 %      | 50 %            | 4 yrs.                  | 4 yrs.     | 5 yrs.    | 5 yrs.    | 6 yrs.          |
| ESL                                   |  | 1 %             | 1 %       | 0 %       | 0 %       | 1 %             | 78 %                    | 85 %       | 53 %      | 58 %      | 50 %            |
| Gifted/Talented                       |  | 3 %             | 5 %       | 8 %       | 18 %      | 18 %            | 21 %                    | 32 %       | 43 %      | 41 %      | 41 %            |
| Special Ed                            |  | 6 %             | 6 %       | 4 %       | 5 %       | 5 %             | 3 %                     | 3 %        | 3 %       | 3 %       | 9 %             |
| Title I                               |  | 100 %           | 100 %     | 100 %     | 100 %     | 100 %           |                         |            |           |           |                 |
| Free/Reduced Lunch                    |  | 97 %            | 96 %      | 96 %      | 97 %      | 95 %            | 94 %                    | 90 %       | 90 %      | 97 %      | 97 %            |
| Limited English (LEP)                 |  | 59 %            | 62 %      | 63 %      | 59 %      | 54 %            | 0 %                     | 0 %        | 0 %       | 0 %       | 0 %             |
| At-Risk                               |  | 79 %            | 82 %      | 80 %      | 82 %      | 79 %            | 0 %                     | 0 %        | 0 %       | 0 %       | 0 %             |
| <b>Student Outcomes</b>               |  |                 |           |           |           |                 |                         |            |           |           |                 |
| Attendance Rate                       |  | 97.4 %          | 97.2 %    | 97.8 %    | 97.6 %    | 97.6 %          | 94 %                    | 90 %       | 90 %      | 97 %      | 97 %            |
| Promotion Rate                        |  | 84.2 %          | 83.6 %    | 92.6 %    | 94.7 %    | 96.7 %          | 0 %                     | 0 %        | 0 %       | 0 %       | 0 %             |
| <b>Disciplinary Actions</b>           |  |                 |           |           |           |                 |                         |            |           |           |                 |
| In-School Suspensions                 |  | 0               | 0         | 1         | 1         | 0               | 0 %                     | 0 %        | 0 %       | 0 %       | 0 %             |
| Out-of-School Suspension              |  | 51              | 32        | 26        | 27        | 27              | 0 %                     | 0 %        | 0 %       | 0 %       | 0 %             |
| Expulsions                            |  | 0               | 0         | 0         | 0         | 0               | 0 %                     | 0 %        | 0 %       | 0 %       | 0 %             |
| Alternative Placement                 |  | 0               | 1         | 1         | 3         | 1               | 0 %                     | 0 %        | 0 %       | 0 %       | 0 %             |
| Total Number                          |  | 51              | 33        | 28        | 31        | 28              | 6 %                     | 10 %       | 10 %      | 0 %       | 3 %             |
| <b>Adequate Yearly Progress (AYP)</b> |  |                 |           |           |           |                 |                         |            |           |           |                 |
| Meets AYP                             |  | 06-07           | 07-08     | 08-09     | 09-10     | 10-11 (Prelim.) | 06-07                   | 07-08      | 08-09     | 09-10     | 10-11 (Prelim.) |
| Meets AYP                             |  | Meets AYP       | Meets AYP | Meets AYP | Meets AYP | Met AYP         | Recognized              | Recognized | Exemplary | Exemplary | Recognized      |

|   |  | TEA Accountability |       |       |       |                 |
|---|--|--------------------|-------|-------|-------|-----------------|
|   |  | 06-07              | 07-08 | 08-09 | 09-10 | 10-11 (Prelim.) |
| <b>Special Education</b>                |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |
| Life Skills Resource                    |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |
| Speech Therapy                          |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |
| <b>Advanced Academics</b>               |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |
| Vanguard Neighborhood                   |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |
| <b>School-Based Programs</b>            |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |
| Magnet                                  |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |
| <b>Career &amp; Technical Education</b> |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |
| Multilingual                            |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |
| English as a Second Language            |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |
| Traditional Bilingual Program           |  |                    |       |       |       |                 |

**Appendix D**

**Table 1**

*Ways in which theatre arts education can teach children to acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century skills*

Table 1

*Ways in which theatre arts education can teach children to acquire 21<sup>st</sup> century skills*

| <b>21st Century Skill</b>             | <b>Definition of 21st Century Skill</b>   | <b>Example of theatre arts activity which will accomplish this skill</b>  |
|---------------------------------------|---|---|
| Creativity and Innovation             | "Demonstrating originality and inventiveness in work; developing, implementing and communicating new ideas to others; being open and responsive to new and diverse perspectives; acting on creative ideas to make a tangible and useful contribution to the domain in which the innovation occurs."   | After reading several trickster folktales, students write their own contemporary version of a trickster story and present them as short skits.  |
| Critical Thinking and Problem Solving | "Exercising sound reasoning in understanding ; making complex choices and decisions; understanding the interconnections among systems; identifying and asking significant questions that clarify various points of view and lead to better solutions; framing, analyzing and synthesizing information in order to solve problems and answer questions." | "Students gather information about a challenging school or community issue such as peer pressure, discrimination, or the environment through online research and recorded interviews with local citizens. They create and perform a series of ensemble scenes that address the issues identified and propose possible solutions." |

|                      |   |   |
|----------------------|---|---|
| <p>Communication</p> | <p>"Articulating thoughts and ideas clearly and effectively through speaking and writing."</p>  | <p>"Students perform and audio/video the same story three times, once with words only, once with physical movements only, and once with both. They review their three different performances and reflect in group discussions and individual writing about how the presentations and story changed and whether or not one version communicated more effectively than another, and why."</p> |
| <p>Collaboration</p> | <p>"Demonstrating ability to work effectively with diverse teams; exercising flexibility and willingness to be helpful in making necessary compromises to accomplish a common goal; assuming shared responsibility for collaborative work."</p> | <p>"Working together, students share the different responsibilities needed to produce a one-act play. They collaboratively assign specific roles as costumer, set designer, actor, etc., and in these roles, analyze a script and agree on an interpretation that will bring the play to life."</p>   |

|                             |  |   |
|-----------------------------|--|---|
| <p>Information Literacy</p> | <p>"Accessing information efficiently and effectively, evaluating information critically and competently, and using information accurately and creatively for the issue or problem at hand; possessing a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information."</p>   | <p>"Students devise guiding questions and conduct interviews with local immigrants about the obstacles they faced in coming to the United States and their transition once they arrived. They transcribe the immigration stories and use these as a basis to write, edit, and perform original monologues based on their ethnographic research. Throughout the process, students reflect on the ethical implications of docudrama theatre."</p> |
| <p>Media Literacy</p>       | <p>"Understanding how media messages are constructed, for what purposes and using which tools, characteristics, and conventions; examining how individuals interpret messages differently, how values and points of view are included or excluded, and how media can influence beliefs and behaviors; possessing a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information."</p> | <p>"Students research an important issue or conflict central to their lives. Included in their research is an exploration of the ways the issue or conflict is represented in the media and how different points of view are embedded in different media presentations. They create a</p>   |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|   |   | storyboard and script for a short video designed to express their point of view."  |
| Information, Communication, and Technology Literacy | "Using digital technology, communication tools, and/or networks appropriately to access, engage, integrate, evaluate, and create information in order to function in a knowledge economy; using technology as a tool to research, organize, evaluate, and communicate information and the possession of a fundamental understanding of the ethical/legal issues surrounding the access and use of information." | "Students research, design, and create a multimedia presentation to be used as a part of an original dramatic production about the civil rights movement including historical photos, graphic design, video, music, and sound effects."  |
| Flexibility and Adaptability                        | "Adapting to varied roles and responsibilities; working effectively in a climate of ambiguity and changing priorities."   | "Students work together to perform improvisational theatre sketches (scenes), taking suggestions from audience members. Collectively, they maintain an imaginary world while making credible choices in the moment in reaction to circumstances as they arise. Each student reflects on his or her |

|   |   |  |
|---|---|--|
|   |   | <p>spontaneous choices in the improv through a written reflection of the scene or translation into another medium (e.g., dance, musical performance, or work of visual art)."</p>  |
| <p>Initiative and Self-direction</p>    | <p>"Monitoring one's own understanding and learning needs; going beyond basic mastery of skills and/or curriculum to explore and expand one's own learning and opportunities to gain expertise; utilizing time efficiently and managing workload; defining, prioritizing, and completing tasks without direct oversight; demonstrating initiative to advance skill levels toward a professional level; demonstrating commitment to learning as a lifelong process."</p> | <p>"Students use the Internet and library resources to research oral histories of children who rode the late-nineteenth century orphan trains. They employ their gathered information to create monologues or first person narrative presentations."</p>                                 |
| <p>Social and Cross-cultural skills</p> | <p>"Working appropriately and productively with others; leveraging the collective intelligence of groups when appropriate; bridging cultural differences and using differing perspectives to increase innovation and the quality of work."</p>  | <p>"Students research and demonstrate a play of their own or another culture. Students then facilitate a discussion with the audience on what the play reveals about the culture they have researched. They gather additional feedback during an online discussion with an audience"</p> |

|                                 |  |  |
|---------------------------------|--|--|
|                                 |  | representing the culture."   |
| Productivity and Accountability | "Setting and meeting appropriate standards and goals for delivering high-quality work on time; demonstrating diligence and a positive work ethic(e.g., being punctual and reliable)."  | "Students, with minimal supervision, prepare and deliver a performance, sharing responsibility for all aspects of a theatrical production: design, casting, production, budgeting, rehearsal scheduling, and reviewing each rehearsal and performance to enable continuous improvement." |
| Leadership and Responsibility   | "Using interpersonal and problem-solving skills to influence and guide others toward a goal; leveraging strengths of others to accomplish a common goal; demonstrating integrity and ethical behavior; acting responsibly with the interests of the larger community in mind." | "Advanced students serve as peer mentors for younger students in a teacher supervised theatre safety program, demonstrating safe practices in set installation, tool use, toxic material handling, proper recycling of materials, and lighting and audio technology, thereby creating    |

|  |  |  |
|--|--|--|
|  |  | continuity in the school's culture of safety." |
|--|--|--|

**Appendix E**

**Details of Individual Pre-Survey Items Development**

The following is a detailed account of how/why the items were created and how well they address the constructs they intended to measure.

The first 4 survey items (i.e., *name*, *age*, *grade level*, and *school*) are demographic in nature and were included for reference, comparison, and potential longitudinal tracking and follow-up interviews purposes. For confidentiality and anonymity purposes, it is not traditional to include a request for respondents' names; however, due to the young age of the participants I felt that assigning a visible study code number would prove problematic for the students when taking the post-survey in the spring<sup>17</sup>.

The open-ended survey item "*What do you want to be when you grow up?*"<sup>18</sup> was included for the intended purposes of assessing whether (1) participation in the school year theatre classes had an effect on students' future career aspirations and/or (2) to demonstrate the relevance of theatre arts to a variety of student types.

The open-ended survey item "*What do you like best about theatre?*" was included with the intention that responses could depict the overall attitude of students entering the school year theatre classes. Since many of the students entering the theatre classes had not previously been exposed to any form of theatre arts education, the survey item did not elicit many useful responses. In retrospect, this item would have best been presented during a focus group in preparation for the pre-survey item generation or reserved for the post-survey after the completion of the theatre classes.

Ten Likert-type scale items were included that sought to measure the students overall feelings toward ten school subjects: academic --- *math*, *writing*, *reading*, *social*

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<sup>17</sup> Upon completion of data entry, I assigned survey code numbers in place of the students' names. In adherence to CPHS protocol, no one outside the research team will have access to the link between study code numbers and/or the direct identifiers.

<sup>18</sup> Refer to **Appendix A**.

*studies, and science---and extracurricular --- sports, theatre, music, band, and dance*<sup>19</sup>.

Additionally, two open-ended items (“*Which subject do you make the best grades in?*” and “*What is your favorite subject and why?*”) were included in order to validate the Likert-type scale responses indicated by the students. Originally these twelve items were included with the intention to demonstrate the impact participation in theatre classes has on students’ overall achievement and/or motivation in school subjects. In retrospect, I acknowledge that these items can not measure the proposed hypothesis because they do not account for external and internal variables.

The final six Likert-type scale items attempted to measure the students’ overall perception of their academic and social values and abilities<sup>20</sup>. Due to the unfamiliarity of the subject matter to the participants, I chose to include “Don’t know” and “Don’t care” as viable choices for the Likert-type scale items so as to not force responses in unknown categories. It was my intention to follow up with group interviews of respondents who chose these answers; however, schedules and student accessibility did not permit such an activity. I chose to include these responses without secondary clarification because she feels that they reflect the students’ initial unfamiliarity with theater arts and its related skills (i.e., creativity and teamwork).

In an attempt to better define the constructs for the post-survey, three open-ended items (“*What makes someone a good theatre student?*,” “*What makes someone creative?*,” and “*What makes someone a good friend?*”) were included to complement these final six Likert-type scale items. Since I did not have the chance to interact with the students, these open-ended items acted as a written focus group to aid the researcher in

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<sup>19</sup> Refer to **Appendix A**.

<sup>20</sup> Refer to **Appendix A**.

the clarification of definitions. The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration (2009) encourages the pairing of focus groups with surveys to help researchers “reveal specific issues of interest, language and terminology used by the population of interest” (p. 2) by clarifying terminology or revealing appropriate language to be used in the survey items. While the Department of Family and Child Nursing (2003) indicates that this pairing can be of extraordinary benefit when developing instruments for use with immigrant populations (abstract), it is my opinion that the same phenomenon can be achieved with a young population. The qualitative responses from these open-ended items were coded and (1) used to indicate areas in which the instructor could focus classroom activities for the benefit of students’ skills improvement and (2) presented to the instructor to aid in the generation of more appropriately worded post-survey items.

Three of the final survey items (“*How do you feel about public speaking?*,” “*How do you feel about performing on stage?*,” and “*How do you feel about making a class presentation?*”) allowed students’ multi-choice options in an attempt to most accurately measure their self-confidence in the mass social skill of public speaking. This skill is not only vital to success in theatre arts but is also a prerequisite to success in several academic and work situations (e.g., job interviews, networking, etc.). According to Paul Witt (2006), “the idea of making a presentation in public is the No. 1 fear reported by people in the U.S. ... It is even scarier than rattlesnakes” (as cited in DeNoon, 2006, p. 1). Due to the documented intensity of emotions that can be associated with public speaking, the students were given multi-choice options so as to allow for the possible association of multiple feelings. Likewise, the final survey item (“*How do you feel about working in a group?*”) was crafted to allow for multi-choice options since it, too, dealt

with a social skills area that had the potential to elicit intense favor or disfavor according to students' personalities and preferences.

**Evaluation of Items using Pilot Data --- Recommended Refinement for Post-Survey**

Since this was the first formal evaluation of the project and its impact on students, *The Fifth Ward Project* executives wished to cast a broad net when gathering initial data so as to allow for emergent themes and/or a foundation for a longitudinal study of the potential impact on a variety of academic and social components. I have since determined that several of the constructs that were originally surveyed cannot be validly or reliably measured by the surveys and, therefore, will not be included on the post-survey.

**Appendix F**

**Details of Individual Post-Survey Items Development**

The following is a detailed account of how/why the survey items were created and how well they address the constructs they intended to measure.

The first draft of the post-survey was created using the 5 skills associated with the original research questions presented in my previous research (i.e., *appreciation of theatre arts, creativity, problem solving, team work, and focus*). The teacher's definition of the 5 skills and student responses to open-ended questions on the pre-survey helped me design survey items pertaining to the 5 main constructs being measured. Based on pre-survey responses, *public speaking* was added as a separate construct. Items were also included to measure students' awareness of theatre arts skills and their transference to other subject matters. The first draft was submitted to my Survey Research Methods professor and her comments were used to craft my second draft (see **Appendix G**). The second draft of the post-survey was submitted to Juliet for member checking. She was asked to examine each survey item and indicate whether it should be included as is, with revision, or not at all. Based on her feedback it was determined that the final draft should more closely mimic the style, format, and ideas of the previous pre-survey so as to optimize student understanding of the items.

For the final draft survey items were grouped into 11 constructs (the 5 skills of the original research questions presented in my previous research and 6 themes commonly associated with theatre arts education and/or pertaining to the specifics of these classes). Items were then created for each construct using their definition/characteristics so as to ensure internal consistency among items (see **Appendix H**).

The last 6 survey items<sup>21</sup> (i.e., *name, age, grade level, school, participation in After School Theatre, and DECK attendance*) were demographic in nature and were included for reference, comparison, and potential longitudinal tracking and follow-up interviews purposes. For confidentiality and anonymity purposes, it is not traditional to include a request for respondents' names; however, due to the young age of the participants I originally chose to not assign a visible study code number on the pre-surveys and wanted to stay consistent on the post-survey<sup>22</sup>.

The open-ended survey item "*What is your favorite subject? And why?*" was included for the intended purposes of assessing whether (1) participation in the school year theatre classes had an effect on students' academic interests and/or (2) to demonstrate the relevance of theatre arts to a variety of student types.

As I did in the pre-survey, three of the final survey items ("*How do you feel about public speaking?*", "*How do you feel about performing on stage?*", and "*How do you feel about making a class presentation?*") allowed students' multi-choice options in an attempt to most accurately measure their self-confidence in the mass social skill of public speaking.

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<sup>21</sup>Refer to **Appendix I**.

<sup>22</sup> Upon completion of data entry, I assigned survey code numbers in place of the students' names. In adherence to CPHS protocol, no one outside the research team will have access to the link between study code numbers and/or the direct identifiers.

A NARRATIVE OF THEATRE ARTS TO LOW SES STUDENTS

**Appendix G**

**First Draft of Post-Survey with Comments for Revision from Professor**

5<sup>th</sup> Ward Project: 2010 – 11 School Year POST-survey (SP 2011)

FOR EACH QUESTION BELOW,

choose ONE answer and put a CHECK by it.

A creative person is someone who is willing to try new activities, experiment with ideas, and look for unusual answers to solve a problem.

After participating in theatre class, I think

- am a MORE creative person
- stayed the SAME as a creative person
- am NOT a creative person

Theatre class taught me to use my imagination to solve problems.

- YES, it did
- no, I ALREADY knew how to do that
- NO, I still cannot do that

In theatre class I ~~was willing to try~~ tried new activities.

- YES, I did
- no, I ALREADY did that
- NO, I still do not want to do that

Theatre class taught me to think about all my choices before making a decision.

- YES, it did
- no, I ALREADY knew how to do that
- NO, I still cannot do that

A good friend is someone who is nice to you, shares with you, is respectful toward you, and listens to you.

Comment [T1]: Dr. Horn, for this section do I need to keep the concepts to the "theatre class" setting or can some of the ideas translate into "in general"?

My objective with these survey items is to a) determine if students' actions match their self-assessments in CREATIVITY, TEAMWORK, PROBLEM SOLVING, etc. b) determine, from a program eye standpoint, if the theatre class taught the skills necessary to achieve its objectives

Is this better worded/formatted than my original submission? **THINK THIS IS FINE**

Comment [T2]: Since I previously determined that the students' and teacher's definition of CREATIVITY, TEAMWORK, etc. differ in some areas, I plan to define each construct using the project's objectives to ensure we are speaking a common language. I have an email out to the theatre experts and am awaiting their reply for the definitions. **GOOD PLAN.**

Comment [T3]: Dr. Horn, do you think 3<sup>rd</sup> - 5<sup>th</sup> graders will understand items like this that present the question as a stem statement?

After participating in theatre class, I think I am

a BETTER friend

stayed the SAME as a friend

NOT a good friend

Comment [CH4]: As written doesn't work with the prompt.

In theatre class I was willing to help ANYONE when they were having trouble.

yes, I was willing to help EVERYONE

no, I only ~~want to help~~ helped MY FRIENDS

no, I did NOT help anyone

In theatre class I was respectful to ALL students during class time.

yes, I was respectful to EVERYONE

no, I was only respectful to MY FRIENDS

no, I was NOT respectful to anyone

Comment [CH5]: Is this a term respondents will know clearly?

In theatre class I was nice to ALL students during class time.

yes, I was nice to EVERYONE

no, I was only nice to MY FRIENDS

no, I was NOT nice to anyone

Comment [CH6]: And to above question will they distinguish nice from respectful?

A good group worker is someone who is willing to work with all the other team members to successfully complete the activity.

After participating in theatre class, I think I

work BETTER in a group

work the SAME in a group

do NOT work well in a group

I like to be the leader of the group.

yes, I LIKE being the leader

no, I did NOT like being the leader

Who should be the leader of the group?

The person with the BEST IDEAS should be the group leader.

The most POPULAR person should be the group leader.

You should TAKE TURNS being leader of the group.

The leader should listen to EVERY group members' ideas.

YES, they should listen to EVERYONE's ideas

Comment [CH7]: Grammatically this should be he/she

no, they should only listen to ~~their~~ FRIENDS' ideas

no, they should only listen to the GOOD ideas

no, the leader does NOT have to listen to others' ideas

I liked working in a group in theatre class.

YES, I liked working in a group

no, I did NOT like working in a group

Theatre class taught me to work with ANYONE so that we can complete the activity.

YES, it did

no, I ALREADY knew how to do that

NO, I still only like to work in a group with only MY FRIENDS

A good problem solver is someone who finds the answer either on their own or with help from a friend or teacher.

After participating in theatre class, I think I

am a BETTER problem solver

stayed the SAME as a problem solver

NOT a good problem solver

Theatre class taught me that if I do not know the answer, ~~then~~ it is okay to ask for help.

Comment [CH8]: given your anchors, you may want to consider rewarding to be simply "ask for"

YES, I learned that

no, I ALREADY knew how to do that

NO, I still do not do that

Theatre class taught me that if I do not know the answer, then sometimes I have to find the answer on my own.

- YES, I learned that
- no, I ALREADY knew how to do that
- NO, I still do not do that

If I do not know the answer, then I just do not do complete the activity.

- YES, I just skip it
- NO, theatre class taught me to try harder

A focused person is someone who pays attention to the instructions and works hard to complete the activity even when others are not paying attention.

After participating in theatre class, I think I

- learned to focus BETTER during class time
- focus the SAME during class time
- do NOT focus during class time

Comment [CH9]: Here are you referring to class time generally? I think you may want to clarify (e.g., classes at my school)

In theatre class I listened when my teacher was teaching.

- yes, I did ALL of the time
- yes, I did SOME of the time
- NO, I did not listen

In theatre class I learned that you have to listen to the instructions before you can play the games.

- YES, I learned that
- no, I ALREADY knew how to do that
- NO, I still do not do that

In theatre class I followed instructions.

- yes, I did ALL of the time
- yes, I did SOME of the time
- NO, I did not follow instruction

In theatre class I worked on the activity until it was completed.

- yes, I did ALL of the time

NO, sometimes I got distracted

NO, sometimes I got bored

Theatre class taught me to focus on my work even when others are trying to distract me.

YES, I learned that

no, I ALREADY knew how to do that

NO, I still cannot do that

Comment [CH10]: Knowing how to do something as per the above and doing it are two different things

Public speaking is when you speak in front of a group to give a class presentation or to perform on stage.

After participating in theatre class, I think I am

BETTER at public speaking

SAME at public speaking

NOT good at public speaking

After participating in theatre I am no longer scared to do a class presentation.

yes, I am NOT scared

no, I NEVER was scared

no, I am still scared

After participating in theatre class I am excited to do a class presentation.

YES, I am excited

no, I ALREADY was excited

no, I am NOT excited

I would like to perform on stage for an audience.

YES, I would

no, I would not

FOR EACH QUESTION BELOW, CIRCLE YES or NO

**In theatre class you were taught SKILLS like creativity, problem solving, paying attention, public speaking, and team work.**

I think the skills I learned in theatre class will help me do well in school. YES NO  
 I think the skills I learned in theatre class will help me get into college. YES NO  
 I think the skills I learned in theatre class will help me get a job. YES NO

**In theatre class you did .... (ACTIVITIES)**

I think theatre activities can be used in my regular school subjects. YES NO

Comment [T11]: I am checking with the teachers for specifics

Comment [CH12]: Awkwardly worded. Maybe, my classes at school. Or my other classes at school.

If my other teachers used theatre activities to teach their lessons it would

improve my grades. YES NO  
 make class more fun. YES NO  
 help me pay better attention. YES NO  
 help me better understand the lessons. YES NO

**Theatre class was...**

challenging. YES NO  
 hard work. YES NO  
 fun. YES NO  
 interesting. YES NO  
 boring. YES NO

Comment [CH13]: Is your respondent going to distinguish between challenging and hard work?

I would like to participate in theatre class again. YES NO  
 I think my friends would like to participate in theatre classes at their schools. YES NO  
 I would like to participate in the summer theatre class called DECK. YES NO

Have you ever been to a theatre performance? YES NO

IF YOU CIRCLED YES, where did you see the show?

\_\_\_\_\_

IF YOU CIRCLED YES, who did you go with to the show?

\_\_\_\_\_

After participating in theatre class, would you like to go see a theatre performance? YES NO

**\*\*NAME:** \_\_\_\_\_ **\*\*AGE:** \_\_\_\_\_

**\*\*GRADE LEVEL (circle one):** 3<sup>rd</sup> 4<sup>th</sup> 5<sup>th</sup> 6<sup>th</sup>

**\*\*SCHOOL (circle one):** ATHERTON or SHERMAN-CRAWFORD

**\*\*What do you want to be when you grow up?** \_\_\_\_\_

Comment [CH14]: Why ask for name?

**Appendix H**

**11 Main Constructs and Relevant Survey Items**

**Construct 1: Creativity**

1. After participating in theatre class, I think I am CREATIVE.
2. Theatre class taught me to use my imagination during activities.
3. In theatre class I tried new activities.

**Construct 2: Team Work**

1. After participating in theatre class, I think I WORK WELL IN A GROUP.
2. Theatre class taught me that we do better when we work together as a team.
3. Theatre class taught me that it is nice to listen to EVERYONE's ideas.
4. Theatre class taught me to how to work with ANYONE, not just my friends, so that we can complete the activity.

**Construct 3: Focus and Concentration**

1. I think that focus and concentration will help me do well in my OTHER classes.

**Construct 4: Problem Solving**

1. Theatre class taught me that there is no right or wrong answer in theatre --- the important thing is to just make a CHOICE!

**Construct 5: Appreciation of Theatre Arts**

1. After participating in theatre class, how do you feel about THEATRE?
2. Did you enjoy the theatre performance at the University of Houston?
3. After participating in theatre class, I would now like to see ANOTHER theatre performance.

**Construct 6: Public Speaking**

1. After participating in theatre class, how do you feel about PUBLIC SPEAKING?

2. After participating in theatre class, how do you feel about PERFORMING ON STAGE?
3. After participating in theatre class, how do you feel about MAKING A CLASS PRESENTATION?

**Construct 7: Future Participation in Theatre Arts**

1. I would like to participate in theatre class again.
2. I think my friends would like to participate in theatre classes at their schools.
3. I would like to participate in the summer theatre camp called DECK.

**Construct 8: Acknowledgement of Theatre Arts Skills and their Transference to other Academic Classes**

1. I think that being able to work well with others will help me do well in my OTHER classes.
2. I think that not being afraid to just make a choice will help me do well in my OTHER classes.
3. I think my teachers can use theatre games to teach the lessons in my OTHER classes.

**Construct 9: Behavior**

1. After participating in theatre class, I think I am A WELL-BEHAVED STUDENT.

**Construct 10: Friendship**

1. After participating in theatre class, I think I am A GOOD FRIEND.

**Construct 11: Theatre Ability**

1. After participating in theatre class, I think I am A GOOD THEATRE STUDENT.

# A NARRATIVE OF THEATRE ARTS TO LOW SES STUDENTS

## **Appendix I**

### **Post-Survey**

**5<sup>th</sup> Ward Project: 2010 – 11 School Year POST-survey (SP 2011)**

FOR EACH QUESTION BELOW, choose ONE answer and CIRCLE your chosen face.

1. After participating in theatre class, I think I am CREATIVE.



YES, definitely



I'm pretty good



I'm okay



I don't know



Not really



NO, definitely not

2. Theatre class taught me to use my imagination during activities.



YES, it did



no, I ALREADY knew that



NO, I did not learn that



I don't know

3. In theatre class I tried new activities.



YES, I did



NO, I did not

4. After participating in theatre class, I think I WORK WELL IN A GROUP.



YES, definitely



I'm pretty good



I'm okay



I don't know



Not really



NO, definitely not

5. Theatre class taught me that we do better when we work together as a team.



YES, it did



no, I ALREADY knew that



NO, I did not learn that



I don't know

6. Theatre class taught me that it is nice to listen to EVERYONE's ideas.



YES, it did



no, I ALREADY knew that



NO, I did not learn that



I don't know

7. After participating in theatre class, I think I am A GOOD FRIEND.



YES, definitely



I'm pretty good



I'm okay



I don't know



Not really



NO, definitely not

8. Theatre class taught me to how to work with ANYONE, not just my friends, so that we can complete the activity.



YES, it did



no, I ALREADY knew that



NO, I did not learn that



I don't know

9. Theatre class taught me that there is no right or wrong answer in theatre --- the important thing is to just make a CHOICE!



YES, it did



no, I ALREADY knew that



NO, I did not learn that



I don't know

10. I think that focus and concentration will help me do well in my OTHER classes.



YES, it will



NO, it will not



I don't know

11. I think that being able to work well with others will help me do well in my OTHER classes.



YES, it will



NO, it will not



I don't know

12. I think that not being afraid to just make a choice will help me do well in my OTHER classes.



YES, it will



NO, it will not



I don't know

13. I think my teachers can use theatre games to teach the lessons in my OTHER classes.



YES, they can



NO, they cannot



I don't know

14. After participating in theatre class, how do you feel about THEATRE?



LOVE it!



LIKE it



Don't Care



Don't Know



DISLIKE it



HATE it!

15. After participating in theatre class, I think I am A GOOD THEATRE STUDENT.



YES, definitely



I'm pretty good



I'm okay



I don't know



Not really



NO, definitely not

24. After participating in theatre class, how do you feel about MAKING A CLASS PRESENTATION?



EXCITED



CONFIDENT



HAPPY



DON'T CARE



DON'T KNOW



DISLIKE IT



WORRIED



TERRIFIED

25. What is your favorite subject? And why?

---

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|  |                 |        |                  |
|--|-----------------|--------|------------------|
| **NAME:  | _____           | **AGE: | _____            |
| **GRADE LEVEL (circle one):                                | 4 <sup>th</sup> | or     | 5 <sup>th</sup>  |
| **SCHOOL (circle one):                                     | ATHERTON        | or     | CRAWFORD-SHERMAN |
| **Do you participate in <i>After School</i> ? (circle one) | YES             |        | NO               |
| **Have you attended DECK? (circle one)                     | YES             |        | NO               |

**Appendix J**

**Tables 2 - 6**

Table 2

*Reliability Statistics*

| Cronbach's Alpha | Cronbach's Alpha Based on Standardized Items | N of Items |
|------------------|--|------------|
| .393             | .384   | 6          |

Table 3

*Reliability Statistics (of Split-Half Reliability)*

|                                |                  |            |                |
|--------------------------------|------------------|------------|----------------|
| Cronbach's Alpha               | Part 1           | Value      | .345           |
|                                |                  | N of Items | 3 <sup>a</sup> |
|                                | Part 2           | Value      | .262           |
|                                |                  | N of Items | 3 <sup>b</sup> |
|                                | Total N of Items |            | 6              |
| Correlation Between Forms      |                  |            | .183           |
| Spearman-Brown Coefficient     | Equal Length     |            | .309           |
|                                | Unequal Length   |            | .309           |
| Guttman Split-Half Coefficient |                  |            | .293           |

a. The items are: Prefeeltheatre, Prebehave, Pretheatrestudent.

b. The items are: PreCreative, PreFriends, Preteamwork.

Table 4

*Paired Samples Correlations*

|         |  | N  | Correlation | Sig. |
|---------|--|----|-------------|------|
| Pair 1  | Postfeeltheatre & Prefeeltheatre       | 54 | .066        | .633 |
| Pair 2  | Postbehave & Prebehave                 | 54 | .250        | .069 |
| Pair 3  | Posttheatrestudent & Pretheatrestudent | 54 | .122        | .381 |
| Pair 4  | PostCreative & PreCreative             | 54 | .069        | .622 |
| Pair 5  | PostFriends & PreFriends               | 54 | .190        | .168 |
| Pair 6  | Postteamwork & Preteamwork             | 53 | .146        | .298 |
| Pair 7  | Postspeak & Prespeak                   | 54 | .083        | .551 |
| Pair 8  | Postspeak2 & Prespeak2                 | 14 | -.161       | .583 |
| Pair 9  | Postspeak3 & Prespeak3                 | 6  | .250        | .633 |
| Pair 12 | Postperform & PrePerform               | 54 | .003        | .982 |
| Pair 13 | Postperform2 & Preperform2             | 11 | -.338       | .309 |
| Pair 14 | Postperform3 & Preperform3             | 4  | .408        | .592 |
| Pair 17 | Postpresent & Prepresent               | 52 | .268        | .055 |
| Pair 18 | Postpresent2 & Prepersent2             | 9  | .654        | .056 |

Table 5

*Paired Samples Test*

|  | Paired Differences |                   |                       |  |        | t      | df | Sig.<br>(2-tailed) |
|--|--------------------|-------------------|-----------------------|--|--------|--------|----|--------------------|
|  | Mean               | Std.<br>Deviation | Std.<br>Error<br>Mean | 95%<br>Confidence<br>Interval of the<br>Difference |        |        |    |                    |
|  |                    |                   |                       | Lower  | Upper  |        |    |                    |
| Pair 1 Postfeeltheatre -<br>Prefeeltheatre       | -7.019             | 8.097             | 1.102                 | -9.229   | -4.808 | -6.369 | 53 | .000               |
| Pair 2 Postbehave -<br>Prebehave                 | .519               | 5.414             | .737                  | -.959  | 1.996  | .704   | 53 | .485               |
| Pair 3 Posttheatrestudent -<br>Pretheatrestudent | -7.963             | 7.420             | 1.010                 | -9.988   | -5.938 | -7.886 | 53 | .000               |
| Pair 4 PostCreative -<br>PreCreative             | -1.407             | 6.992             | .951                  | -3.316   | .501   | -1.479 | 53 | .145               |
| Pair 5 PostFriends -<br>PreFriends               | .704               | 6.027             | .820                  | -.941  | 2.349  | .858   | 53 | .395               |
| Pair 6 Postteamwork -<br>Preteamwork             | .755               | 5.598             | .769                  | -.788  | 2.298  | .981   | 52 | .331               |
| Pair 7 Postspeak -<br>Prespeak                   | -.759              | 8.296             | 1.129                 | -3.024   | 1.505  | -.673  | 53 | .504               |
| Pair 8 Postspeak2 -<br>Prespeak2                 | 3.286              | 7.194             | 1.923                 | -.868  | 7.440  | 1.709  | 13 | .111               |
| Pair 9 Postspeak3 -<br>Prespeak3                 | .000               | 1.897             | .775                  | -1.991   | 1.991  | .000   | 5  | 1.000              |
| Pair 12 Postperform -<br>PrePerform              | .407               | 8.155             | 1.110                 | -1.819   | 2.633  | .367   | 53 | .715               |
| Pair 13 Postperform2 -<br>Preperform2            | 6.818              | 10.078            | 3.039                 | .048   | 13.589 | 2.244  | 10 | .049               |
| Pair 14 Postperform3 -<br>Preperform3            | -.500              | 1.732             | .866                  | -3.256   | 2.256  | -.577  | 3  | .604               |
| Pair 17 Postpresent -<br>Prepresent              | -1.135             | 8.308             | 1.152                 | -3.448   | 1.178  | -.985  | 51 | .329               |
| Pair 18 Postpresent2 -<br>Prepersent2            | 1.111              | 1.167             | .389                  | .214   | 2.008  | 2.857  | 8  | .021               |

Table 6  
Correlations

|                     | PreFeeltheatre | PostFeeltheatre | Pretheatrestudent | Posttheatrestudent | PreCreative | PostCreative | PreFriends | PostFriends | Preteamwork | Postteamwork |
|---------------------|----------------|-----------------|-------------------|--------------------|-------------|--------------|------------|-------------|-------------|--------------|
| PreFeeltheatre      | 1              | .066            | .341              | -.070              | -.142       | .051         | .102       | -.133       | -.051       | -.001        |
| Pearson Correlation |                | .633            | .012              | .615               | .305        | .712         | .463       | .337        | .718        | .997         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| N                   | 54             | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| PostFeeltheatre     | .066           | 1               | .249              | .344               | -.171       | .240         | .125       | .341        | -.148       | .174         |
| Pearson Correlation |                | .633            | .070              | .011               | .216        | .081         | .368       | .012        | .289        | .207         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| N                   | 54             | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| Pretheatrestudent   | .341           | .249            | 1                 | .122               | .260        | .114         | .164       | .002        | .159        | .105         |
| Pearson Correlation |                | .012            | .381              | .381               | .058        | .411         | .237       | .990        | .256        | .448         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| N                   | 54             | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| Posttheatrestudent  | -.070          | .344            | .122              | 1                  | -.011       | .903         | .083       | .353        | -.120       | .409         |
| Pearson Correlation |                | .011            | .381              | .381               | .937        | .000         | .549       | .008        | .391        | .002         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| N                   | 54             | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| PreCreative         | -.142          | -.171           | .260              | -.011              | 1           | .069         | -.040      | .130        | .303        | .143         |
| Pearson Correlation |                | .216            | .058              | .937               | .622        | .622         | .775       | .348        | .025        | .302         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| N                   | 54             | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| PostCreative        | .051           | .240            | .114              | .503               | .069        | 1            | .050       | .100        | -.164       | .457         |
| Pearson Correlation |                | .081            | .411              | .000               | .622        | .721         | .721       | .470        | .240        | .000         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| N                   | 54             | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| PreFriends          | .102           | .125            | .164              | .083               | -.040       | .050         | 1          | .190        | .073        | .227         |
| Pearson Correlation |                | .368            | .237              | .549               | .775        | .721         | .668       | .604        | .604        | .098         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| N                   | 54             | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| PostFriends         | -.133          | .341            | .002              | .358               | .130        | .100         | .190       | 1           | .171        | .493         |
| Pearson Correlation |                | .012            | .990              | .008               | .348        | .470         | .168       | .222        | .222        | .000         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| N                   | 54             | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| Preteamwork         | -.051          | -.148           | .159              | -.120              | .308        | -.164        | .073       | .171        | 1           | .146         |
| Pearson Correlation |                | .289            | .256              | .391               | .025        | .240         | .604       | .222        | .222        | .288         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 53              | 53                | 53                 | 53          | 53           | 53         | 53          | 53          | 53           |
| N                   | 53             | 53              | 53                | 53                 | 53          | 53           | 53         | 53          | 53          | 53           |
| Postteamwork        | -.001          | .174            | .105              | .409               | .143        | .467         | .227       | .498        | .146        | 1            |
| Pearson Correlation |                | .207            | .448              | .002               | .302        | .000         | .058       | .000        | .298        | .298         |
| Sig. (2-tailed)     |                | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |
| N                   | 54             | 54              | 54                | 54                 | 54          | 54           | 54         | 54          | 53          | 54           |

\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.05 level (2-tailed).  
 \*\*. Correlation is significant at the 0.01 level (2-tailed).

**Appendix K**

**Factor Analysis of Pre- and Post-Survey Items**

For this study, only the 16 Liker-scale type survey items were examined<sup>23</sup>. Overall the 16 items correlated weakly, with nine items positively correlating between .204 to .227 to only one other item and only one item correlating .390 to one other item. However, all 16 items inversely related to between three – nine other items. The Bartlett's test of sphericity indicates that the correlation matrix rejects the null hypothesis, but the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin was a low measure of .487 (.213 below the recommended value of .7).

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<sup>23</sup> The researcher chose not to include the open-ended and multi-choice survey items in the factor analysis. The open-ended items were coded using qualitative research techniques and the multi-choice items were analyzed in an Excel spreadsheet. Good choice

Table 7

*KMO and Bartlett's Test*

|   |                    |         |
|---|--------------------|---------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy |                    | .487    |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity                   | Approx. Chi-Square | 190.743 |
|   | df                 | 120     |
|   | Sig.               | .000    |

Finally, the communalities for all 16 items were above .503 (with .725 being the highest), confirming that each item shared at least some common variance with other items.

Table 8

*Communalities*

| Survey items                          | Initial | Extraction |
|---------------------------------------|---------|------------|
| How do you feel about math?           | 1.000   | .560       |
| How do you feel about writing?        | 1.000   | .616       |
| How do you feel about reading?        | 1.000   | .722       |
| How do you feel about social studies? | 1.000   | .550       |
| How do you feel about science?        | 1.000   | .558       |
| How do you feel about sports?         | 1.000   | .591       |
| How do you feel about theatre?        | 1.000   | .724       |
| How do you feel about music?          | 1.000   | .561       |
| How do you feel about band?           | 1.000   | .511       |
| How do you feel about dance?          | 1.000   | .586       |
| I make good grades                    | 1.000   | .611       |
| I am well-behaved                     | 1.000   | .678       |
| I am a good theatre student           | 1.000   | .707       |
| I am creative                         | 1.000   | .505       |
| I am a good friend                    | 1.000   | .565       |
| I work well in a group                | 1.000   | .725       |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.  
 Note. Highlighted values reflect the researcher's threshold for significant communality:  $\geq .60$ .

Despite the weak correlations and low KMO, it was determined that that factor analysis could be conducted on all 16 items due to the high communalities (7 items have a communality  $\geq .60$ ).

Principle component analysis yielded seven factors explaining a total of 61.248% of the rotated variance for the entire set of variables.

Table 9

*Total Variance Explained*

| Compon<br>ents | Initial Eigenvalues |                      |                  | Extraction Sums of<br>Squared Loadings |                      |                  | Rotation Sums of<br>Squared Loadings |                      |                  |
|----------------|---------------------|----------------------|------------------|--|----------------------|------------------|--------------------------------------|----------------------|------------------|
|                | Tot<br>al           | % of<br>Varian<br>ce | Cumulat<br>ive % | Tot<br>al                              | % of<br>Varian<br>ce | Cumulat<br>ive % | Tot<br>al                            | % of<br>Varian<br>ce | Cumulat<br>ive % |
| 1              | 1.6<br>94           | 10.589               | 10.589           | 1.6<br>94                              | 10.589               | 10.589           | 1.5<br>27                            | 9.542                | 9.542            |
| 2              | 1.5<br>74           | 9.838                | 20.426           | 1.5<br>74                              | 9.838                | 20.426           | 1.5<br>21                            | 9.503                | 19.045           |
| 3              | 1.5<br>52           | 9.698                | 30.124           | 1.5<br>52                              | 9.698                | 30.124           | 1.4<br>77                            | 9.233                | 28.278           |
| 4              | 1.4<br>05           | 8.778                | 38.903           | 1.4<br>05                              | 8.778                | 38.903           | 1.4<br>01                            | 8.757                | 37.035           |
| 5              | 1.2<br>54           | 7.838                | 46.741           | 1.2<br>54                              | 7.838                | 46.741           | 1.3<br>76                            | 8.601                | 45.636           |
| 6              | 1.2<br>23           | 7.645                | 54.386           | 1.2<br>23                              | 7.645                | 54.386           | 1.3<br>24                            | 8.278                | 53.914           |
| 7              | 1.0<br>69           | 6.684                | 61.070           | 1.0<br>69                              | 6.684                | 61.070           | 1.1<br>45                            | 7.156                | 61.070           |
| 8              | .90<br>8            | 5.672                | 66.742           |  |                      |                  |                                      |                      |                  |
| 9              | .88<br>6            | 5.536                | 72.278           |  |                      |                  |                                      |                      |                  |
| 10             | .80<br>4            | 5.026                | 77.304           |  |                      |                  |                                      |                      |                  |
| 11             | .75<br>9            | 4.745                | 82.050           |  |                      |                  |                                      |                      |                  |
| 12             | .67<br>6            | 4.223                | 86.273           |  |                      |                  |                                      |                      |                  |
| 13             | .63<br>1            | 3.942                | 90.214           |  |                      |                  |                                      |                      |                  |
| 14             | .62<br>0            | 3.872                | 94.086           |  |                      |                  |                                      |                      |                  |
| 15             | .52<br>8            | 3.300                | 97.386           |  |                      |                  |                                      |                      |                  |
| 16             | .41<br>8            | 2.614                | 100.000          |  |                      |                  |                                      |                      |                  |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

It was determined that only those components which loaded with items at  $\geq .70$  to more than one item would be labeled, since the eigenvalues of the seven components were each just above one (1.089 to 1.694), no component accounted for more than 9.532% of the variance (as represented by the fact that the scree plot does not indicate a clear “leveling off” but rather a steady decline), and loadings were minimal (but high) for each components.

Table 10

*Rotated Component Matrix*

| Survey items                          | Component |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|---------------------------------------|-----------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
|                                       | 1         | 2     | 3     | 4     | 5     | 6     | 7     |
| How do you feel about math?           | .034      | -.059 | -.047 | -.189 | .422  | .573  | .106  |
| How do you feel about writing?        | -.187     | -.009 | .690  | -.090 | .071  | .266  | -.142 |
| How do you feel about reading?        | .197      | .097  | -.059 | .095  | .799  | .078  | -.128 |
| How do you feel about social studies? | .710      | .098  | -.045 | -.173 | .012  | .072  | .017  |
| How do you feel about science?        | .017      | .006  | .126  | .195  | -.036 | .709  | .018  |
| How do you feel about sports?         | .167      | -.174 | .557  | .062  | .208  | -.410 | -.083 |
| How do you feel about theatre?        | .038      | .816  | -.069 | .098  | .164  | .125  | -.009 |
| How do you feel about music?          | .460      | .104  | .237  | .225  | -.098 | -.085 | .463  |
| How do you feel about band?           | -.018     | .284  | .605  | .078  | -.185 | .006  | .156  |

|                              |       |       |       |       |       |       |       |
|------------------------------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|-------|
| How do you feel about dance? | .426  | -.146 | .358  | -.333 | -.082 | .289  | -.231 |
| I make good grades           | -.021 | .005  | -.047 | .760  | .138  | -.103 | -.044 |
| I am well-behaved            | -.418 | -.090 | .242  | -.159 | .554  | -.097 | .309  |
| I am a good theatre student  | -.029 | .806  | .150  | -.054 | -.113 | -.132 | .022  |
| I am creative                | -.586 | .173  | .116  | -.172 | -.257 | .135  | .068  |
| I am a good friend           | .005  | .031  | .065  | .680  | -.166 | .262  | .045  |
| I work well in a group       | -.080 | -.010 | -.106 | -.047 | .000  | .111  | .832  |

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Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

a. Rotation converged in 9 iterations.

*Note.* Highlighted values reflect the researcher's threshold for significant factor loading:  $\geq .70$ .

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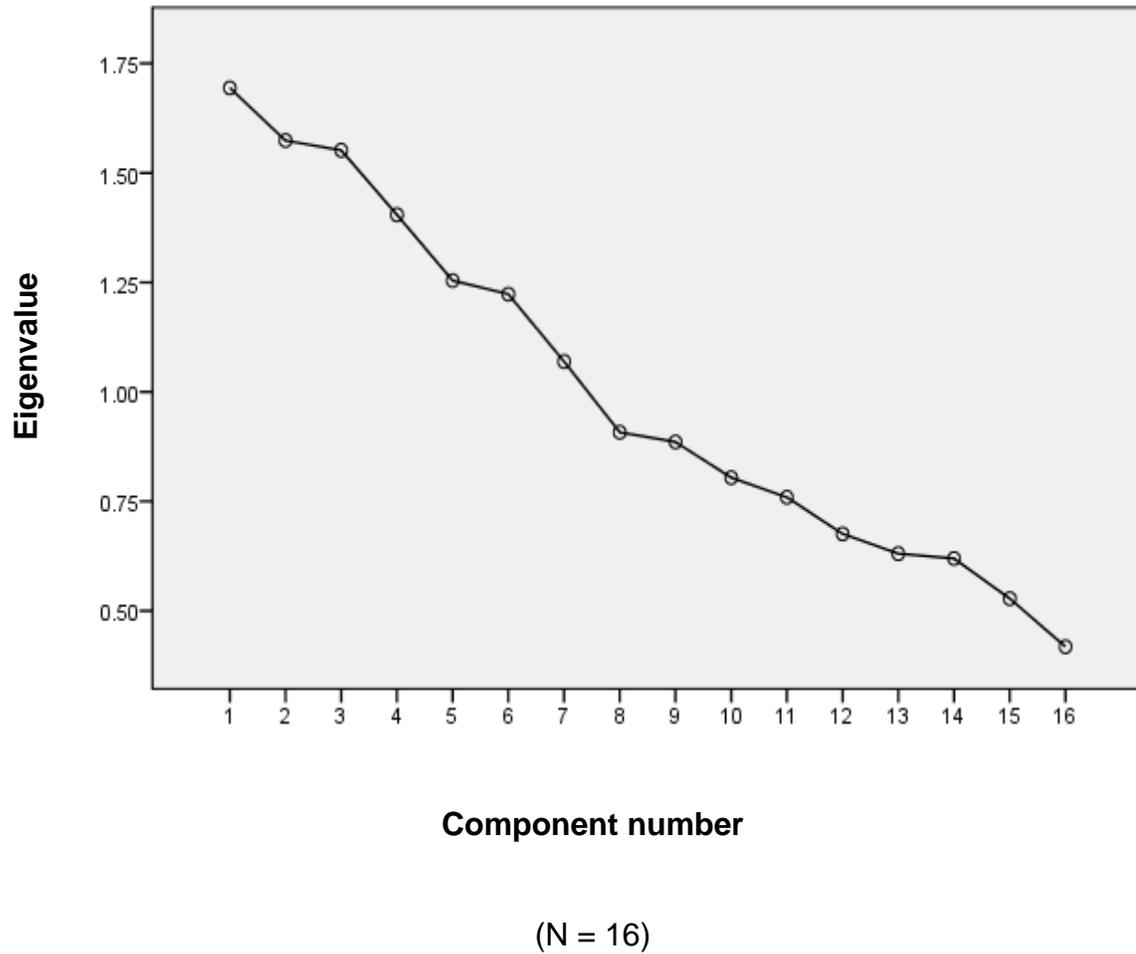


Figure 6. Scree Plot.

The first component loaded at  $\geq .70$  but for only one item so it was discarded. The second component was labeled *students' attitude towards theatre and their theatrical abilities* based on the .816 and .806 loadings of items number seven and thirteen, respectively: "How do you feel about theatre?" and "I am a good theatre student." The third component did not load at  $\geq .70$  and so it was discarded. The fourth through seventh components were discarded because they only loaded at  $\geq .70$  for only one item each.

### **Discussions and Conclusions for Pre-Survey Based on Factor Analysis of Items**

The high factor loadings of the labeled components indicate that they reliably measure the one item that they were designed to measure (e.g., it would make sense that the survey item: “How do you feel about social studies?” would reliably measure the component: *students’ attitude towards social studies*). However, the researcher has previously determined that despite the overall reliability of the instrument, many of the survey items pertaining to academic attitudes are not valid predictors of the theatre classes’ impact on student academic achievement; and, therefore, are not helpful to this evaluation.

After throwing out items one, four, five, six, eight, nine, and ten for the above listed reasons, the second option was for the researcher to consider the remaining items based on their reliability to measure the overarching theme of the survey: students’ attitudes towards and skills associated with theatre arts education. Based on their high factor loading and high communalities ( $\geq .60$ ), the researcher determined that those survey items related to writing, reading, theatre, academic achievement, behavior, and teamwork met this criteria. Again, however, the researcher chose to throw out items two and three based on their lack of validity as previously described.

As a final filter, the researcher had to return to the qualitative data produced by students’ open-ended responses, the descriptive interview with the secondary instructor, and the expert input of the primary instructor to determine those items that warranted development and refinement for possible use in the post-survey. Based on the coding of the qualitative data it was determined that item seven and items eleven through sixteen

would be retained for the post-survey and that additional items would be generated in order to measure the following significant categories: (1) skills associated with success in the theatre arts and (2) attitudes towards the theatre arts.

While the indicators for factor analysis were generally low, the analysis was productive in assisting the researcher to see the limited scope and overall invalid nature of many of the survey items. Taken in conjunction with the qualitative data and the researcher's improved knowledge about survey creation, the factor analysis ultimately helped the researcher design a more effective post-survey. Future factor analysis of the post-survey data will hopefully support the validity of the researcher's newly generated survey items.

### **Factor Analysis of Post-Survey Items**

For this study, only 11 Liker-scale type survey items were examined<sup>24</sup>. Overall the 11 items correlated strongly --- with one item positively correlating at .716 to one item and .833 to another item, one item positively correlating at .707 to one other item, one item positively correlating at .550 to one item and .813 to another item, and a final item positively correlating at .545 to one item. Seven items inversely related to between one – five other items. The Bartlett's test of sphericity indicates that the correlation matrix rejects the null hypothesis, but the Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin was a slightly low measure of .637 (.063 below the recommended value of .7).

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<sup>24</sup> The researcher determined that other items on the post-survey did not pertain to her qualitative discussions.

Table 11

*KMO and Bartlett's Test*

|  |                    |         |
|--|--------------------|---------|
| Kaiser-Meyer-Olkin Measure of Sampling Adequacy. |                    | .637    |
| Bartlett's Test of Sphericity                    | Approx. Chi-Square | 224.354 |
|  | df                 | 55      |
|  | Sig.               | .000    |

Finally, the communalities for 9 of the 11 items was above the researcher's  $\geq .60$  threshold for significant communality (with .918 being the highest), confirming that each item shared at least some common variance with other items.

Table 12  
Communalities

|                                      | Initial | Extraction |
|--------------------------------------|---------|------------|
| Appreciation for Theatre Arts (POST) | 1.000   | .867       |
| Creativity (POST)                    | 1.000   | .918       |
| Problem Solving (POST)               | 1.000   | .809       |
| Teamwork (POST)                      | 1.000   | .873       |
| Focus (POST)                         | 1.000   | .843       |
| Use imagination                      | 1.000   | .672       |
| I tried new activities               | 1.000   | .695       |
| Just make a choice                   | 1.000   | .464       |
| Choice help in OTHER classes         | 1.000   | .698       |
| Participate again                    | 1.000   | .431       |
| See another show                     | 1.000   | .720       |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

*Note.* Highlighted values reflect the researcher's threshold for significant communality:  $\geq .60$ .

Despite the low KMO, the strong correlations led the researcher to determine that that factor analysis could be conducted on all 11 items due to the high communalities (9 items have a communality  $\geq .60$ ).

Principle component analysis yielded four factors explaining a total of 72.644% of the rotated variance for the entire set of variables.

Table 13

*Total Variance Explained*

| Component | Initial Eigenvalues |               |              | Extraction Sums of Squared Loadings |               |              | Rotation Sums of Squared Loadings |               |              |
|-----------|---------------------|---------------|--------------|-------------------------------------|---------------|--------------|-----------------------------------|---------------|--------------|
|           | Total               | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total                               | % of Variance | Cumulative % | Total                             | % of Variance | Cumulative % |
| 1         | 3.746               | 34.058        | 34.058       | 3.746                               | 34.058        | 34.058       | 2.511                             | 22.831        | 22.831       |
| 2         | 1.769               | 16.083        | 50.141       | 1.769                               | 16.083        | 50.141       | 2.179                             | 19.807        | 42.638       |
| 3         | 1.382               | 12.562        | 62.703       | 1.382                               | 12.562        | 62.703       | 1.915                             | 17.408        | 60.046       |
| 4         | 1.094               | 9.941         | 72.644       | 1.094                               | 9.941         | 72.644       | 1.386                             | 12.598        | 72.644       |
| 5         | .845                | 7.684         | 80.328       |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |
| 6         | .762                | 6.924         | 87.252       |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |
| 7         | .489                | 4.448         | 91.700       |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |
| 8         | .437                | 3.969         | 95.669       |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |
| 9         | .236                | 2.147         | 97.815       |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |
| 10        | .145                | 1.321         | 99.136       |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |
| 11        | .095                | .864          | 100.000      |                                     |               |              |                                   |               |              |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

It was determined that only two components would be labeled --- the two components which loaded with items at  $\geq .70$  and loaded with more than one item. The eigenvalues of three components were each just above one (1.094 to 1.6769) and one component had an eigenvalue of 3.746 and accounted for 34.058% of the variance (as represented by the fact that the scree indicates a steep drop off and then a steady decline at component two). Loadings were minimal (but high) for three components.

Table 14

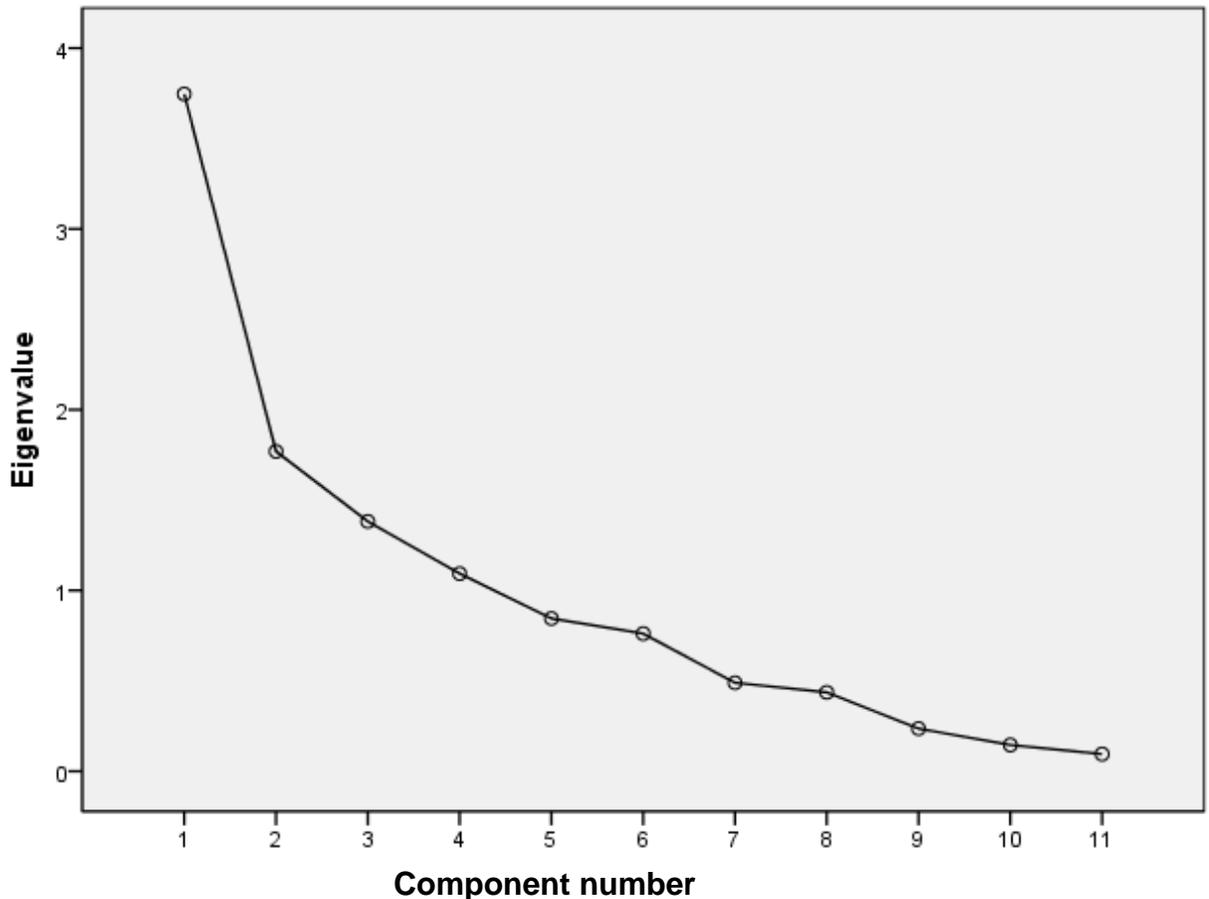
*Rotated Component Matrix<sup>a</sup>*

|                                      | Component |      |      |       |
|--------------------------------------|-----------|------|------|-------|
|                                      | 1         | 2    | 3    | 4     |
| Appreciation for Theatre Arts (POST) | .892      |      |      |       |
| Creativity (POST)                    | .928      |      |      |       |
| Problem Solving (POST)               | .748      |      |      |       |
| Teamwork (POST)                      |           | .874 |      |       |
| Focus (POST)                         |           | .865 |      |       |
| Use imagination                      |           |      |      | .567  |
| I tried new activities               |           |      |      | -.798 |
| Just make a choice                   |           |      |      |       |
| Choice help in OTHER classes         |           |      | .675 |       |
| Participate again                    |           |      | .614 |       |
| See another show                     |           |      | .808 |       |

Extraction Method: Principal Component Analysis.

Rotation Method: Varimax with Kaiser Normalization.

- a. Rotation converged in 7 iterations.
- b. *Note.* Highlighted values reflect the researcher's threshold for significant factor loading:  $\geq .70$ .



(N = 11)

Figure 7. Scree plot.

The first component was labeled *students' self-perceptions towards internal characteristics of theatre students* based on the .928 loading of item number two: "After participating in theatre class, I think I am creative," the .892 loading of item number one: "After participating in theatre class, how do you feel about theatre?" and the .748 loading of item number three: "Theatre class taught me that there is no right or wrong answer in theatre --- the important thing is to just make a choice!" The second component was labeled *students' self-perceptions towards external characteristics of theatre students*

based on the .874 loading of item number four: “After participating in theatre class, I think I work well in a group.” and the .865 loading of item number five: “I think that focus and concentration will help me do well in my other classes.” The third and component was discarded because it only loaded at  $\geq .70$  to one item. The fourth component was discarded because it failed to load at  $\geq .70$  to any items.

**Appendix L**

***Figure 8. Commonalities and differences between qualitative and quantitative methods***

**Table 15**

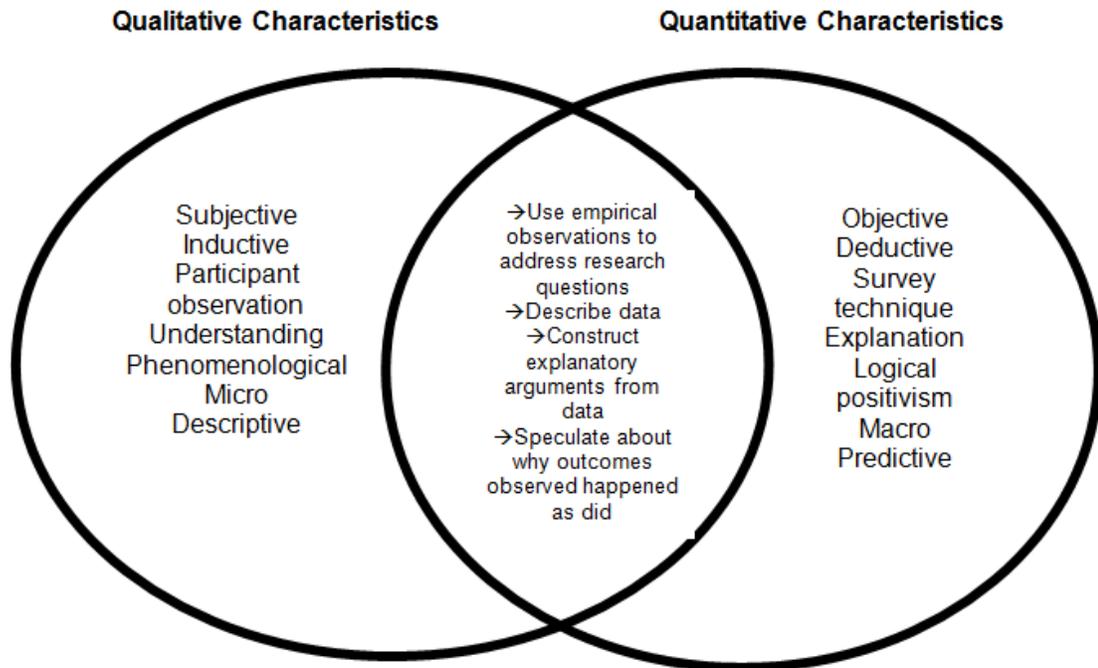
***How quantitative and qualitative methods define “reliability,” “validity,” “sampling,” and “generalizability”***

**Table 16**

***General Strengths and Weaknesses of Quantitative Research***

**Table 17**

***General Strengths and Weaknesses of Qualitative Research***



*Figure 8.* Commonalities and differences between qualitative and quantitative methods (adapted from Johnson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 15; McLaughlin, 1991, p. 294 as cited in Niglas, 1999).

Table 15

*How quantitative and qualitative methods define “reliability,” “validity,” “sampling,” and “generalizability” (Collingridge & Gnatt, 2008, p. 390-2; Guba & Lincoln, 1994)*

**Quantitative Definitions**

**Qualitative Definitions**

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><b>RELIABILITY:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Focus on obtaining exactly the same results time and again (Collingridge &amp; Gnatt, 2008, p. 390).</li> </ul>   | <p><b>RELIABILITY:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Choosing the <i>right</i> research method for the phenomenon to be studied to achieve consistent similarity in the quality of the results.</li> <li>• <i>Dependability</i> relies on the researcher to account for the ever-changing context within which research occurs (Guba &amp; Lincoln, 1994).</li> <li>• If reliable, “expected to produce results that enrich our understanding of the meanings that people attach to social phenomena” (Collingridge &amp; Gnatt, 2008, p. 390).</li> </ul>  |
| <p><b>VALIDITY:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which research measures what it purports to measure.</li> <li>• The approximate truth of propositions, inferences, or conclusions.</li> <li>• <b>INTERNAL validity:</b> <i>whether you have evidence that what you did in the study (i.e., the program) caused what you observed (i.e., the outcome) to happen</i></li> <li>• <b>EXTERNAL validity:</b> <i>the degree to which the conclusions in your study would hold for other persons</i></li> </ul> | <p><b>VALIDITY:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• The extent to which research measures what it purports to measure means selecting an appropriate method for a given question and applying that method in a coherent, justifiable, and rigorous manner.             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>○ Are you asking right question of right people?</li> <li>○ Are observing people and events in proper settings to ensure accurate and concrete cultural descriptions of group?</li> </ul> </li> <li>• <b>INTERNAL validity:</b> <i>credibility as judged by the participants who</i></li> </ul> |

|   |  |
|---|--|
| <p><i>in other places and at other times</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>CONSTRUCT validity:</b> <i>whether we are truly assessing an underlying construct</i></li> <li>• <b>CONTENT validity:</b> <i>whether our measurement tools provide an adequate measure of the construct of interest</i></li> <li>• <b>CRITERION validity:</b> <i>strength of the relationship between our measurement tools and other measures of the same phenomenon</i></li> </ul> | <p>experienced the phenomenon (Guba &amp; Lincoln, 2004).</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>EXTERNAL validity:</b> <i>transferability which is primarily the responsibility of the one doing the generalizing (Guba &amp; Lincoln, 2004).</i></li> <li>• <b>CONSTRUCT validity:</b> <i>accurately describing intangible constructs</i></li> <li>• <b>CONTENT validity:</b> <i>adequately accessing constructs through effective interviewing and observation techniques</i></li> <li>• <b>CRITERION validity:</b> <i>obtaining results that agree with other measures of the same phenomena</i></li> </ul> |
| <p><b>SAMPLING and GENERALIZABILITY:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Random sampling</b> enhances generalizability of results (<i>the extent to which the results can be applied to people and contexts outside of the study</i>) by justifying that our results can refer back to the population from where the sample came.</li> </ul>  | <p><b>SAMPLING and GENERALIZABILITY:</b></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• <b>Participant/Purposive sampling/</b> should follow well-defined rationale and fulfill specific purpose.</li> <li>• “Analytical generalization, involves making a ‘reasoned judgment about the extent to which the findings in one study can be used as a guide to what might occur in another situation’” (Collingridge &amp; Gnat, 2008, p. 392).</li> </ul>  |

Table 16

*General Strengths and Weaknesses of Quantitative Research (Johnson, & Onwuegbuzie, 2004, p. 19).*

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Strengths

- Testing and validating already constructed theories about how (and to a lesser degree, why) phenomena occur.
- Testing hypotheses that are constructed before the data are collected. Can generalize research findings when the data are based on random samples of sufficient size.
- Can generalize a research finding when it has been replicated on many different populations and subpopulations.
- Useful for obtaining data that allow quantitative predictions to be made.
- The researcher may construct a situation that eliminates the confounding influence of many variables, allowing one to more credibly assess *cause-and-effect* relationships.
- Data collection using some quantitative methods is relatively quick (e.g., telephone interviews).
- Provides precise, quantitative, numerical data.
- Data analysis is relatively less time consuming (using statistical software).
- The research results are relatively independent of the researcher (e.g., effect size, statistical significance).
- It may have higher credibility with many people in power (e.g., administrators, politicians, people who fund programs).
- It is useful for studying large numbers of people.

Weaknesses

- The researcher's categories that are used may not reflect local constituencies' understandings.
  - The researcher's theories that are used may not reflect local constituencies' understandings.
  - The researcher may miss out on phenomena occurring because of the focus on theory or hypothesis *testing* rather than on theory or hypothesis *generation* (called the *confirmation bias*).
  - Knowledge produced may be too abstract and general for direct application to specific local situations, contexts, and individuals.
-

Table 17

*General Strengths and Weaknesses of Qualitative Research (Johnson, & Onwuegbuzie,*

*2004, p. 19)*

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Strengths

- The data are based on the participants' own categories of meaning.
- It is useful for studying a limited number of cases in depth.
- It is useful for describing complex phenomena.
- Provides individual case information.
- Can conduct cross-case comparisons and analysis.
- Provides understanding and description of people's personal experiences of phenomena (i.e., the "emic" or insider's viewpoint).
- Can describe, in rich detail, phenomena as they are situated and embedded in local contexts.
- The researcher identifies contextual and setting factors as they relate to the phenomenon of interest.
- The researcher can study dynamic processes (i.e., documenting sequential patterns and change).
- The researcher can use the primarily qualitative method of "grounded theory" to generate inductively a tentative but explanatory theory about a phenomenon.
- Can determine how participants interpret "constructs" (e.g., self-esteem, IQ).
- Data are usually collected in naturalistic settings in qualitative research.
- Qualitative approaches are responsive to local situations, conditions, and stakeholders' needs.

Weaknesses

- Qualitative researchers are responsive to changes that occur during the conduct of a study (especially during extended fieldwork) and may shift the focus of their studies as a result.
  - Qualitative data in the words and categories of participants lend themselves to exploring how and why phenomena occur.
  - One can use an important case to demonstrate vividly a phenomenon to the readers of a report.
  - Determine *idiographic* causation (i.e., determination of causes of a particular event).
- Knowledge produced may not generalize to other people or other settings (i.e., findings may be unique to the relatively few people included in the research study).
  - It is difficult to make quantitative predictions.
  - It is more difficult to test hypotheses and theories.
  - It may have lower credibility with some administrators and commissioners of programs.
  - It generally takes more time to collect the data when compared to quantitative research.
  - Data analysis is often time consuming.
  - The results are more easily influenced by the researcher's personal biases and idiosyncrasies.
-

**Appendix M**

**Interview Protocol for Hermia**

Date of interview: February 23, 2011

Interviewee: *I will interview Hermia, a current classroom teacher for The Fifth Ward Project. Due to scheduling conflicts the structured interview will be a written submission.*

Original research questions:

1. *What is the impact on low-SES students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade who participate in a school year-long theatre art class?*
2. *What are the benefits for low-SES students in 4<sup>th</sup> and 5<sup>th</sup> grade who participate in a school year-long theatre art class?*
  - a. *Do the benefits match the established (by the literature review) benefits for young students participating in theatre arts classes OR are there benefits that are specific only to this population?*
3. *Are the student participants consciously aware of the impact/benefits of participating in theatre arts classes?*
  - a. *Does student participants' perceptions of the impact/benefits of participating in theatre arts classes match teacher's intended impact/benefits for the student participation in theatre arts classes?*

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Establishing the teacher as an expert*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

- 1. To start with, I wanted to get some background on you, as a theatre arts professional, and your job duties with the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward project. First, can you tell me about your personal background/training in theatre arts?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Teacher's conscious awareness of herself as an expert in the field; her self-assessment of her own expertise; attempt by the interviewer to discover personal background necessary for: a) establishing a rapport between the interviewer and the teacher and b) centering the teacher to the mind frame that should guide the interview --- theatre arts education

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Connecting teacher expertise to current position with the project*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

- 2. And how did you get involved with the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward project?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Teacher's motivations to work with the project; her understanding of how her expertise prepares/qualifies her to work with the project; continued attempt by the interviewer to discover personal background necessary for: a) establishing a rapport between the interviewer and the teacher and b) centering the teacher to the mind frame that should guide the interview --- theatre arts education

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Establishing the role of the teacher*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

- 3. Can you tell me, in detail, what your job description is? In other words, what were you hired to do for the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward project?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Teacher's understanding of her role/duties with the project; relevant background information for the interviewer to establish a foundation/rationale for future questions

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Establishing the school setting/student demographic*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

- 4. And which school do you work at?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Relevant background information for the interview to establish a foundation/rationale for future questions

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- a. What are the ages/grade levels of the students you work with?**
- i. I am not familiar with the school you work at; can you help me get a better understanding of the school community by describing a typical student --- what is their socioeconomic status, at what levels are their academics?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Relevant background information for the interviewer to establish a foundation/rationale for future questions; teacher's understanding/awareness of student demographics; her

personal feelings toward the student population; her qualifications in assessing typical elementary school-aged students' characteristics/abilities

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Establishing the classroom setting*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

**5. I haven't had the chance to witness a class for myself yet, so could you describe, in detail, a typical class time --- including typical activities?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Relevant background information for the interviewer to establish a foundation/rationale for future questions; teacher's awareness of classroom activities/routines; her teaching priorities; her teaching style/philosophy

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- a. **Can you give me an example of a specific lesson you have completed with your students? It can be a favorite activity or one that you are especially proud of.**
- b. **Have there been any activities/lessons that did not go as well as planned?**
  - i. **Why do you think that was?**
  - ii. **What would you do differently to make that lesson more successful next time?**

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Establishing the project's goals for students*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

- 6. Think back to when you started preparing to teach this class, what were your goals for the students in your classes? In other words, what did you hope they would walk away with after completing this school year?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Teacher's intended goals for her students; her values; her teaching priorities; her beliefs about the benefits of theatre arts education

FOLLOW-UP QUESTION:

- a. Do you feel that they are accomplishing these goals? Why/Why not?**

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Defining the benefits of theatre education*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

- 7. In general, what do you think are the benefits of theatre education?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Teacher's beliefs about the benefits of theatre arts education; her familiarity with established research in the field of theatre arts education

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Defining the benefits of theatre education for low-SES students*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

- 8. Jackie deMontmollin, the project director, has told me that most of the students that you are working with have never been exposed to theatre prior**

**to participation in the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward project. So, thinking about your personal experiences and familiarity with these particular students, which theatre benefits do you think are think are the most valuable to your students? Why?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Teacher's perception AND/OR understanding of what low-SES students need in order to be successful (academically and in life); her personal view of her students' current situations (academic, social, and future potential); her belief in the probability of future success for her students; (*possibly*) the extent AND/OR type of established relationship she has with her students

**FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:**

- a. Can you give me a specific example of how the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward Project has benefited your students?**
  - i. Do you think the students are consciously aware of these benefits to themselves? Can you give me a specific example that leads you to that belief?**

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Recognizing student perceptions about theatre arts*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

**9. In general, how do you think the students feel about theatre arts?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Teacher's familiarity with her students' academic backgrounds; her familiarity with students' internal beliefs; the extent AND/OR type of established relationship she has with her students

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- a. How do you think they feel about the 5th Ward project, specifically?**
  - i. Can you give me the details of a specific conversation you have had with a student about their participation in the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward project?**

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Recognizing school sentiment towards the project*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

**10. In general, how do you think the traditional classroom teachers feel about the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward project?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Teacher's understanding of non-theatre populations' perceptions of theatre arts education; her willingness to work with AND/OR combat outsiders' perceptions in order to help students succeed; (*possibly*) uncovering her commitment to student success by revealing her relationship (if any) with other teachers within in the school

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- a. Can you give me the details of a specific conversation you have had with a teacher about the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward project?**
- b. Do you think they are aware of the benefits of theatre education?**
  - i. If not, what do you think would be the best way to educate them about the benefits of theatre education?**

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Teacher vs. student definition of theatre skills*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

**11. Now I would like to switch gears and get your professional input on some terminology commonly associated with theatre arts education. On the first day of class, I surveyed all the students about their general understanding of some key skills that are commonly associated with theatre arts education. I have looked at their definitions of the terms, and now I think it would be helpful to get a teacher's perspective to help me fully define the terms for use in future surveys and assessments. First, how do you define *creativity*?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: Necessary information in order to attempt to answer research question #3a; teacher's familiarity with key terminology; her personal employment of established standards in theatre education in her own classroom

FOLLOW-UP QUESTIONS:

- a. **What would a creative student look like? In other words, what observable actions would a *creative* student do so that others could easily recognize that they are creative?**
- b. **Can you give me a specific example of how your theatre students have demonstrated creativity in your classes?**
- c. **And, finally, how do you define *teamwork*?**
  - i. **What does it look like when students are successfully working together as a team?**
  - ii. **Can you give me a specific example of how your theatre students have successfully participated in team work activities?**

*TOPIC DOMAIN: Teacher's free response*

LEAD-OFF QUESTION:

**12. Finally, is there anything else you would like to share with me about your involvement with the 5<sup>th</sup> Ward project, your students, or the schools you teach in?**

COVERT CATEGORIES: After the establishment of a comfortable/honest rapport and hearing the guiding framework of the questions, the interviewer is allowing time/prompt for emerging themes/responses that might not have been directly asked, but the teacher now feels comfortable AND/OR compelled to share

**Appendix N**

**Interview Protocol for Juliet**

Date of interview: January 05, 2012

Interviewee: *I will interview Juliet, the former project coordinator and lead teacher for The Fifth Ward Project. The unstructured interview will be a conversation to elicit as much information as possible about the experience.*

Research questions:

1. What meanings did the participants of *The Fifth Ward Project* make of their lived experience?
2. Were the meanings made and reported *enough*?

Topics to be discussed:

1. For clarification, what was your official position with the project?
2. To recap, can you summarize *The Fifth Ward Project* during the 2010-11 school year --- what you aimed to do vs. what you did.
3. Looking back, what do you think these classes did for the students?
4. Did the project accomplish its goals?
5. What were some of the highlights for individual students? (Tell me some “proud moments” stories.)
6. What were some obstacles you faced when teaching these students? (You mentioned having trouble defining problem solving ...)
7. Why do you think students need theatre arts programs like this one?

**Appendix O**

**Interview Protocol for Verona Students**

Date(s) of interview: February 16 and 17, 2012

Interviewee: *I will interview 11 students from Verona Elementary who previously participated in The Fifth Ward Project. The semi-structured interview will allow me to cover questions in the protocol, while allowing for a seemingly informal and sociable conversation with young respondents. Clarification, probing, and confirmation of responses will be pursued when appropriate.*

Research questions:

3. What meanings did the participants of *The Fifth Ward Project* make of their lived experience?
4. Were the meanings made and reported *enough*?

Topics to be discussed:

1. **FIRST IMPRESSIONS / RECALL**

Hi! I'm Mrs. Burrow and I go to the University of Houston. I am a teacher and I am studying theatre arts. I wanted to talk to you about the theatre class you took with Ms. Wallace last year. *Do you remember the class?*

2. **CLASS ACTIVITIES**

*What did you used to do in theatre?*

3. **IMPRESSIONS of CLASS**

*What did you like most about theatre?*

*How was it different from your other classes at school?*

*What was the hardest thing to do in theatre?*

4. **IMPRESSIONS of TEACHER**

*What did you think of Ms. Wallace?*

*Was she a good teacher?*

*Why?*

*Was she like your other teachers?*

*How was she different?*

5. **IMPACT of CLASS**

*What did you learn to do better in theatre?*

*What do you miss most about theatre?*

*Do you think your school should have theatre again? Why?*

6. **(OPTIONAL, when appropriate) PROBE INDIVIDUAL STUDENT**

**SURVEY RESPONSES**